

# **THE FEMINISATION OF POVERTY AND FEMALE HEADSHIP IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA, 1997-2006**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

A large and growing body of scholarship has suggested that income poverty has recently decreased in post-apartheid South Africa. Evidence for an overall drop in poverty rates notwithstanding, there has been very little work which has examined the *gendered* nature of poverty. There have, however, been important changes over the period which might suggest that poverty trends have been gendered. On the one hand, for example, the post-apartheid period has seen the expansion of several grants to support the care-givers of children and the elderly as well as employment growth for women. On the other hand, this same period has been characterised by declining marital rates, rising rates of female unemployment, and women increasingly over-represented in low-wage work, changes which would be expected to have negative implications for women's economic well-being.

This thesis uses nationally representative household survey data from the October Household Surveys (1997 and 1999) and the General Household Surveys (2004 and 2006) to investigate gendered trends in income poverty in several different ways. It examines first, whether females are more likely to live in poor households than males, and whether this has changed over time; and second, how poverty has changed among female- and male-headed households. The thesis also considers why females and female-headed households are more vulnerable to poverty and why the poverty differential between males and females (and female- and male-headed households) may have widened over time. Given the criticism of headship based analyses of income poverty, the thesis also investigates poverty and female headship in greater detail by adopting several alternative definitions of female headship that are commonly used in the literature.

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## **DECLARATION**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Human Sciences), in the Graduate Programme in the School of Development Studies,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
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I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was not used. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Human Sciences) in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Student signature

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Date

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AMPS</b>	All Media and Product Survey
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress
<b>BRIDGE</b>	Briefings on Development and Gender
<b>CDF</b>	Cumulative Distribution Function
<b>CDG</b>	Care Dependency Grant
<b>COSATU</b>	Congress of South African Trade Unions
<b>CPI</b>	Consumer Price Index
<b>CPS</b>	Current Population Survey
<b>CSG</b>	Child Support Grant
<b>DASP</b>	Distributional Analysis STATA Package
<b>DHS</b>	Demographic and Health Survey
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>FCG</b>	Foster Care Grant
<b>FGT</b>	Foster, Greer and Thorbecke
<b>FHH</b>	Female-Headed Household
<b>GDI</b>	Gender Development Index
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEAR</b>	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
<b>GHS</b>	General Household Survey
<b>GIA</b>	Grant in Aid
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>HSRC</b>	Human Sciences Research Council

<b>IES</b>	Income and Expenditure Survey
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>KIDS</b>	KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study
<b>LFS</b>	Labour Force Survey
<b>LIS</b>	Luxembourg Income Study
<b>MHH</b>	Male-Headed Households
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>NIDS</b>	National Income Dynamic Study
<b>OHS</b>	October Household Survey
<b>PIR</b>	Poverty and Inequality Report
<b>PSLSD</b>	Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development
<b>RDP</b>	Reconstruction and Development Programme
<b>SACP</b>	South African Communist Party
<b>SALDRU</b>	Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit
<b>SASSA</b>	South African Social Security Agency
<b>SOAP</b>	State Old Age Pension
<b>UIF</b>	Unemployment Insurance Fund
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

# Chapter One- Introduction

## 1. Introduction

The United Nations Development Programme's (1995) claim that 70 per cent of the world's poor are women, has sparked a renewed interest in gendered differences in poverty rates in both developed and developing regions. The increasing percentage of women among the poor, introduced into the development lexicon as the 'feminisation of poverty' in Diane Pearce's (1978) work, has been, particularly in the 1990s and the early 2000s, at the forefront of the international gender and poverty literature. In South Africa, amidst an ongoing debate over the nature of trends in overall poverty since the end of apartheid, there has been very little work which has examined the gendered nature of income poverty. Rather, studies have focused on measuring aggregate trends in poverty and, given the legacy of apartheid, on changes disaggregated by race. While several studies have either hypothesised (cf. Phalane 2002; Bentley 2004; Bhorat et al. 2006; Thurlow 2006) or offered preliminary evidence of (Bhorat et al. 2006; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008) a feminisation of poverty in South Africa, there has been no comprehensive study of the phenomenon to date.

Despite the lack of attention paid to gendered poverty trends in post-apartheid South Africa, there have been a number of changes that are likely to have affected gendered access to resources (and to income in particular) over the period. On one hand, the period has seen an increase in labour force participation and employment growth among women (Casale and Posel 2002; Casale 2004; Casale and Posel 2005), continued gender parity in school enrolment rates (Woolard 2002; Casale and Posel 2005; Hausmann et al. 2009), the introduction of progressive equal opportunity legislation and protective labour laws (including the extension of minimum wages to domestic workers)<sup>1</sup> (Casale and Posel 2005), an increase in the level of women's representation in

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<sup>1</sup> The 1997 Basic Conditions of Employment Act provides protection against unfair dismissal and enforces a minimum wage. The 1998 Employment Equity Act promotes the employment of both women and non-Whites across all sectors. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, (4) (2000) protects women against discrimination across a wide range of spheres (e.g. employment, land rights, education and health).

parliament and government (Elson and Keklik 2003; Hausmann et al. 2009), and the expansion<sup>2</sup> of a relatively comprehensive and well-targeted social grant system which includes a social pension as well as several grants to support the care-givers of children. On the other hand, this same period has seen a number of changes which might adversely affect women's economic well-being. These changes include: the gendered impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Bentley 2004; Schatz and Ogunmefun 2007; HSRC 2009; UNAIDS 2010), declining marital rates (Posel et al. 2011), an increase in rates of female unemployment (Casale and Posel 2002; Casale 2004), and women increasingly over-represented in the informal economy and in jobs with very low earnings (Casale 2004; Chen et al. 2005).

Since 1993, nationally representative household surveys have been conducted regularly by South Africa's official statistical agency (Statistics South Africa). With these official data sets, it has been possible, in the post-apartheid era, to generate comparable measures of household income (or expenditure) with which to estimate changes in poverty over time and a fairly rich body of poverty literature has emerged over this period.<sup>3</sup> The broad objectives of this thesis are to explore gender differences in access to resources in post-apartheid South Africa and to investigate whether or not women have become absolutely and relatively more vulnerable to income poverty over time. While, in the South African context, it may be of greater interest to determine whether there have been gendered changes in poverty between the apartheid and post-1993 periods, the national data sets collected prior to 1993 are not comparable with later data sets and, in addition, were not representative of all population groups in South Africa. As a result, the period of analysis for gendered poverty trends (and overall poverty trends, more generally) is restricted to the post-1993 era. In this study, official data sources (the October Household Surveys and the

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<sup>2</sup> Government expenditure on social grants increased in the post-2000 period (starting in 2001-2) with the proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) spent on social grants rising from about two per cent in 1994 to 3.5 per cent in 2005 (Seekings, 2007a). The magnitude of changes in social grant expenditure is detailed further in Chapter Five.

<sup>3</sup> Estimating trends in poverty using official data sources has not been without its problems and some of the challenges associated with comparing estimates of income and expenditure over time are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

General Household Surveys) from 1997, 1999, 2004 and 2006 are used to investigate poverty trends since these data sets yield the most comparable and regularly collected estimates of earnings and social grant income. The period of analysis is limited to this ten year period, rather than extended into more recent years (e.g. by using comparable data from 2008) because the years from 1997 to 2006 represent a decade during which there are a number of comprehensive studies of income poverty with which the present work can be compared. In other words, the objective of this thesis is to analyse a recent period for which there is a large poverty literature and to extend the analysis by exploring gender differences in income poverty in detail.<sup>4</sup>

The international literature often identifies several reasons why females may be increasingly vulnerable to poverty relative to males. The rise in the number of female-headed households (often combined with single motherhood), intra-household inequalities that exacerbate existing gender biases, disadvantages in the labour market, increasing responsibility for care-giving and household maintenance, and, more recently, the gendered impacts of structural adjustment programmes (Moghadam 2005) are some of the key reasons often put forward to explain gendered changes in poverty. The focus on female headship, in particular, has become a key concern of gendered poverty studies, especially in developing countries.

One of the reasons for the focus on the gender of the household head is that measuring gendered changes in poverty brings the difficulty of how to assign income across individuals in a household. In generating conventional estimates of income poverty, it is assumed that all household resources are equally shared among household members. An individual is therefore identified as being poor if he or she lives in a household in which average per capita (or per adult equivalent) income is below a poverty threshold. If, for example, all adult men and women were married or co-habiting, there would be no gender differences in poverty because poverty status is

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<sup>4</sup> More detailed reasons for the selection of each of the respective years between 1997 and 2006 are discussed in Chapter Five. However, an additional motivation for not analysing poverty beyond 2006 is that most comparable analyses of poverty trends in South Africa use the 2005 Income and Expenditure Survey as the most recent data source. While there are some more recent sources of data (e.g. the National Income Dynamics Study) with which to estimate poverty, their compatibility with earlier sources of data has been questioned (a fuller discussion provided in Chapter Five).

assigned at the household level. However, where resources are not equally shared among household members (as is very likely the case), these poverty estimates may conceal a gendered distribution of poverty within households. To explore the gendered nature of poverty further, studies from both developed and developing countries often compare the economic well-being of female- and male-headed households (Moghadam 2005; Medeiros and Costa 2007).

In addition to the methodological challenge of assigning income to individuals within households, several other reasons for investigating female-headed households in the context of a feminisation of poverty are offered in the literature. First, if household heads are the primary income earners (or decision makers) in households, then an analysis of poverty based on the gender of the household head highlights the nature and implications of gender differences in access to resources. In other words, poverty differentials between female- and male-headed households are indicative of a distinct gender dimension of vulnerability to poverty and are not necessarily intended as a proxy for gendered poverty trends. As Medeiros and Costa (2007: 117) argue, '[Their] gender dimension refers to a bias that determines family composition, particularly due to the fact that women tend to assume the responsibility for children in the case of dissolution of marital unions and the fact that mortality and age differentials in marriage result in female single-person households'.<sup>5</sup> Second, and leading on from the above, female-headed households are a rapidly growing family type in many countries and are often considered to be particularly vulnerable to poverty because they are more likely to rely on women's earnings (Buvinic and Gupta 1997; Moghadam 2005). In developing countries, female household heads are also likely to have fewer entitlements and poorer access to land (Moghadam 2005). A study of female-headed households is therefore a way of highlighting, and exploring the implications of, gender inequities in the labour market and in access to resources.

Even though headship-based indicators of poverty cannot serve as a proxy for gendered measures of deprivation, they are often employed, within the context of investigating gendered trends in

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<sup>5</sup> In the South African context (and in developing countries more generally), the effect of age and mortality differences within marriages would be more likely to result in women left without access to their partner's income and not necessarily in the formation of 'female single-person households'.



poverty, to explore the well-being of a specific group of women and of those who reside in their household. In the South African context, there is some existing evidence to suggest that trends in female headship may be coinciding with gendered changes in income poverty. Female headship is on the rise in South Africa such that the percentage of households with a female head has increased from 28.3 per cent of all households in 1993 to 37.1 per cent in 2004 (Bhorat et al. 2006). There is also evidence that the level of income received by female-headed households is only about half that of male-headed households (Budlender 2005) and that female-headed households are over-represented among the poor (Posel 1997; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999; Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a; Chen et al. 2005; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008). For example, the percentage of the poor who lived in female-headed households was about 55 per cent in 2005, even though only 43 per cent of South Africans lived in this household type (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008).

One of the first comprehensive post-apartheid poverty studies conducted in South Africa, the Poverty and Inequality Report (PIR), also noted the higher risk of poverty associated with female headship. The report argued that the greater vulnerability to poverty in these households is likely explained by their greater concentration in rural areas, fewer working-age adults in the household and the labour market disadvantages (e.g. higher levels of unemployment and a gender wage gap) faced by women (May et al. 1998). Against this backdrop of a rise in female headship accompanied by higher poverty risks in female-headed households, several authors have argued that post-apartheid economic policy has exacerbated the burden of poverty on women and female-headed households (relative to males and male-headed households) and may be contributing to a feminisation of poverty (Taylor 1997; Phalane 2002; Thurlow 2006).

The widespread use of headship-based indicators notwithstanding, there is an open questioning of 'headship' in the development literature and a number of South African (Moultrie and Timaeus 2001; Budlender 2003; Budlender 2005) and international (Baden 1999; Chant 2003a) studies have contested the use of headship as an appropriate analytical category. Criticisms of headship (cf. Baden and Milward 1997; Baden 1999; BRIDGE 2001; Chant 2006a) typically argue that both male- and female-headed households are highly heterogeneous groups (Chant 2003a; Chant

2006a), that headship is often arbitrarily assigned in household surveys (Barros et al. 1997; Budlender 2005), that it precludes joint decision-making (Moultrie and Timaeus 2001; Finley 2007) and that it is likely to have different meanings for policy makers, researchers and the survey respondents themselves (Barros et al. 1997; Budlender 2005). Such concerns with headship have become part and parcel of feminisation of poverty studies and a parallel body of work now explicitly examines the relevance of headship within the context of gender and poverty trends.

## **2. Rationale, objectives and research questions**

Gendered poverty studies have been employed in the international literature to build on theoretical and empirical work which highlights the ever present interactions between gender, class, labour market inequalities and household divisions of labour (Misra 2002; Fontana and van der Meulen Rodgers 2005). Debates about the extent of and the reasons for the growing gender gap in income poverty are, therefore, closely linked with larger issues of gender inequality amidst demographic, social and economic changes in many countries over the past several decades (Williams and Lee-Smith 2000; Brady and Kall 2008; Chant 2008b). Investigating gendered income poverty trends in the post-apartheid era in South Africa contributes to these larger discourses and highlights the links between gender, household composition, social policy, class and work in a particular context. Moreover, the focus on gender and *income* poverty, in particular, allows for an empirical contribution to a robust poverty literature in post-apartheid South Africa as well as a gendered analysis of the country's primary poverty alleviation intervention, the social grant system.

The occurrence (or not) of a feminisation of poverty therefore has important policy implications. If a feminisation of poverty is observed in South Africa, the direct implication is that poverty-alleviation programmes and social and economic policy in the post-apartheid era have been gender biased. Conversely, if income poverty trends have not been gendered, then policy makers, poverty researchers and gender advocates should divert their resources to other aspects of gender inequality (Baden 1999; Medeiros and Costa 2007). The investigation of the feminisation of

poverty is, thus, one approach to measuring the progress of gender equality (Williams and Lee-Smith 2000). Gender differences in income poverty, moreover, have wider impacts beyond the problem of unequal access to resources. As argued by Fontana and van der Meulen-Rodgers (2005: 334), 'Countries with greater gender inequality in rights and access to resources show evidence of higher female mortality rates, higher HIV infection rates, greater violence against women, lower-quality health outcomes for children, and more poverty'.

The main objective of this thesis is, therefore, to measure gendered changes in access to resources (and specifically income) in post-apartheid South Africa through a feminisation of poverty framework. One component of the study undertakes a standard poverty analysis in order to investigate whether gender differences in the extent, depth and severity of poverty have widened over the period. After identifying gendered changes in income poverty, the thesis then considers what might explain these observed changes and, in particular, how different sources of income have affected poverty rates among females and males.

Another component of the study is concerned with changes in the extent and nature of female headship and explores the relationship between these changes and gendered trends in poverty. This part of the thesis considers, for example, whether there has been a change in the number, composition or type of female-headed households in South Africa. Differences in poverty risks among and between female- and male-headed households (and whether these differences have widened over time) are also a key focus in this part of the thesis. The present study adds further to the existing poverty literature by presenting both descriptive and econometric analyses of the main reasons for the poverty differential between these broad household types. Finally, a further objective of the thesis, in light of the critiques of using headship as an analytical category, is to consider the appropriateness of self-reported headship as an indicator of gendered access to resources.

### **3. Data and methods**

In exploring the above questions, the thesis makes use of nationally representative data from the 1997 and 1999 October Household Surveys (OHSs) and the 2004 and 2006 rounds of the General Household Surveys (GHSs). These annually collected surveys contain income and expenditure modules that are largely comparable and, as noted earlier, correspond to a period for which there is an existing poverty literature. Perhaps most importantly, these data sources capture information on both earned and social grant income at the individual level which allows for comparisons of pre- and post-transfer income as well as the possibility of using more sophisticated decomposition techniques.

Since the thesis is concerned predominantly with estimating poverty trends, the analysis makes use of one of the most widely used techniques (the Foster, Greer and Thorbecke approach) for estimating not only the extent of poverty, but also the depth and severity (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five). This approach has been dominant in the post-apartheid poverty literature and the methods used in the thesis, therefore, are largely in line with the approaches adopted by other income poverty studies and allow for a comparison of gendered poverty trends to an established literature.

### **4. Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapters Two and Three review the gender and poverty literature in both developed and developing countries and summarise the reasons (both theoretical and empirical) offered in the literature for the growing gap in poverty rates between males and females (and between male- and female-headed households). The literature on household headship is also reviewed. In Chapter Four, the political economy of the post-apartheid period is briefly reviewed and some of the key development (e.g. unemployment, inequality and poverty) indicators are discussed in order to provide context for the empirical analysis of gendered poverty trends. The chapter also considers the poverty literature in South Africa in some detail and highlights some of the key debates which have dominated poverty discussions in post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter Five provides an overview of the data sources available to analyse poverty trends over time in post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter highlights some of the main problems with using these data sources to estimate poverty trends and, in particular, notes how the underestimation of income in most official data sources has affected estimates of poverty in the post-apartheid period. The chapter then discusses the data sources selected for analysing gendered trends in poverty in this thesis (i.e. the OHSs and the GHSs). In doing so, the chapter highlights the reasons for using these data to explore gendered poverty trends as well as the adjustments to the data that are made to compensate for the likely underestimation of income in the OHSs and the GHSs. The poverty lines chosen for the analysis are also reviewed and the method used to estimate the incidence, depth and severity of poverty is discussed.

Chapter Six is the first chapter to present empirical data and it considers estimates of poverty overall and by gender. The chapter also tests the robustness of the gendered poverty trends to differing assumptions about the poverty threshold, to adjustments for household size and composition, and to the possible underestimation of income data. Finally, the chapter employs a relatively new decomposition technique to examine the contribution of different income sources, and social grant income in particular, to the reduction of poverty among males and females.

Following the classification adopted in the international literature on gender and poverty, Chapter Seven examines differences in the risk of poverty among female- and male-headed households. Estimates of changes in the incidence and depth of poverty at the household level are presented and, once again, a decomposition analysis highlights the relative contribution of social grant income to the reduction of poverty among both female- and male-headed households.

Chapter Eight considers the characteristics of female-headed households that may make them, on average, more vulnerable to poverty than male-headed households. The chapter considers, in particular, which types of female-headed households are more vulnerable to poverty and identifies some of the key demographic and labour market characteristics which differentiate them from male-headed households. Following the descriptive analysis, the chapter then presents

an econometric model in order to identify which characteristics explain the higher poverty risk associated with female headship.

Since the previous two chapters present poverty analyses based on the gender of the household head, Chapter Nine addresses some of the well-documented concerns with using self-reported headship to distinguish ‘gendered’ households. The key concern of the chapter is to investigate whether there are better ways of classifying households (apart from the gender of the self-reported head) in order to investigate gendered poverty risks. One of the main reasons for distinguishing between female- and male-headed households is to highlight the poverty implications of gender differences in access to resources. This type of analysis carries the *a priori* assumption, however, that self-reported heads are the main income provider (or decision maker) in the household. The chapter, therefore, investigates several alternative definitions of headship that are well established in the literature. These alternative definitions are used to examine whether the trends in poverty among female- and male-headed households identified in Chapter Seven are robust to alternative classifications of headship.

## **Chapter Two- A Review of the International Literature on the Feminisation of Poverty in Developed Countries: Trends, Theory and Causes**

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter reviews the international literature on gender and poverty in developed countries. The chapter is concerned, in particular, with work which has investigated a feminisation of poverty- or the *increasing* percentage of females (or female-headed households) among the poor- at either a national or regional level. The investigation of the feminisation of poverty is approached in different ways in developed and developing countries and the reasons for gendered differences in poverty risks are often markedly different in developing countries (compared with countries/regions that are more developed). As such, this chapter discusses the literature on gender and poverty from developed countries only and the following chapter reviews the scholarship from developing countries separately.

The overall objective of this chapter (and the following one) is to review the available literature on gendered income poverty trends and to contextualise gendered changes in access to earnings, changes in household composition and gendered labour market trends in post-apartheid South Africa within the broader ambit of gendered access to resources internationally. Moreover, since South Africa is a middle-income country with characteristics of both a developed and developing country, a review of the different ways in which gendered changes in poverty are linked with broader economic, demographic, social and political changes is likely to be instructive. As the following chapters will demonstrate, an additional advantage to exploring gendered poverty trends in South Africa is that the data available to explore these trends are much better suited to the task than the types of data sets that are often used in other developing country contexts. In many developing countries, information on income and other economic resources is only available at the household level (Chant 2006b). South African data therefore allow for the type of nuanced analyses of the key factors hypothesised to influence gendered poverty differences over time that are usually only possible with data from developed countries (and, to a lesser extent, countries in Latin America).

The chapter is structured as follows. The following section summarises the findings of the empirical work on the feminisation of poverty in developed countries from the 1940s-2000s. Section Three reviews the theoretical work that attempts to explain these gender differences in poverty. In Section Four, the lessons learned from feminisation of poverty studies are examined and some of the key reasons for why females (and female-headed households) may be more vulnerable to poverty (relative to males and male-headed households) are reviewed. Section Five summarises the available evidence on gendered poverty trends and offers some tentative conclusions about the trends documented in the literature.

## **2. Gendered poverty trends in developed countries**

The origins of gendered poverty studies are often traced to debates about single motherhood in the United States during the 1970s. Over the following three decades, concerns with gendered inequality in income poverty and with a parallel body of work documenting the growing number of female-headed households throughout the developed world, lead a number of studies, particularly in North America and the United Kingdom (U.K.), to investigate claims of a feminisation of poverty. These studies have presented variable results, but, on the whole, they point to changes in household composition and the rapid increase in the number of households headed by a single female, in particular, as the main reasons for gender differences in poverty. It is therefore difficult to disentangle the findings from gendered poverty studies from those that are concerned with changing poverty rates among female-headed households.<sup>6</sup> There are many overlaps between these two distinct research agendas and, as noted in much of the literature, the origins of gendered poverty studies often have their roots in policy concerns with changing family formations (e.g. single parenthood and divorce) (Casper et al. 1994).

This blurring of analytical boundaries between gender and female headship within the gender and poverty literature aside, the broad trend that emerges from the existing scholarship (cf. Pearce 1978; Fuchs 1986; McLanahan et al. 1989; Smith and Ward 1989; Dooley 1994; McLanahan and

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<sup>6</sup> This is particularly so because many ‘feminisation of poverty’ studies examine poverty differences between males and females as well as household poverty differences by the gender of the household head (see Table 1).



Kelly 1999; Brady and Kall 2008) on the feminisation of poverty in developed countries (predominantly in North America) is that gender differences in income poverty *widened* over a period in which poverty levels *decreased* significantly for both males and females. For example, Smith and Ward (1989), in line with a number of other studies (cf. Pearce 1978; McLanahan et al. 1989; McLanahan and Kelly 1999), found that poverty levels in the United States (U.S.) decreased steadily between the immediate post-war era and the 1980s for both males and females. In addition, the authors found that, in 1940, there was no gender poverty gap (34 per cent of both men and women lived below the poverty line) but that, by 1980, the poverty headcount had decreased by considerably more for men than for women (only seven per cent of men were poor in 1980 compared with 11 per cent of women) (Smith and Ward 1989). Paradoxically, they found that the growth of the gender poverty gap in the United States was most pronounced in the period (1950-1970) during which overall poverty rates declined the most (Smith and Ward 1989). At the same time, there is evidence to suggest that the poverty differential between female- and male-headed households in the United States grew between the 1940s and the 1970s (Ross et al. 1987; Barrington and Conrad 1994) and continued to widen into the 1970s and 1980s (Blaustein 1982; Pearce 1983; Pearce 1989; Jones and Kodras 1990; Hoffman 1991).

Another paradox associated with the feminisation of poverty is that the widening of the gender poverty gap occurred over a period in which a number of political, social and economic changes would have been expected to improve the relative economic well-being of women. Bianchi (1999: 308) citing Pearce (1978), noted that the irony in the United States (in the 1960s and 1970s) is that 'during the same period that women's employment increased dramatically and affirmative action legislation enhanced opportunities for women in educational institutions and the labour force, their likelihood of living in poverty was increasing relative to men'. This paradox, together with ongoing debates about the seemingly static nature of the gender wage gap over the same period (for a fuller discussion see Smith and Ward 1989) resulted in a number of studies (predominantly in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s) which investigated the extent of the feminisation of poverty as well as its possible causes.

Despite interest in the gendered nature of income poverty in many developed countries in the post-war period, together with a broad consensus that the gender poverty gap widened at least through the 1970s in the United States and Canada, there is evidence both for and against this claim. Evidence in support of a feminisation of poverty comes from a number of studies in developed countries that have found that women or female-headed households are disproportionately poor (Lewis and Piachaud 1987; Lochhead and Scott 2000; Davies et al. 2001; Bradshaw et al. 2003; Brown and Kesselring 2003)<sup>7</sup> and, as documented in Table 1, most of those concerned with changes over time<sup>8</sup> have suggested that the percentage of women (or female-headed households) among the poor is actually increasing. Of these studies, most (cf. Fuchs 1986; Pressman 1988; McLanahan et al. 1989; Northrop 1990; Dooley 1994; Bianchi 1999; McLanahan and Kelly 1999) found that the trend did not continue after (or into) the 1980s.

Evidence *against* an obvious feminisation of poverty suggests that the picture is not always clear and several studies have reported marked differences in poverty trends among different age or race groups. McLanahan and Kelly (1999), for example, found evidence that the feminisation of poverty in the United States extended into the 1980s and 1990s, but only among the elderly (see also Bianchi 1999). The authors, in fact, found a ‘de-feminisation’ of poverty throughout the 1980s and 1990s among White working-age adults (McLanahan and Kelly 1999). Similarly, Hoffman (1992) found that female-headed households in the United States (between 1959 and 1989) were more likely to be poor relative to male-headed households (despite decreases in the extent of poverty among both household types) but that this overall picture was driven particularly by the increasing vulnerability of households with a Black female head.

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<sup>7</sup> See also: Stallard et al., 1983; Smith & Ward, 1989; Evans, 1991; Wright, 1992; Battle, 1994; Casper et al., 1994; Wright, 1996; Buvinic, 1997; Davies & Joshi, 1998; Pressman, 2002; Elmelech & Lu, 2004; Brady & Kall, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> See for example: Pearce, 1978; Pearce, 1983; Fuchs, 1986; Lewis & Piachaud, 1987; Peterson, 1987; Pressman, 1988; McLanahan et al., 1989; Pearce, 1989; Smith & Ward, 1989; Goldberg & Kremen, 1990; Northrop, 1990; Dooley, 1994; Bianchi, 1999; McLanahan & Kelly, 1999; Brady & Kall, 2008; Kim & Choi, 2010.

Several studies (cf. Fuchs 1986; Northrop 1990) have also found that the trend began to reverse towards the early to mid-1980s (i.e. females or female-headed households became *less* likely to be poor relative to males or male-headed households). Of the studies that undertook empirical analyses into the 1990s and 2000s, the evidence supporting a feminisation of poverty is even thinner. Elmelech and Lu (2004), for example, found no empirical support for a feminisation of poverty in the United States between 1994 and 2001. Nonetheless, recent work by Kim and Choi (2010) examining gendered poverty trends in the United States into the 2000s presents evidence supporting a continued feminisation of poverty. Using Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) data (instead of the Current Population Survey (CPS) data used by most studies) they found that female-headed households became increasingly over-represented among the poor between 1985 and 2005.

While most of the focus has been on gendered poverty trends in the United States, there is also some evidence for a feminisation of poverty in Canada. Of the four studies (Evans 1991; Battle 1994; Dooley 1994; Kim and Choi 2010) which explicitly examined changes in poverty rates by gender in Canada, two found evidence of increasing levels of poverty among females or female-headed households. Dooley (1994) found that, between 1973 and 1990, females and female-headed households became relatively poorer over the period while Kim and Choi (2010) conclude that this trend continued into 2010 for Canadian female-headed households. A tentative conclusion based on the existing empirical work is, therefore, that a feminisation of poverty (based on household level poverty and the gender of the head) may be an enduring feature of poverty trends in Canada.

**Table 1 Overview of key gendered poverty studies from developed countries**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Country/region</b>	<b>Unit of analysis</b>	<b>A feminisation of poverty?</b>
Pearce, 1978	1950-1974	United States	Individuals and female-headed families	Yes
Blaustein, 1982	1969-1978	United States	Female-headed households	Yes
Pearce, 1983	1971-1983	United States	Female-headed households	Yes
Fuchs, 1986	1959-1984	United States	Individuals	Yes, but with some reversal of the trend between 1979 and 1984
Ross et al., 1987	1939-1979	United States	Female-headed households	Yes
Pressman, 1988	1959-1985	United States	Female-headed households	Yes
McLanahan et al. 1989	1950-1980	United States	Individuals	Yes
Smith & Ward, 1989	1940-1980	United States	Individuals	Yes
Goldberg & Kremen, 1990	1960-1990	United States, Canada, Sweden, France, Poland, Russia, and Japan	Female-headed households	United States- Yes
Jones & Kodras, 1990	1970-1980	United States	Female-headed households	Yes
Northrop, 1990	1959-1986	United States	Female-headed households	Yes, but with some reversals in the mid-1970s and from 1979-1983
Hoffman, 1991	1959-1988	United States	Female-headed households	Yes
Hoffman, 1992	1959-1989	United States	Female-headed households	Yes, but more pronounced among households with a black female head

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*Table 1 continued...*

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Wright, 1992	1968-1986	United Kingdom	Individuals	No
Barrington & Conrad, 1994	1939-1959	United States	Female-headed households	Yes
Battle, 1994		Canada		No
Dooley, 1994	1973-1990	Canada	Individuals and female-headed households	Yes, but more pronounced at the household level
Davies & Joshi, 1998	1968-1990	United Kingdom	Individuals and female-headed households	No
Bianchi, 1999	1968-1996	United States	Individuals	Only among individuals over the age of 65
McLanahan & Kelly, 1999	1950-1996	United States	Individuals	Yes, but may have reversed after 1980 for working-age adults
Elmelech & Lu, 2004	1994-2001	United States	Individuals	No
Brady & Kall, 2008	1969-2000	United States, Canada, U.K., Italy, Germany and Sweden	Individuals	In the U.S., only until 1979 and then possibly a slight increase in the late 1990s; in Germany until about 1980 and then again in the mid-1980s; in Canada until 1983; in Italy from 1986-1993; in Sweden between 1987-1992; in the U.K. between 1997 and 2000

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*Table 1 continued...*

Kim & Choi, 2010	1985-2005	Australia, Canada, U.K., U.S., Austria, France, Germany, Italy Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden	Female-headed households	Only in Canada, the U.K., U.S., France, Italy, and Sweden
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Note: Studies are only included in the table if they investigated changes in poverty rates by gender (or by the gender of the household head) *over time*.

While the feminisation of poverty is often cited as a global phenomenon, there has been little empirical work concerned with gendered poverty rates *over time* in countries apart from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Moreover, the work from the United Kingdom (Wright 1992; Davies and Joshi 1998) suggests that poverty trends have not been gendered in the 1970s and 1980s. A number of studies (Sorenson 1990; McLanahan et al. 1992; Casper et al. 1994; Stapf 1994; Wright 1996; Fernandez-Morales and Haro-Garcia 1998; Pressman 1998; Christopher 2001; Pressman 2002; Rake and Daly 2002; Smeeding and Sandstrom 2005; Brady and Kall 2008; Gornick and Jäntti 2010) have conducted cross-country comparisons of gender and poverty in developed regions in order to investigate the reasons why women may be more vulnerable to poverty in some contexts, but these studies have not examined changes over time and cannot therefore conclude whether or not there has been a feminisation of poverty in these countries. Despite a lack of empirical evidence, there has also been speculation that a feminisation of poverty is likely to be occurring in the ‘transition’ economies of the former Soviet bloc and Asia. Moghadam (2005: 25), citing a United Nations report, suggests that the growing female composition among the poor may even be ‘the distinctive feature of the post-Soviet period’. Evidence for this claim comes not from poverty analyses, however, but from observations that, in the former socialist countries, middle-class occupational categories that had high percentages of women (administrators, clerics, medical professionals and teachers) have seen the greatest lay-offs and cutbacks as economies were re-structured in the transition period (cf. Milanovic 1995; Moghadam 1998).

The empirical evidence for a feminisation of poverty in countries outside of the United States and Canada is therefore limited to only a handful of cross-country studies. Some preliminary evidence of vulnerability to a feminisation of poverty in Sweden, France, Poland, Russia, and Japan was initially described in an edited volume (Goldberg and Kremen 1990), but the empirical results presented in the book were largely inconclusive and not based on empirical data for countries other than the United States (Pressman 1992; Medeiros and Costa 2007). The strongest evidence for a feminisation of poverty in countries apart from the United States and Canada seems to come from the recent study (Kim and Choi 2010) using Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) data. Kim and Choi (2010) report that a growing percentage of the poor (between 1985 and 2005) are living in female-headed households in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Italy and Sweden. Another recent cross-country study (Brady and Kall 2008) focused mostly on the causes of female poverty in a large number of developed countries, but also presented some evidence for an increase in gender poverty differences in the mid- to late 1990s in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Italy and Sweden.

The available evidence therefore suggests that, between the 1940s and the early to mid-1980s, an increasing proportion of the poor were females (or living in female-headed households) in the United States and possibly Canada, but not in the United Kingdom.<sup>9</sup> More recent work has suggested that this trend can now be documented in other countries over the past two decades, but only if a feminisation of poverty is defined as the increasing number of poor people living in female-headed households. Evidence of a growing gender differential in income poverty in developed countries through the 1990s and the 2000s, however, is less robust.

### **3. Theoretical work**

Equal, if not more, attention in the gender and poverty literature has been directed at understanding why women and female-headed households may be more vulnerable to poverty

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<sup>9</sup> There is no comprehensive evidence of a feminisation of poverty in the U.K. but a cross-country study (Brady & Kall, 2008) using LIS data suggested that gender differences in poverty rates may have widened in the U.K. in the short period between 1997 and 2000.

and why this may have changed over time. This section now reviews the theoretical work which has sought to explain the growing gender gap in poverty. Since the vast majority of empirical work on the feminisation of poverty has been conducted in North America, it is not surprising that there is, once again, a strong bias towards the U.S. in work which examines the possible reasons for the gender bias in income poverty.

The theoretical models used to explain the (growing) gender poverty gap in developed countries can be grouped into three broad categories. The first, the neoclassical economic models, explain gender differences in poverty largely in terms of individual human capital accumulation. In contrast, the second group of models highlight demographic explanations which attempt to identify changes in household structure and living arrangements that may increase the vulnerability of women and female-headed households to poverty. The third considers the role of the welfare state (or social assistance more generally) in meeting the needs of women and single mothers, in particular, in light of changes in household composition and female labour force participation. Each of these broad theoretical approaches and their main critiques are discussed briefly in this section.

### **3.1 Neoclassical theory**

A traditional neoclassical analysis of gender differences in poverty risks views individual differences as the main factor driving poverty differences. In particular, the theory of human capital (see Schultz 1961; Mincer 1974; Becker 1975; Becker 1993) emphasises differences in educational attainment, labour market skills and work experience in explaining gender differences in income poverty (Elmelech and Lu 2004).<sup>10</sup> In its simplest form, this theoretical framework posits that men are less likely to be poor because they have higher levels of education, more work experience and skills that command more value in the labour market. In other words,

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<sup>10</sup> Empirical tests of the human capital theory and the gender poverty gap typically employ age as a proxy for work experience (see Pressman, 1998). There are obvious limitations to this approach in most contexts, but this may be even more problematic in settings with high unemployment rates.



this perspective holds that men and women acquire different skills and levels of education throughout their lives and that it is these differences that make men more likely to have greater access to income (Blau and Kahn 1994). Empirical support for human capital theory comes from a well established body of economic literature which demonstrates that factors such as education, labour market experience and age are key predictors of earnings (Ben-Porath 1967; Sandell and Shapiro 1980; Willis 1986; Mincer 1994). To a lesser extent, there is also some work which specifically links human capital factors to gender differences in occupational sectors (see for example Polachek 1981) as well as to differences in earnings between men and women, often referred to as the gender pay gap (cf. Mincer and Polachek 1974; Mincer and Polachek 1978; Becker 1985; Wellington 1994).

Neoclassical theory is also supported by a number of ‘family’ theories which provide a theoretical justification for a gender division of labour in the household. Perhaps one of the more prominent family theories is ‘structure-functionalism’, originating in work by Parsons (1951), which argues that men and women have natural roles outside of and within the household, respectively, and that maintaining this natural order maximises a household’s efficiency (Parsons and Bales 1955; Parsons 1966). Within structure-functionalism, Goode’s (1963) ‘convergence theory’ further argued that development or modernisation encourages a move away from extended families and toward nuclear family formations. According to this perspective, development is associated with the enforcement of a gendered household division of labour with the traditional nuclear family forming the most efficient family unit. Becker’s (1965) seminal work on the allocation of time within the family built on this framework by introducing a model which formalised the notion of non-market labour and, perhaps more importantly, identified individual labour market decisions as linked to the household and other household members (also see Becker 1981). This work eventually led to the formulation of the unitary household model which posited that the household (usually under the influence of a ‘benevolent dictator’ as the household head), rather than the individual, is the primary decision making unit (Becker 1974; Becker 1981).

Within the functionalist and human capital explanations of gender differences in earnings and economic well-being, women's greater responsibility for children and the household are often presented as the reason that women 'choose' not to invest in education or time in the labour market (Mincer and Polachek 1974; Corcoran et al. 1984).<sup>11</sup> Becker (1981; Becker 1985) argues further that, because women have a comparative advantage (relative to men) in non-market activities (both because of lower levels of human capital and a biological disposition to this type of work) household efficiency is maximised by a sexual division of labour along market and non-market lines. Because this stance has been used to justify lower wages for women through the implicit assumption that women lack skills (relative to men) as they choose to (or the 'household' chooses for them to) take on household responsibilities rather than develop their careers, a neoclassical human capital approach has received substantial criticism from feminist economists (cf. Friedan 1963; Folbre 1986a; Peterson 1987; Beneria 1995; Folbre 2006; Elson 2007).<sup>12</sup>

Many of these feminist critiques (cf. England 1982; Kilbourne et al. 1994; Sorenson 1994; Elson 1999; England 2005) have also demonstrated that, even controlling for human capital differences between men and women, there is still evidence of gender discrimination in terms of both access to certain occupations (England 1982; Seguino 2003) and earnings (Woolley 1993; Kilbourne et al. 1994; Blau and Kahn 1997; Blau and Kahn 2000).<sup>13</sup> Thus, while human capital explanations do account for some of the differences between men and women (i.e. in terms of the pay gap and employment segregation), women continue to earn less than men and are more likely to work in lower paying sectors even after controlling for education and work experience (Blau and Kahn 2000; Seguino 2003). As Blau and Kahn (2000: 27) argue, 'at least some of the remaining pay

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<sup>11</sup> Corcoran et al. (1984), however, find no empirical support for this explanation.

<sup>12</sup> Elson (2007) further argues that traditional theories of the household often encapsulate the 'male breadwinner bias' in that they assume that women's income is not as important to the household as male income.

<sup>13</sup> Kilbourne et al. (1994), for example, find that human capital theory explains roughly a fifth to a quarter of the gender gap in pay while Blau and Khan (2000) suggest that human capital variables may explain up to a third of the gap.

gap is surely tied to the gender division of labor in the home, both directly through its effect on women's labor force attachment and indirectly through its impact on the strength of statistical discrimination against women'. Even when women live in households without men, they are often penalised for educational discontinuity and/or periods of labour market disruption due to responsibility for child birth and care-giving.

One of the strongest of the theoretical critiques of human capital theory is encapsulated within the concept of 'comparable worth' that was first promoted by feminist economists in the mid-1980s. The notion of comparable worth (see England 1992; England 2005) highlights that the labour market offers returns that are not necessarily in line with human capital endowments (or even the tasks required for a certain job), but are rather determined according to entrenched historical prejudices. As Feldberg (1984: 319) argues,

'... we are operating not in the context of economic laws but within a system of segmented labor markets. The structure of the market incorporates historic customs, prejudices, and ideologies that connect the worth of different kinds of work with ideas about the inherent worth of workers who vary by sex, race, age, ethnicity, and other social characteristics. It is these customs, prejudices, and ideologies, modified by the effects of struggles between workers and employers, rather than the nature of work or any natural economic laws, that have shaped the basic framework of wage determination. This process has systematically disadvantaged women, who have been seen as people whose primary attachments are or ought to be to home and family'.

The principle critique of the human capital model is, therefore, that several types of work place discrimination (see for example Woolley 1993; Blau and Kahn 2000; Goldin 2002; England 2005), continue to limit the ability of many women to fill 'men's' jobs or to earn equivalent wages in 'women's jobs' and that neo-classical theory tends to downplay the role of discrimination in job segregation and the gender pay gap (Kilbourne et al. 1994; England 2005). Moreover, human capital theory is also charged with paying insufficient attention to the value of unpaid work and the historical inequalities that are embedded in the labour market and in society as a whole (Brenner 1987; Beeghley 1988; Beneria 1995; Folbre and Nelson 2000).

These feminist challenges to neoclassical theory, supported by the available empirical evidence of persisting gendered inequalities in the labour market, have therefore pointed towards other (aside from human capital) explanations for the gender poverty gap. Although human capital factors are important determinants of earnings, they cannot account for the gender gap in access to resources or for why the gender gap persists even where human capital differences, by gender, do not exist. For example, the fact that growth in the gender poverty gap has, in the U.S., been observed during a period in which women made important strides in the labour market and in access to education (Pearce 1978) casts doubts on the extent to which human capital differences adequately account for gender differences in poverty.

### **3.2 Demographic perspectives**

A second category of theoretical work, characterised here as the demographic perspectives, has emerged in response to a perceived over-emphasis on human capital explanations for the feminisation of poverty. One of the first challenges for the emerging demographic change theories has been the task of proffering competing explanations of household formation in response to existing ‘family’ theories. The essence of the demographic perspectives is that modern families/households do not fit functionalist models. Functionalism, for example, has attracted substantial criticism, not least from feminist economists who have pointed to the rise in female headship in many regions as evidence of the ‘instability of the [traditional] conjugal unit’ alongside modernisation and urbanisation (Amoateng 2007: 29).

Leading on from the above, Amoateng (2007: 35) argues that ‘family life’ and life-course conceptual frameworks have begun to challenge structure-functionalism by highlighting concurrent factors such as increasing levels of education, rising female labour force participation, improvements in personal freedoms, and advances in contraception and communication as competing explanations for changes in family formations. On the whole, the emergence of these more recent models of household change has meant that functionalism has largely fallen out of favour as a paradigm and is criticised as a static model, rooted in conservative values (and from a conservative period) that has not been able to adapt to changing family formations and the intra-

household dynamics that have accompanied these changes (Friedan 1963; Kingsbury and Scanzoni 1993; Winton 1995). In addition, feminist challenges to the unitary household model, borrowing variously from theories of co-operative conflict (Nash 1953; Sen 1990), ‘new household economics’<sup>14</sup> (Folbre 1986b; Evans 1989; Elson 1993), and ‘institutional economics’ (Hartmann 1976; Wheelock and Oughton 1996; Hart 1997; Morrisson and Jutting 2005), in particular, have re-shaped the way households and gender roles within these households are conceptualised (Brickell and Chant 2010). Broadly speaking, these theoretical perspectives acknowledge and are consistent with a gendered division of labour within the household but, critically, they problematise the way in which the division is created and they challenge the justification of gender discrimination in the labour market (Elson 1993; Elson 1999).

In terms of new theoretical contributions towards explaining the gender poverty gap, demographic perspectives often focus on key changes in family formation, combined with labour market changes, as the principle factors contributing to the feminisation of poverty. Structural theory, inspired by Wilson’s (1987) work and originating in earlier research concerned with group poverty amid affluence (Myrdal 1965; Ornati 1966), has enjoyed popularity in the recent Sociology literature, in large part, because it combines demographic and labour market explanations of poverty into a single model (Brady 2006). The structural theory of poverty, for example, posits that ‘macro-level labor market and demographic conditions’ largely determine individual poverty risks (Brady 2006: 154).

In explaining gendered poverty risks, structural theory argues that (changing) conditions which result in a larger number or proportion of females with vulnerable demographic or labour market characteristics results in a feminisation of poverty (Brady 2006; Brady and Kall 2008). One of the key structural demographic factors theorised to contribute to overall poverty (Bianchi 1999; Wu and Wolfe 2001) and to female poverty (Casper et al. 1994; Christopher et al. 2002), in particular, is single motherhood (Brady 2006). Structural theory therefore identifies the move

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<sup>14</sup> This work critiques Becker’s (1965) explanation for the gendered division of labour in the household and, in particular, challenges the direction of causality between the gender division of labour in the household and discrimination in wages in the labour market.

towards single motherhood in many countries, combined with the labour market disadvantages faced by these single mothers, as the key explanation for the feminisation of poverty. While functionalist and structural theory (somewhat paradoxically) both identify the change in household formation away from the nuclear (two-parent) family as a significant factor underlying the feminisation of poverty, the key difference is in the way that these two paradigms address the underlying processes which contribute to the 'problem'.

At one extreme, functionalists would advocate policies and interventions that encourage traditional, male-headed, two-parent households in order to curb the 'deviant' social processes that result in heightened vulnerability to poverty for women. Proponents of structural theory, in contrast, would be more inclined to acknowledge changes in household formation and advocate interventions to support female heads through child care support, greater legal support for child maintenance, housing subsidies, skills training and credit extension (Ypeij and Steenbeck 2001; Chant 2003b). However, one of the critiques of structural theory is that '...it only gets as far as incorporating 'women' into the analysis as a 'vulnerable group'. It does not fully recognise unequal gender relations as one of the key structures which determine how the economy functions' (Elson 1993: 242).

### **3.3 Welfare-regime theory**

The third, and most recent, addition to the theoretical work on the feminisation of poverty is the explanation, first formulated by the theory of welfare-state regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990), that social assistance programmes strongly influence gender differences in income poverty. Welfare state theory does not necessarily run counter to structural theory as Esping-Anderson (1999) points to a number of structural changes (e.g. structural unemployment, population ageing, and family instability) which have resulted in poverty risks that modern welfare regimes are not able to address adequately (Dewilde 2003; Brady 2006). Welfare state theory therefore suggests that it is not just factors such as female headship or single motherhood which increase the risk of poverty, but it is how social policy is able to support these family types which determines poverty outcomes (Brady 2006). In short, using a welfare regime framework to analyse gender poverty

differences requires the assumption that the trend towards single parenthood (and female headship) is entrenched and that the two factors which will determine how successfully single women will manage their independence, *ceteris paribus*, are the opportunities available in the labour market and the ability of social support structures to assist them. A situation where trends in female headship (or single motherhood) outpace both the opportunities for women in the labour market and increases in social support for households with children will result in a feminisation of poverty (McLanahan et al. 1992).

In response to a number of feminist critiques<sup>15</sup> of the original framework (cf. Trifiletti 1999; Arts and Gelissen 2002; Bamba 2004), the theory was later re-formulated (Esping-Andersen 1999) to include gender dimensions of welfare regimes. The revised theory, as empirically tested by Kim and Choi (2010), hypothesises that the structure and generosity of welfare programmes largely explain the differences in gendered poverty findings in developed countries. Similarly, power resources theory (see Huber and Stephens 2001), which builds on Keynesian notions of government intervention, indirectly also looks to the role of social assistance programmes in mediating gendered poverty trends. This theory argues that increased spending on public social safety nets reduces poverty and, since female-headed households are more likely to be poor without social assistance, social policy can directly reduce the gender poverty gap (Orloff 1996; Pressman 2002).

Recent feminist critiques of the welfare state literature, however, have argued that ‘mainstream’ work is often gender blind and does not consider the impact of social policy either on gender relations or on the well-being of women (Orloff 1993). Moreover, some work has theorised that welfare regimes may actually benefit men more than women (Orloff 1996; Christopher 2002; Misra 2002) and that, in particular, most modern welfare regimes are not able to support single mothers in sustaining independent (female-headed) households (Kilkey and Bradshaw 1999; Huber et al. 2004). On the whole, however, the role of social transfer programmes in either facilitating or negating the processes underpinning the feminisation of poverty have not been

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<sup>15</sup> These critiques, on the whole, argued that Esping-Andersen’s welfare classification system ignores the provision of family leave, child care and the evaluation of unpaid work in welfare entitlements.

fully explored in the literature (Brady and Kall 2008). Despite recent empirical support (Pressman 2002) for the role of social policy in reducing the gender poverty gap in developed countries, the investigation of the impact of social transfers remains one of the most active areas of research within the feminisation of poverty literature (see Brady and Kall 2008; Kim and Choi 2010).

#### **4. Empirical work**

This section now reviews the findings on why a gender gap in poverty exists and why it persists or widens even further. On the whole, very little work focuses expressly and only on human capital factors. Rather, empirical tests of the gender poverty gap have tended to focus more on the demographic, structural and welfare regime explanations for the feminisation of poverty. This section therefore briefly discusses the most common findings relevant to these three theoretical contributions.

##### **4.1 Support for demographic perspectives**

Since the 1970s, feminisation of poverty studies have been concerned with the rapid rise in female headship and single parenthood during the post-war era, and particularly from the 1960s onwards (Snyder et al. 2007). In simple mathematical terms, the interest in the demographic changes underpinning gender poverty trends is derived from the fact that, 'In the household measure approach, the aggregate gender difference in poverty is a function of two factors: the percentage of the population that is single and the difference in poverty rates among single men and women (McLanahan et al. 1989: 106)'. Not surprisingly then, a large body of scholarship (cf. McLanahan et al. 1989; Smith and Ward 1989) attributes the growing gender poverty gap (in the 1970s and 1980s) to the dissolution of the traditional nuclear family, single motherhood and the formation of independent households without adult males (i.e. female-headed households).

One of the earlier proponents of demographic and household change as the primary factor contributing to a feminisation of poverty, Pressman (1988), showed that the increase in female-



headed households coupled with the persistent level of poverty in these households (concurrent with dramatic decreases in poverty among male-headed households) contributed to the growing gender poverty gap in the U.S. between 1950 and 1980. Similarly, Smith and Ward (1989) argue that the feminisation of poverty in the U.S. between 1940 and 1980 was due, almost entirely, to the advent of single adult households. They add that, in the 1940s and 1950s, the nuclear household predominated and differences in the earnings capacity of men and women therefore had no direct bearing on gender differences in poverty. Such a situation ended, however, with the rise in 'single sex headships' (i.e. households in which the head is the only adult) and single parenthood (Stallard et al. 1983; Smith and Ward 1989; Gimenez 1999).

In explaining the rise in female headship in the U.S., Pressman, along with a number of the other earlier studies (cf. McLanahan et al. 1989; Smith and Ward 1989; McLanahan and Kelly 1999) concluded that the main reason was a considerable rise in divorce rates after 1950. He also noted that, among female-headed households, the relative youth of female heads explains roughly half of the vulnerability to poverty faced by these households (Pressman 1988). For Pressman, then, there are three main reasons for the feminisation of poverty in the U.S.: rising divorce rates; the increasing ability of females to form their own households; and the age and racial profile of female heads. Racial differences are also important to Smith and Ward (1989) and they find that a rise in the average income of the poorest 'non-White' female-headed households over the period allowed a greater proportion of these households to live without a male breadwinner (i.e. in a traditional male-headed household).

McLanahan et al. (1989) also cite female headship, single motherhood and divorce as the most likely causes of the feminisation of poverty in the U.S., but they take their analysis further and offer several reasons why these processes should disadvantage women more than men. In doing so, the authors sought to build on a separate body of work which has explicitly examined the gendered effects of family dissolution on gendered access to resources (see for example Weiss 1984; Duncan and Hoffman 1985; Bane 1986). An *a priori* assumption based on the findings from this parallel literature is that the gender poverty gap is likely to be largest among young adults of child-rearing age since women tend to take on more responsibility for the care of

children and because single-parent households will not enjoy the same economies of scale (McLanahan et al. 1989). The authors then concluded, through a number of simulations, that the feminisation of poverty in the U.S. was due, not just to changes in household formation, but also to changes in parental obligations that accompanied the rise in female headship (McLanahan et al. 1989).

In addition to the age of female heads, the increasing responsibility for care-giving and the absence of household scale economies, there are several other factors that have been put forward to explain why female headship has contributed to the feminisation of poverty. Barrington and Conrad (1994), for example, looked at the feminisation of poverty and, in particular, the proliferation of female-headed households prior to 1959 in the U.S. and found a number of reasons for the feminisation of poverty in that period. They found that female-headed households had, on average, fewer adults and a greater number of children in 1960 than they did in 1940. At the same time, female headship increased because the level of income required to form a separate household fell, relative to the poverty line, over the time period.

## **4.2 Support for structural theory**

The greatest level of empirical support for an explanation of the feminisation of poverty is, by far, associated with a combination of demographic and labour market factors (i.e. structural theory). One of the key challenges of this work has been to explain how a feminisation of poverty could have occurred at the same time that women made important strides in the labour market and in access to education. While one possible explanation (Blau and Kahn 1997) is that the lagged effects of the affirmative action policies of the 1950s and 1960s were only reflected in the period during which the feminisation of poverty in the U.S. stopped or began to reverse (i.e. the mid-1980s), there is evidence that demographic and labour market trends combined to frustrate women's access to resources (relative to men) throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

For example, one of the early advocates of a structural theory of gender poverty differences, Pearce (1978), argued that the three main causes of the feminisation of poverty in the U.S. (from the 1950s to the 1970s) were: women's lower earnings, a lack of private child support, and

limited public assistance- particularly for single mothers. Similarly, Buvinic (1997), in explaining how women have become more disadvantaged relative to men in a period (the 1970s to the early 1990s) in which women increased their participation in the labour force and made important strides toward equality, quotes the 1995 Human Development Report in describing the period as 'a story of expanding capabilities and limited opportunities'. These expanding opportunities for women in the labour market, it is implied, have not been enough to offset persistently lower wages for women and the growing child-rearing responsibilities assigned to women in the wake of the rise in single parenthood (Peterson 1987; Fuchs 1988). In one estimate of the scope of the rise in care-giving responsibility, Smith (1984) documented that the number of women heading households with children doubled between 1970 and 1980. It is therefore not surprising that the 'significant improvement in women's labor market opportunities while the feminization of poverty was becoming so prevalent' is explained by lower wages of women and the fact that children still live with their mothers in one-parent families (particularly after divorce), thereby making poverty a far more likely event for women than for men (Smith and Ward 1989: 20-21).

In analysing further the link between demographic and labour market factors in explaining the persisting gender poverty gap in the U.S. (into the 1990s), McLanahan and Kelly (1999: 10) describe the situation as follows:

First, the wage growth that pushed poverty rates down benefited men more than women because they were more closely attached to the labor market. Second, changes in family structure hurt women more than men, mainly because women bore more responsibility for children in the growing number of unmarried households. Women's wages have slowly gained on men's over the last fifteen years, stopping the increased feminization of poverty. It is important to note, however, that women are still much more likely – about 50% more likely overall – than men to live in poverty.

In identifying the broad factors driving the feminisation of poverty, they highlight: changes in the family, changes in the economy, and changes in the welfare state. The main changes in the family include: a decline in marital rates, an increase in divorce, an increase in single parent households, an increase in the birth rate among single women, the increase in 'non-family' and single person households (including increases in the numbers of young people and the elderly that live alone), and increases in life expectancy-particularly among women (McLanahan and Kelly 1999). As the

authors argue, ‘since women generally earn less than men for various reasons, single women have a higher risk of being poor than single men. In short, if nothing else changes, declines in marriage will lead to increases in the sex poverty ratio’.

Some work has also tended to focus on the specific types of labour market disadvantages faced by women, single mothers and female heads. Pressman (1998) citing previous work (Northrop 1990), notes that female heads (and women more generally) are more likely to be employed in low paying sectors of the economy and that the absence of a second earner in female-headed households was a key driver of the feminisation of poverty in the U.S. in the 1970s (Pearce and McAdoo 1981; Smith 1984; Fuchs 1988; Card and Blank 2008). Similarly, Smith (1984) suggests that there were two main developments contributing to the feminisation of poverty in the U.S.: the fact that an increasing proportion of women relied solely on their own earnings or on welfare/social support and that labour market gains mask the fact that the new jobs that became available in the period were low paying and were concentrated in the services sector (a low-paying sector that began to absorb more labour market entrants than other sectors in the 1970s and 1980s).

In explaining cross-country variations in gender poverty differences, there is also strong support for the role of labour market inequalities. In considering the differences in the gender poverty gaps in France, the U.S., Canada and Australia, Nichols-Casebolt and Krysik (1995) found that, in addition to the employment status (i.e. whether employed or unemployed) of single mothers significantly reducing the risks of poverty, the ‘independent poverty-reducing impact’ of employment was greater than the effect of child support or social assistance in all four countries. Similarly, Solera (1998) found that the employment status of single mothers in the U.K., Italy and Sweden explains almost all of the cross-country variation in the economic well-being of single mother households. In examining the link between changes in household composition and labour market biases, data from a number of countries that participate in the Luxembourg Income Study have shown that, while gender poverty gap ratios (i.e. the ratio of women’s poverty to men’s poverty) differ considerably between the countries that were surveyed, there is evidence to suggest that pressure from rapid changes in household formation (e.g. an increase in female

headship) have largely outstripped potential gains for women from labour market opportunities (Casper et al. 1994). In explaining the likely causes of gendered vulnerability to poverty in countries where women were more likely to be poor than men (e.g. the U.S, Australia, West Germany, Canada and the U.K.), the authors found that the most important factors accounting for gender differences in poverty are gender differences in employment status, single parenthood and marital status. In short, single women in developed countries are poorer than single men because single women are more likely to live with children, women generally earn less than men, and in some countries men actually gain more from government transfers (Christopher et al. 2002). Pressman (1998, see page 284), however, warns that there is no single explanation for the feminisation of poverty and that cross-country comparisons reveal that a host of differences between countries yield a number of different explanations.

### **4.3 Support for welfare state theory**

Finally, another more recent explanation for gender differences in poverty argues that the ways in which social welfare programmes have responded to family, demographic and labour market changes over the past several decades largely determine whether a country or region has experienced a feminisation of poverty. Much of the empirical research which has considered the role of welfare regimes in contributing to or mitigating the process of a feminisation of poverty has relied on cross-country comparisons. Such work has, on the whole, demonstrated that public assistance in Nordic countries like Sweden has helped reduce (or even reverse) the gender poverty gap while the welfare regimes typical of Anglophone countries (e.g. the U.S., the U.K., Canada and Australia) have generally failed to close the gender poverty gap (Sorenson 1990; Casper et al. 1994; Christopher et al. 2002; Kim and Choi 2010).

For example, recent work using cross-country LIS data (Gornick and Jäntti 2010) has shown that, on the whole, the poverty profiles of countries that share many similarities differ markedly and that much of the variation in poverty levels, the depth of poverty and the most affected groups is due, in large part, to differences in social policy. Gornick and Jäntti (2010: 2) suggest further that, while the underlying causes of gender differences in poverty are ‘complex, overlapping, and

cumulative', the structure and generosity of social welfare regimes matter in terms of the gender poverty gap. In some countries (e.g. the U.S.), for example, social transfers targeted towards households with children are somewhat meagre compared with those targeted towards other groups (e.g. the elderly, the unemployed and young working-age adults). In these contexts, households with children are often more likely to be poor and, since such households often contain women (without male partners), female-headed households experience higher levels of poverty (Gornick and Jäntti 2010). On the whole, the association between labour market attachment, single parenthood and poverty is supported by a large and growing body of work (Sorenson 1990; Kilkey and Bradshaw 1999; Beaujot and Liu 2002; Orsini et al. 2003; Huber et al. 2004; Misra et al. 2007; Gornick and Jäntti 2010) which shows the poverty-reducing effects of social transfers for single mothers, in particular.

In order to test the hypothesis that differences in social transfer programmes explain the cross-country variation in the gender poverty gap, Gornick and Jäntti (2010) considered pre- and post-transfer poverty estimates across 26 middle and high income countries. In comparing these two poverty estimates (i.e. based on pre- and post-transfer income), the gender poverty gap either narrows or reverses in all 26 countries after transfer income is considered. Moreover, it is in the Nordic countries, where transfer income is more generous and better targeted to households with children, that the reverses in gender poverty differences occur after transfer income is included in the poverty estimates (i.e. women are actually less likely to be poor than men when poverty is estimated from post-transfer income) (Gornick and Jäntti 2010).

In other recent work examining gender poverty differences across countries and by the type of welfare regime, Kim and Choi (2010) employ a welfare regime approach to explore the feminisation of poverty across 12 welfare states *over time*. They find that, on the whole, regime types which they label as 'conservative welfare states' with social insurance schemes (e.g. Austria, France, Germany and Italy) have made more gains in reducing the feminisation of poverty than 'liberal welfare' (or less generous regimes) countries (e.g. the U.S., the U.K., Canada and Australia). Nordic welfare states, once again, were found to have outperformed the other regime types through 'social policy institutions' that are more gender-sensitive. Not

surprisingly, the Nordic regimes, as a group, were also far more successful in reducing levels of poverty in single-parent households relative to the liberal and conservative regimes (Kim and Choi 2010).

The links between social spending, welfare programmes and gender poverty differences, however, are not always clear. McLanahan et al. (1992) were the first to use Esping-Anderson's (1990) typology to examine differences in the gender poverty gap across welfare regimes. They used a slightly different grouping of regime types from Kim and Choi (2010) to compare gender poverty differences across what they call 'corporatist welfare' states (Germany, Holland and Italy), 'liberal welfare' countries (the U.S., the U.K., Canada and Australia) and 'social democratic' regimes (Sweden). Their findings indicate that female poverty is markedly higher in the liberal welfare countries but that there is no evidence to suggest that the corporatist welfare regimes have successfully reduced poverty among women. According to McLanahan et al. (1992), then, the welfare regime framework does not appear to explain cross-country differences in the gender poverty gap. The authors warn, however, that cross-country differences within welfare state typologies compromise the ability to generalise about the role of these broad regime types in either mitigating or re-enforcing gender income inequality (Esping-Andersen 1990).

More recently, Wiepking and Maas (2004; Wiepking and Maas 2005) used LIS data from 22 countries to investigate whether cross-country differences in the gender poverty gap are due to 'compositional' differences in the respective populations or from macro level differences between the countries. The authors conclude that country level context (macro) effects are likely to explain slightly more of the differences in gender-poverty gaps. In particular, they found that gender poverty gap is smaller in countries where economic growth is faster, there is an enduring influence from communist or socialist political parties, and women are more 'emancipated' (Wiepking and Maas 2005). Interestingly they find that, while, social welfare programmes reduce poverty levels overall, there is not necessarily a gender 'effect'. Brady and Kall (2008) also report mixed findings with regard to cross country data (representing 18 'affluent' Western democracies) and gender poverty differences. They find that the main correlates of female poverty in their study are: social transfer income, children in female single-parent households,

female labour force participation, public spending on health, and economic growth. In explaining the differences in sex poverty ratios across different countries, however, the most important variables are: sex ratios of the elderly, children in single mother households and female labour force participation (Brady and Kall 2008).

On balance, there is therefore a strong argument that social welfare policy is one of several intersecting factors underpinning women's greater relative risk of living in poverty. As Moghadam (1998: 227) argues,

The relationship between poverty and gender is mediated by such variables as class, state policy (e.g. specific economic and social policies, as well as the legal framework), and demographic change (e.g. fertility rates, household size, female labour force participation, and female-headed households). In particular, the feminization of poverty is intimately linked to the economic and social policy regime of any given society, and to trends in female employment, wages, and household headship.

In developed country contexts, evidence on the role of social welfare programmes in mitigating gender poverty differences has often been complicated by the use of different typologies of welfare-regimes as well as significant differences in gender poverty gaps between countries within the same welfare regime type. On the whole, however, the available evidence suggests that, over and above the cultural, demographic, economic, macro, and human capital drivers of gender poverty differences, the responses of different countries (through social policy in particular) to these factors have had some effect on the gender poverty gap. The extent to which the structure and generosity of welfare programmes can play a role in reducing the poverty differences between males and females (and between female- and male-headed households), however, remains open for debate.



## **5. Concluding remarks**

This chapter has demonstrated that concerns with rising divorces rates and the dramatic rise in the number and proportion of single-parent families in many developed countries during the second half of the twentieth century have often been the key motivations for empirical investigations of the feminisation of income poverty. The available evidence for the growing difference in poverty rates between males and females, however, is somewhat limited in terms of both geography and time. At best, it can be suggested that there is some consensus that females represented an increasing share of the poor throughout the 1970s and 1980s in the U.S. and possibly in Canada as well. One of the key difficulties in documenting the feminisation of poverty, however, has been the inconsistency with which the term has been applied and, in particular, the blurring of the analytical boundaries between poverty rates among females and among female-headed households. As will be argued throughout this thesis, these are two distinct groups and are, in fact, measuring two different, albeit related, dimensions of gendered vulnerability to income poverty.

There is greater consensus in the literature, however, on the likely reasons for the gender poverty gap observed in the U.S. and, to a lesser extent, in several other developed countries. Theoretical work, for the most part, has moved beyond purely neoclassical explanations for gender differences in poverty and has, more recently, focused on the nexus between demographic changes in household composition and gender disadvantages in the labour market. One of the more recent theoretical approaches to explaining the feminisation of poverty has also considered the additional role of welfare/social policy in meeting the needs of changing household types and, in particular, the challenges faced by single mothers.

Empirical work which estimates gender differences in poverty has highlighted, in particular, the role of single motherhood, women's weaker attachment to the labour market and their lower wages, reduced access to male earnings, greater responsibility for household maintenance and children, and limited private support for child care. More recently, work has also begun to

explore the role of social policy/welfare programmes in mediating the risk between single motherhood and vulnerability to poverty. In this regard, cross-country comparisons have suggested that social policy matters in terms of gender poverty differences, but the existing evidence differs as to how and to what extent social welfare programmes impact on gender poverty differences.

On the whole, the existing scholarship has demonstrated that, in most developed countries, women and individuals living in female-headed households are more likely to be poor than men (or individuals living in male-headed households). There is also some evidence to suggest that, in some contexts and at various points in time, the difference in income poverty levels between males and females has widened. The reasons for this widening are likely to be complex and multi-faceted and are, moreover, likely to differ by country. As Pressman (2002a) has argued, there is not one single explanation for the feminisation of poverty and a combination of human capital, demographic, labour market and social policy factors are likely to affect the gender poverty gap.

The next chapter builds on the review of the gender and poverty literature by examining the contribution of the scholarship from developing countries. As the chapter will demonstrate, the literature from developing countries has an even stronger focus on female-headed households and offers a number of additional explanations for the relative deprivation of this household type. Moreover, the developing country literature also introduces a sharper analysis of household headship as a potential analytical category and challenges some of the existing assumptions about female headship that originate from research in developed countries.

## **Chapter Three- Review of the Feminisation of Poverty Literature from Developing Countries: Female-Headed Households and Headship**

### **1. Introduction**

In developing countries, the concept of a feminisation of poverty has received renewed enthusiasm in the wake of the recognised gender-specific impacts of structural adjustment programmes and the increase in the proportion of female-headed households in many developing countries and regions (Moghadam 1998; Chant 2003c; Moghadam 2005). One of the key features of the gender and poverty literature from developing countries is the focus on headship and the over-representation of female-headed households among the poor rather than on the relative changes in women's access to economic resources over time (i.e. a feminisation of poverty) (Davids and Driel 2001; Asgary and Pagan 2004; Chant 2007a; Medeiros and Costa 2007). Indeed, Davids and Driel (2001) argue that such emphasis has been placed on the role of female headship in the feminisation of poverty literature that studies in the developing world have adapted the term to refer specifically to the proportion of poor individuals who live in female-headed households.

Just as studies based in North America and the U.K. dominate the feminisation of poverty literature in developed countries, work examining the link between gender (female headship) and poverty in developing countries exhibits a strong bias towards Latin American countries due, in large part, to the relative abundance of data (Chant 2006a; Chant 2006b). Since one of the key differences between the feminisation of poverty literature in developed and developing countries is the (over)emphasis on poverty differences between female- and male-headed households, a key contribution from work in Latin America, and to some extent other developing countries as well, is an open questioning of whether female headship is an appropriate tool for investigating gender inequality in access to resources (Chant 1997; Marcoux 1998; Chant 2001; Molyneux 2002; Momsen 2002; Chant 2003b; Chant 2003c; Chant 2003a; Chant 2006a; Chant 2006b; Molyneux 2006; Chant 2007b). As a result of this particular line of enquiry, there is now a large (and growing) body of scholarship which explicitly examines the concept of headship in order to evaluate the merit of headship-based analyses of household poverty. Accordingly, it is now

considered good practice to examine the meaning of self-reported headship alongside an analysis of poverty differentials between female- and male-headed households.

The chapter is structured as follows. The following section reviews the relevant literature from developing countries and regions and focuses, in particular, on female headship and its relationship with changes in poverty levels. The section also highlights some of the main reasons why female-headed households may be more vulnerable to poverty relative to male-headed households. The literature which unpacks the concept of headship is discussed in Section Three. Section Four offers some concluding remarks on the treatment of the feminisation of poverty in developing countries and on the role of headship in this body of scholarship.

## **2. Feminisation of poverty in developing countries**

Somewhat surprisingly, there has only been one comprehensive feminisation of poverty study carried out across a range of countries in the developing world. In relatively recent work, Medeiros and Costa (2007) tested the hypothesis in eight Latin American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Venezuela) and found no instance of an increasing differential in male and female poverty during the 1990s in any of these countries. The only evidence of changes in ‘gendered’ poverty trends was by the gender of the household head. In particular, in Argentina and Mexico, the difference in poverty levels between female- and male-headed households widened over the decade (Medeiros and Costa 2007). Evidence for a feminisation of poverty in developing countries is, therefore, extremely limited. The remaining body of work which has examined gender and poverty in developing countries (or the ‘Global South’) has been concerned, instead, with differences in poverty levels between female- and male-headed households at a particular point in time (i.e. no measure of changing differentials) (Chant 2007b). As with the work conducted in developed countries, much of this scholarship uses the term ‘feminisation of poverty’ to describe research results (e.g. higher poverty risks associated with female headship) but is, in fact, only documenting higher poverty levels among female-headed households relative to male-headed households at a single point in time.

The clear departure from the established definition of a feminisation of poverty notwithstanding, this section reviews the evidence demonstrating greater poverty risks faced by female-headed households in developing countries. The interest in poverty differentials according to the gender of the household head, rather than changes over time between men and women, is the likely result of several factors. First, data constraints have impeded efforts to examine gendered poverty trends (or even poverty trends more generally). Marcoux, writing in 1998, noted that only 44 developing countries had income and expenditure data for at least two points in time and only a third of developing countries had recent data from a nationally representative survey. Moreover, the lack of reliable gender disaggregated household data in many developing countries has meant that the household is the only unit of analysis available to researchers (Marcoux 1998; Moghadam 1998; Razavi 1999b; BRIDGE 2001; Rodenberg 2004; Chant 2006a; Chant 2007b; Chant 2008b). Second, despite the fact that the term ‘female-head’ (or headship more generally) is increasingly questioned by researchers, it still maintains a strong policy relevance. Indeed, policy interest in the relative well-being of female-headed households remains undiminished in many countries primarily due to the desirability of targeting groups at risk of poverty on efficiency grounds (Buvinic and Gupta 1997; O’laughlin 1998; Chant 2003b; Chant 2007b).

Third, the rapid rise in female headship, coupled with widespread changes in marital trends, female migration, household composition, female labour force participation and the gendered impacts of structural adjustment programmes have meant that female-headed households have become a focus of interest in and of themselves in many developing countries (Moghadam 2005). The increase in the proportion of households headed by a female has not occurred evenly throughout the developing world, however, but has been more pronounced in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa (Buvinic and Gupta 1997; Medeiros and Costa 2007). In these two regions, for example, Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data suggest that the majority of the countries have documented an increase in female headship (Barros et al. 1997; BRIDGE 2001). Accordingly, much of the work that investigates poverty differentials between female- and male-headed households comes from these two regions.

## **2.1 Evidence for greater poverty risks among female-headed households**

Individual studies in which an association between income poverty and female headship has been documented, can be found in a number of diverse regions, including *inter alia*: the Middle East (e.g. Egypt (Bibars 2001), Iran (International Labour Organisation 2004) and Turkey (Guncavdi and Selim 2009)); Central and Latin America (e.g. Costa Rica (Chant 2009) and urban parts of Brazil (Barros et al. 1993; Barros et al. 1997)); sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. South Africa (Ray 2000; Chen et al. 2005; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008; Dungumaro 2008), Kenya (Kennedy and Haddad 1994), Tanzania (Katapa 2006), Zimbabwe (Horrell and Krishnan 2007), Botswana (Kossoudji and Mueller 1983; O'laughlin 1998), Ghana (Quisumbing et al. 2001) and Mozambique (Tvedten et al. 2008)); the sub-continent (e.g. India (Panda 1997; Meenakshi et al. 2000; Gangopadhyay and Wadhwa 2003) and Bangladesh (Quisumbing et al. 2001)); the Caribbean (e.g. Jamaica (Louat et al. 1993; Handa 1994; Louat et al. 1997)); and in some of the transition economies of the former Soviet Union (Lanjouw et al. 1998).

Perhaps the strongest evidence in support of the claim that female-headed households are more likely to be poor comes from a frequently cited review of the literature conducted by Buvinic and Gupta (1997). They found that, out of 61 studies investigating the association between poverty and female-headed households in developing countries, 38 found female-headed households over-represented among poor households; 15 found that poverty was associated with certain types of female-headed households or that, with certain types of poverty measures, a statistically significant relationship was found; and only eight identified no association between female headship and poverty (summarised in Buvinic 1997; Buvinic and Gupta 1997). In a similar, but more recent, review of the World Bank's poverty assessments, the poverty headcount was higher for female-headed households than for male-headed households in 25 out of 58 countries. In a further ten countries, certain types of female-headed households were poorer than male-headed households (Lampietti and Stalker 2000).

In terms of the magnitude of poverty differences between female- and male-headed households, the evidence suggests that there is a large degree of variability (particularly by region).<sup>16</sup> The difference in poverty rates between female- and male-headed households (as shown in Table 2) appears to be particularly large on the sub-continent (where female-headed households in Bangladesh and India are more than twice as likely to be poor relative to male-headed households). In Turkey, however, the difference between male- and female-headed households is only about 6.4 percentage points. In Central America and the Caribbean, the difference in vulnerability to poverty between these two broad household types ranges from about two percentage points in Jamaica to roughly seven percentage points in Costa Rica, according to two of the most widely cited studies in the region (Louat et al. 1997; Gindling and Oviedo 2008). In sub-Saharan Africa, there is also substantial variability in household poverty differences, but these cross-country differences tend to be more modest than those reported on the sub-continent. For example, as demonstrated in the last set of data rows in Table 2, the outliers in the sub-Saharan Africa region are Madagascar (Quisumbing et al. 2001) and South Africa (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008) where the average difference in poverty rates between female- and male-headed households are about 17.5 percentage points and 22 percentage points, respectively. In the remaining countries, the difference ranges from only about five percentage points in Botswana to roughly 11 percentage points in Mozambique.

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<sup>16</sup> A degree of caution is required when making cross-country comparisons of poverty estimates. Differences in *inter alia* the respective poverty lines selected, data sources, measures of consumption (i.e. income or expenditure), and the unit of measurement (i.e. per capita or per adult equivalent income) complicate direct comparisons of poverty between different settings. The estimates present in Table 2 are merely demonstrating the magnitude of poverty differences between female- and male-headed households that are reported in the available literature.

**Table 2 Differences in poverty headcount rates between male- and female-headed households, by region**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Headcount rate for FHHs</b>	<b>Headcount rate for MHHs</b>
<b>Asia/Middle East</b>			
Quisumbing et al., 2001	Indonesia	45.0	31.6
Quisumbing et al., 2001	Bangladesh	68.2	27.0
Panda, 1997	India	78.0	32.0
Guncavdi & Selim, 2009	Turkey	21.6	15.2
<b>Central America/Caribbean</b>			
Gindling & Oviedo, 2008	Costa Rica	24.0	16.7
Louat et al., 1997	Jamaica	11.0	9.0
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>			
Tvedten et al., 2008	Mozambique	62.0	51.0
Quisumbing et al., 2001	Botswana	35.3	30.2
Quisumbing et al., 2001	Ethiopia	38.1	32.8
Quisumbing et al., 2001	Ghana	37.9	30.7
Quisumbing et al., 2001	Madagascar	48.1	30.6
Bhorat & van der Westhuizen, 2008	South Africa	60.6	38.3

Note: The list of studies presented in the table is not exhaustive. Rather, the table includes some of the key studies conducted in developing countries for which absolute poverty headcount rates have been provided and in which female-headed households were more likely to be poor than male-headed households.

Evidence for the widespread association between female headship and poverty in many countries and regions is, therefore, not conclusive but based on the fact that, on average, female-headed households are poorer than male-headed households in a number of diverse contexts. On the whole, however, the strongest claim that can be made, based on the existing literature, is that female-headed households are significantly more likely to be poor than male-headed households in many (but certainly not all) developing countries.

## **2.2 Factors associated with poverty and female headship**

The factors associated with greater poverty risks among female-headed households are highly variable and complex. On the whole, however, the literature emphasises that female-headed households tend to be poorer due to greater dependency burdens (Clark 1984; Barros et al. 1993), economic gaps, and ‘greater constraints on the time and mobility of female heads’ (Moghadam 1998: 232). The development literature therefore depicts female-headed households as facing a



‘triple burden’ which includes: the head being the sole earner of the household, the earner being female and therefore facing labour market disadvantages, as well as time constraints because of responsibilities for managing the household and earning income (Fuwa 2000a: 128). In a similar vein to the literature from developed countries, the view that female-headed households may be particularly vulnerable to poverty stems largely from the notion that the general disadvantage that women face (e.g. in the labour market) is exacerbated by single motherhood or residence in a household in which there are no adult males (Chant 2007b).

Evidence for this general set of disadvantages faced by female-headed households is available from a wide variety of contexts. Chant (2008a; Chant 2009) in explaining the persistent poverty gap between female- and male-headed households in Costa Rica cites as reasons: less income generating ability, the greater age of female heads, a greater dependence on less stable income sources from outside the household, and lower levels of education among female heads. In the Costa Rican context, Chant (2009) found that a key part of the explanation for the relative poverty of female heads was their link to the labour market. The gender wage gap is roughly 35 per cent in Costa Rica and female heads only earn about half as much as male heads on average. The age of female heads in Costa Rica is also linked to their relative deprivation. The proportion of female heads over the age of 70 increased significantly between 1990 and 2000 (Chant 2009). Since older female heads are particularly disadvantaged, relative to older male heads, in terms of education and access to work-related pensions, the older age of these heads is likely to be a factor in the poverty differences between female- and male-headed households in Costa Rica. Female-headed households with a younger head were also at higher risk of poverty (relative to male-headed households), however, due to the higher dependency ratios associated with child-rearing (Chant 2009).

Buvinic and Gupta (1997) suggest further that there is an independent effect of female headship and poverty in developing countries that is evident over and above the individual characteristics of the head and household level characteristics. This effect is likely derived from time constraints associated with household management and labour market time, inequality in access to resources (e.g. income) for female heads based specifically on their gender, and a greater tendency towards

early and single parenthood in many contexts. Buvinic (1997) also argues that broad factors such as declining fertility, increasing access to education for women and the economic hardships experienced in many developing countries during the 1980s and 1990s have ‘pushed’ many women into low paid work and informal sectors of the labour market. More specifically, Moghadam (1998) suggests that the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s, together with widespread structural adjustment programmes in the same period (see Tanski 1994; Munoz 1998), may have forced many women into types of work (e.g. informal and insecure) in which the wages that they earned were not enough to lift their households out of poverty (Moghadam 1998; Moghadam 1999). Indeed, there is a relatively large body of evidence to suggest that the short term costs of structural adjustment programmes (and budget cuts more generally) may have been borne disproportionately by women and female-headed households (Haddad et al. 1995; Khan 1999; Elson and Catagay 2000; Elson 2004; Thurlow 2006; Pande 2007; Guncavdi and Selim 2009).<sup>17</sup> As a result, female-headed or female-maintained households are more likely to be poor than other household types (Buvinic 1997).

On top of the hardships imposed by economic crises and the disadvantages they share with female-headed households in developed countries (e.g. high dependency ratios and combined labour market and domestic burdens), female-headed households in developing contexts often face a unique set of challenges based on cultural, political and legal disadvantages in access to

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<sup>17</sup> Some of the main reasons why women and female-headed households may be adversely affected by structural adjustment programmes (relative to men and male-headed households), as cited in the literature, include: public sector employment cutbacks may have a greater impact on the types of jobs in which women are more likely to be concentrated; increases in cash crop prices may increase the contribution of unpaid time towards household production for women; the introduction of user fees, particularly for education, increases the likelihood of removing girls from school (relative to boys); women are more likely to be responsible for the provision of household services (e.g. water collection and health care) that are cut or reduced by adjustment policies; and women’s greater participation in non-market labour means that they are less flexible than men with respect to the reallocation of their productive time in order to pursue new market opportunities (for more detailed discussions, see: Haddad et al., 1995; Khan, 1999; Thurlow, 2006; Pande, 2007; Guncavdi & Selim, 2009). Elson (2004) also argues that government expenditure reductions often impact disproportionately on programmes that benefit women while the restructuring of taxation systems often increases women’s share of the tax contribution.

resources, capabilities and entitlements (Moghadam 1997; Aliber 2003; Chant 2007b; Klasen et al. 2010). The role of cultural norms and legal and political barriers (i.e. the non-economic factors) in constraining women in their social and economic mobility is, for example, one of the key contributions from the developing country literature towards the feminisation of poverty debate (Kabeer 1997; Kabeer 2003; Chant 2007b). Indeed, as Klasen et al. (2010) argue, female-headed households in developing countries face additional poverty risks over and above those faced by female-headed households in developed countries. These risks often include: disadvantages in access to land, property, credit, and labour market earnings as well as social and cultural stigma. Access to land is a particularly important protector against poverty in many developing countries and there is a variety of evidence documenting a widespread gender bias in land and property rights (Klasen et al. 2010). Moreover, even where women have access to land, there is evidence to suggest that female-headed households are considerably less likely to have access to extension services and new and productive technologies (World Bank 2001; Chirwa 2005; Klasen et al. 2010).

Related to the difficulties in access to land and other entitlements, declines in family support and social networks due to the stigma of single motherhood are significant factors in the vulnerability to poverty among female heads in developing countries (González de la Rocha 1999; Chant 2003b; Chant 2007a). Some of the stigma and accordant social disadvantage associated with female headship is derived from the greater social and legal legitimacy afforded to male-headed households (Gangopadhyay and Wadhwa 2003; Chant 2007a). A relative lack of social legitimacy, for example, may limit *inter alia* access to land or property, formal employment, or the types of informal income-generating activities (e.g. property rental) that may depend on property ownership (Kabeer 2003; Chant 2007a). In situations where female-headed households consist of relatively more females than males, their disadvantage in terms of assets, labour market earnings and even access to rental properties may be exacerbated (Chant 2007b).

Evidence of this unequal access to entitlements is borne out in much of the scholarship on female-headed households in developing countries. In the Botswana context, the relative vulnerability to poverty of female-headed households has been ascribed to entrenched patriarchal

norms and legal frameworks which limit female access to land ownership, certain occupational categories and sectors, and productive asset ownership (particularly livestock) (Kossoudji and Mueller 1983). Similarly, in Ghana, the vulnerability to poverty faced by female-headed households is explained by gender discriminatory practices which limit access to land, credit and education (Lloyd and Gage-Brandon 1993).

Over and above these disadvantages, female heads who are also single mothers are likely to face even greater poverty risks. In developing countries the rise in female headship and single motherhood has translated into increased poverty risks due to the relative lack of social support for this particular type of household as well as the lack of legal enforcement for financial support from absent fathers (Chant 2001; Budowski and Rosero Bixby 2003; Chant 2003b). Chant (2007a: 18) while outlining the vulnerability to poverty among single mothers in developing country contexts argues that,

On the other hand, women's 'reproduction tax' impinges on economic productivity, with lone mothers often confined to part-time, flexible, and/or home-based occupations. This is compounded by women's disadvantage in respect of education and training, their lower average earnings, gender discrimination in the workplace, and the fact that social and labour policies rarely provide more than minimal support to parents.

In short, these mothers are less likely to receive support from absent partners than in developed countries and are particularly likely to face stigma and social isolation associated with their status as single mothers (Chant 2007b). In terms of lone motherhood (i.e. one common type of female-headed household), the burden of child-rearing means that the link to the labour market is less secure and low-paying and this is often exacerbated by discrimination in the work place, lower levels of education, and limited state support for carers and mothers (Rogers 1995; Elson 1999; Folbre 2006; Chant 2007b).

More encouragingly, just as the data from developed countries (primarily from the LIS based gender studies) have demonstrated how social support for single mothers, in particular, may improve the relative well-being of female-headed households, there is evidence to suggest that legal support for women in developing countries may do the same. Costa Rica is one of the key

examples put forward in the recent literature due to its promotion of gender equality and anti-discrimination legislation, legal support for single mothers (e.g. Law for the Protection of Adolescent Mothers, Comprehensive Training Programme for Female Household Heads in Conditions of Poverty, and the Law for Responsible Paternity), and gender sensitive labour protection (Chant 2009). As a result, the gender wage gap actually decreased at the same time that structural adjustment policies were implemented in Costa Rica (Moghadam 1998; Chant 2008a; Chant 2009).

On the whole, then, the factors most often associated with the disproportionate representation of female-headed households among the poor in developing countries typically include: higher dependency ratios, lower average earnings of main earners (Barros et al. 1993); the older age of female heads (Gomes da Conceição 2003; Finley 2007); greater incidence of widowhood (Horrell and Krishnan 2007), fewer assets; less access to high paying employment (Elson 1999), over-representation of female heads in informal work (Brown 2000; Chen et al. 2004; Chant 2008a), longer hours of domestic labour, the burden of combining household responsibilities (e.g. the 'reproductive tax') with labour market participation (Palmer 1992; Panda 1997; Fuwa 2000b; Kabeer 2003), discrimination in access to employment and social grants, weaker property rights (McFerson 2010) and, in some cases, declines in family support and social networks (Buvinic and Gupta 1997). Moreover, in developing countries, there is even less support for female-headed households in the form of welfare or social assistance than in developed countries, particularly for single mothers (Bibars 2001; Chant 2007a; Chant 2007b).

The large body of scholarship identifying the unique set of poverty risks faced female-headed households in developing countries, notwithstanding, vulnerability to poverty varies considerably by context. Social policy and the political environment, together with women's access to employment (Elson 1999), education and entitlements (Robertson 1998), for example, are factors identified in the literature which are likely to explain the variation in women's socio-economic status across different countries (Clark 1984; Buvinic and Gupta 1997; Moghadam 2005). Moreover, it is often the case that risk factors for poverty in one context have no impact in another. Marital status as a predictor of poverty among female-headed households, for example,

tends to differ greatly across contexts. In some countries pre-marital childbearing is a poverty risk whereas in others the main risk is derived from widowhood (Buvinic and Gupta 1997). Factors beyond household type and marital status also impact on the vulnerability to poverty among female-headed households. In some contexts, for example, female-headed households that are dependent on remittances are more likely to be poor (Kossoudji and Mueller 1983), while in other contexts, these households are actually better off (Kennedy and Peters 1992; Buvinic and Gupta 1997).

### **2.3 Evidence against the link between poverty and female headship**

The accepted wisdom that female-headed households are more vulnerable to poverty for the reasons outlined in the previous section, notwithstanding, there is also some evidence to suggest that female-headed households are at no greater risk of poverty than male-headed households (Lipton and Ravallion 1995). Chant (2003b; Chant 2006a) notes that a series of regional and national studies, particularly in Latin America, have not uncovered any systematic evidence of either the greater vulnerability of female-headed households to poverty<sup>18</sup> (Lloyd and Gage-Brandon 1993; Kennedy 1994; Lloyd 1998; Whitehead and Lockwood 1999; Miwa 2005; Smajic and Ermacora 2007; Villarreal and Shin 2008) or the increase in female poverty shares alongside increases in female headship (Varley 1996; Chant 2001). Moreover, evidence from Latin America as a whole suggests that less than half of all female-headed households are poor and that the recent increases in the incidence of female headship in the region are due largely to the growth in *non-poor* female-headed households (Arriagada 1998).

Several recent reviews of the gender and poverty literature have also cast doubt on the established link between vulnerability to poverty and gender or female headship. The first of these collected sex-disaggregated data in 17 Latin American countries and demonstrated that in ten of these countries, urban women were not significantly more likely to be poor than urban men and that, in

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<sup>18</sup>For other examples, see: Moghadam, 1997; Dreze & Srinivasan, 1998; Marcoux, 1998; Fuwa, 2000b; González de la Rocha, 2001; Quisumbing et al., 2001; Chant, 2007a; Chant, 2007b; Horrell & Krishnan, 2007; Medeiros & Costa, 2007; Klasen et al., 2010.

some cases, were actually less likely to be poor (Rodenberg 2004; Chant 2006b; Chant 2008b).<sup>19</sup> Another key study by Quisumbing and colleagues (1995; Quisumbing et al. 2001) analysed data from ten developing countries in three different regions (sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Central America) and observed that the incidence of female-headed households below the poverty line varied significantly (even within regions) and that in eight of the countries, poverty measures were higher among female-headed households than among male-headed households. Using stochastic dominance analysis, however, the authors suggest that there is insufficient evidence to claim that female-headed households are systematically poorer in the countries investigated (Quisumbing et al. 1995; Quisumbing et al. 2001). They conclude, in fact, that while poverty rates are higher for females and female-headed households (relative to males and male-headed households) overall, the difference is only significant in a fifth to a third of the countries reviewed (Quisumbing et al. 2001). Similarly, a number of regional studies that have used World Bank data to analyse poverty among female-headed households after adjusting for household size have tended to find no systematic relationship between female headship and poverty (Quisumbing et al. 2001; Chen et al. 2004; Chant 2007b).

Leading on from this, evidence (reviewed in Chant 2003b) from a wide range of countries and contexts has suggested that female-headed households are just as likely to be represented among the middle and upper income groups as among the poor (cf. Kumari 1989; Lewis 1993; Geldstein 1994 ; Rogers 1995; Appleton 1996; Gafar 1998; González de la Rocha 1999; Willis 2000; Chant 2007b). Some work (Varley 1996; Chant 2003b) has also demonstrated that female-headed households are not necessarily disadvantaged in terms of access to earned income. In developing countries, in particular, there is evidence to suggest that the female head's share of total household income may be decreasing as access to income from other earners in the household increases (Chant 2003a; Chant 2003b; Chant 2007b). Other evidence shows that the ratio of workers to total household size may even be greater in female-headed households than in male-headed households in societies where patriarchal norms limit the labour market opportunities for

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<sup>19</sup> The same study (using data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean- ECLAC) suggested that while rural women are more likely to be living in poverty than rural men, the differential is very small (Chant, 2006b).

other household members in male-headed households (particularly female members) (Bradshaw and Linneker 2001; Chant 2007b). As a result of these factors, some female-headed households may even experience positive outcomes such as increased independence in household decision making, improved labour market flexibility (i.e. women are more able to engage in paid work when they live in female-headed households) and increased spending on household nutrition and education (BRIDGE 2001). Similarly, for some female heads the greater command over household resources may even be more important than the actual level of resources in determining their poverty status (Chant 2003a).

Another key reason that female-headed households may not be as poor as expected is that two-parent or joint-earner households may not actually have more income. In some contexts, recent work has demonstrated that female earnings in such households are not complementary to male earnings but are rather used as additional discretionary funds for male consumption (Bradshaw and Linneker 2003). Momsen (2002) also points to the literature which suggests that the over-representation of female-headed households among the poor is not empirically founded and that only the 'wealthiest' single mothers can afford to maintain a household and that the poorest single females are often 'embedded mother-child units in other households' (Momsen 2002). Moreover, poverty is highly variable among female-headed households and is likely to be associated with the reasons for the formation of female-headed households rather than the mere presence of a female head (Momsen 2002). In addition, female-headed households, particularly in Latin America, tend to consist of extended family members and receive a substantial amount of support from kinship networks outside of the household. In many cases this leaves households with female heads less vulnerable to poverty than households with a male head (Bradshaw 2002; Chant 2007b).

Furthermore, many studies have identified a range of other factors that have stronger associations with poverty than does headship itself (Medeiros and Costa 2007). In their work in Latin America, for example, Medeiros and Costa (2007) found that the presence of children in the household was a better predictor of poverty than the gender of the household head. Similarly, a study in Uganda observed no difference in mean income and in most indicators of well-being



(both monetary and otherwise) between male and female-headed households and concluded that the marital status of the household head was a more appropriate marker of poverty than the gender of the head (Appleton 1996).

Empirical studies of female-headed households in developing country settings therefore highlight that female-headed households are a highly diverse group and, in some contexts, their heterogeneity makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the relative risk of poverty associated with female headship. As Chant (2003: 108) argues:

The diversity of female-headed households presents a major qualification to generalised statements about their poverty. Differentiation occurs, *inter alia*, through routes into the status (whether by 'choice' or involuntarily, and/or through non-marriage, separation, divorce, widowhood, migration and so on), by rural or urban residence, by 'race', by composition, by stage in the life course (including age and relative dependency of offspring), and by access to resources from beyond the household unit (from absent fathers, kinship networks, state assistance and the like). The significance of these variables- which can intersect in myriad ways- is, in turn, mediated by the particular social, cultural, demographic, political and economic context in which female heads are situated.

In particular, the reasons for the formation of households, the marital status of female heads, geographical location, household composition, and the presence of male partners (often disaggregated into *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households) often mediate the association between headship and poverty (Kennedy and Peters 1992; Handa 1994; Rogers 1995; Dreze and Srinivasan 1998; Fuwa 2000b; Momsen 2002; Chant 2003a; Chant 2007b; Gindling and Oviedo 2008).

A review of the literature on female-headed households in developing countries therefore highlights several key findings. First, while female-headed households have higher levels of poverty in many countries, this is not always the case. In some contexts households headed by a female are actually more likely to have higher levels of income or even to be relatively well off. Second, generalised claims of higher poverty risks for female-headed households are often inappropriate due to the large degree of heterogeneity among female-headed households (and

among male-headed households). As such, it is now considered good practice for gendered poverty studies to explore such heterogeneity carefully in order to identify the characteristics of both female- and male-headed households that may make them particularly vulnerable to poverty.

### **3. Headship as an analytical category in the gender and poverty literature**

The body of scholarship investigating poverty differentials between male- and female-headed households in developing countries has also examined the meaning of headship in far greater detail than the literature from developed countries. There are three main reasons for investigating further the concept of headship in the context of a gender and poverty study. First, there is substantial criticism of headship as an analytical tool and a number of studies have suggested that headship is often an arbitrary assignment in household surveys (Rosenhouse 1989; Hedman et al. 1996; Moultrie and Timaeus 2001; Asgary and Pagan 2004; Budlender 2005; Chant 2006a; Chant 2007b).<sup>20</sup> As Rosenhouse (1989: 45) argues, '[Household headship] was originally introduced in surveys to avoid double counting of household members in household rosters, and in no way reflects any of the dimensions the concept of headship assumes: regular presence in the household, overriding authority, and primary economic support.' Some criticism is also aimed at the methodology often employed to assign headship during field interviews which, according to some analysts, has resulted in as much as a 50 per cent under-reporting of female headship (Barros et al. 1997). 'Headship' and 'household' are also defined differently across different countries and studies which makes transferring lessons from one context to another extremely difficult (Buvinic and Gupta 1997; Moghadam 2005). This problem stems, largely, from the fact

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<sup>20</sup> In some countries, the use of headship in Censuses and household surveys has been abandoned altogether in favour of other reference categories. In the United States and Canada, for example, the Census no longer asks respondents to identify the head of the household due to concerns with ambiguity around the term 'head' (Haughton & Khandker, 2009). In some contexts, a number of terms have been used in place of 'female-headed' to describe, in greater detail, the type of household structure and its relationship to gender. Some of the more common terms include: 'female-maintained', 'women-maintained', 'female-led', 'mother-centered', 'single-parent', or 'male-absent' (see Buvinic & Gupta, 1997).

that headship is often loosely defined in survey questionnaires and may mean different things to policy makers, researchers, fieldworkers and survey respondents (Budlender 2005).

Second, substantial heterogeneity among both female- and male-headed households means that taking self-reported headship at face value masks the many different types of female-headed households. In terms of identifying vulnerability to poverty, critics point out that the use of self-reported headship without an exploration of what 'headship' is actually capturing in household surveys has important implications for policy-making (Asgary and Pagan 2004). Targeting self-reported female-headed households for a particular intervention or for a form of social support could, for example, fail to reach households in which the reported household head is an absent male (such households are often termed *de facto* female-headed households). Such interventions would also target households in which single older women are household heads (often referred to as *de jure* female heads), but which receive substantial economic support from relatives (or which contain younger male household members who contribute resources to the household) (Rosenhouse 1989).<sup>21</sup> Third, investigating alternative definitions of headship (and their respective associations with poverty) allows researchers to explore further some of the characteristics of households that may make them more vulnerable to poverty and to focus more closely on the subject of concern (e.g. income poverty in households supported predominantly by women) (Rosenhouse 1989; Varley 1996). In addition, even if self-reported headship is closely associated with decision making or economic contributions to the household, then examining alternative definitions of headship is a way to test further the sensitivity of poverty analyses to different assumptions about what headship is capturing.

Accordingly, there is a growing body of empirical work which has attempted to identify further what headship is capturing in household surveys and to employ this more nuanced understanding within the context of gender and poverty studies. Towards this end, some of the seminal headship studies in the international literature (cf. Rosenhouse 1989; Handa 1994; Rogers 1995; Handa 1996; Varley 1996; Buvinic and Gupta 1997; Fuwa 2000b), have identified two main

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<sup>21</sup> A fuller discussion of *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households is provided in Chapters Eight and Nine of the thesis.

dimensions of headship: demographic composition and economic contribution (Fuwa 2000a). From these two dimensions, several alternative definitions of headship that are often used in gender and poverty studies can be derived from household survey data. Table 3 presents a conceptual diagram in order to illustrate how alternative definitions of headship often include demographic or economic elements of headship or, in many cases, both of these dimensions. The table suggests, for example, that households can be broken into three distinct groups based on the demographic composition of the household: those households with both male and female adults present, those with only adult females resident (often further subdivided into households with no male attachments and those with adult males who are absent), and those with only adult males.

Similarly, there are three broad economic categories for households based on the gender of the main (or sole) contributor of income to the household. As shown in the table, there is a large degree of overlap in the identification of potential male or female headship across these two broad dimensions (cells containing demographic and economic overlap in identifying potential female heads are highlighted in grey and potential male heads in blue). For example, a household in which there is no adult male in residence and in which a female is the main contributor of income would be female-headed along both demographic and economic dimensions. The need to examine alternative definitions also arises because different analytical uses for headship often require different definitions (Fuwa 2000a). If, for example, research is concerned with the economic well-being of households which are supported primarily by a female, then a definition of headship which is based on monetary or labour market contributions towards the household may be more appropriate than self-identified headship.

These two broad dimensions can therefore be used to construct a number of ‘operational’ definitions of male and female headship that are often explored in the literature on gender and poverty (Fuwa 2000a). Beginning with the purely demographic dimension, a ‘demographic’ female-headed household is one in which there are no adult males resident in the household (and a ‘demographic’ male head would therefore reside in a household without an adult female) (Fuwa

2000a; Fuwa 2000b).<sup>22</sup> In terms of a useful economic definition of the household head there are a number of examples in the literature (cf. Rosenhouse 1989; Rogers 1995; Fuwa 2000b). Almost all of these definitions attempt, in some way, to identify, as the household head, the household member who contributes the highest level of resources to the household. As such, these types of definitions depend, to a large extent, on the type of data available and the way in which individual contributions to the household are captured (e.g. in monetary terms (Rogers 1995) or in hours spent in the labour market (Rosenhouse 1989)). It is also possible to combine the demographic and economic dimensions of headship into an operational definition by identifying what Fuwa (2000b) calls ‘core heads’ or household members that would be identified as both demographic heads because there is no adult of the opposite gender resident in the household and economic heads because they bring in the highest level of income into the household.

**Table 3 Economic and demographic factors for determining potential headship**

<b>Economic</b>	<b>Demographic</b>				
			Only adult female present in the household		
		Male and female adults present	Male partner absent	No male partner	Only adult male present in the household
	Male main contributor	MHH	FHH	FHH	MHH
	Female main contributor	FHH	FHH	FHH	FHH
	Joint contribution	MHH	FHH	FHH	MHH

Source: Adapted from Fuwa (2000a)

Studies which have employed these alternative definitions (e.g. economic, demographic, *de jure*, *de facto*, and core heads) of female headship have yielded mixed results with respect to the overlap between self-reported headship and alternative definitions. Using Peruvian data in her

<sup>22</sup> In the international literature, this definition is typically derived, for example, from the absence of a working-age adult from the opposite sex (see Fuwa, 2000a,b). In the South African context, however, it may be more appropriate to expand the definition to include adults of any age since adult pensioners are often heads of household and the State Old Age Pension is an important source of income for poor households.

seminal paper on headship, Rosenhouse (1989) first introduced the concept of a working head as an indicator of female economic contribution to the household. Defining the working head as the household member who works the greatest total number of hours (including both market and non-market hours), she found that a definition of the household head based on hours of work is more likely to capture female contributions to the household than is self-reported headship. For example, self-reported male heads contributed roughly 50 per cent more labour market hours than self-reported female heads. When the working definition of headship was applied, however, Rosenhouse found that male heads contributed only six per cent more market hours to the household than female heads (and female heads contributed *far* more non-market working hours to the household). Moreover, since, the difference in average monthly household per capita expenditure between female- and male-headed households was actually wider under the working head definition, Rosenhouse concluded that this definition was a better ‘discriminator’ of economic contribution to the household and a better marker of low consumption (Rosenhouse 1989).

Comparing the working head definition directly to the conventional self-reported definition in Panama, Fuwa (2000b) found a small overlap between self-identified headship and a working head definition (only 39.7 per cent of all self-reported female heads were also identified by the working head definition). Moreover, his work suggests that demographic composition (i.e. the absence of a working-age male in the household) is a stronger factor in determining self-identified headship and that women’s economic contribution is clearly under-represented by self-reported headship (i.e. women are not necessarily identified as heads even when they contribute the highest level of economic resources to the household) (Fuwa 2000b). In contrast, Handa (1994), reporting on the Jamaican context, found that three quarters of self-identified household heads would also have been identified as the head based on a working head definition (i.e. the number of hours spent in the labour market). Similarly, evidence from the Dominican Republic (Rogers 1995) seems to indicate some degree of overlap between self-reported headship and *both* a demographic (i.e. the absence of a working-age male) and economic (i.e. the reference female earns more than 50 per cent of total household income) definition of female headship (52.4 per cent and 42.1 per cent, respectively).

Regardless of the strength of the association between self-reported headship and the alternative definitions proposed in the literature, the existing evidence demonstrates the importance of exploring further the concept of headship. Since the meaning of headship is highly variable, and particularly so across different contexts, alternative definitions can go some way towards narrowing down the specific element of headship with which a study is concerned (Rosenhouse 1989; Rogers 1995; Varley 1996). In addition, poverty studies that consider different categories of headship based on household composition (e.g. the absence of adult or working-age men) or economic contributions (e.g. households maintained primarily by women) can explore further the heterogeneity of female-headed households and the implications for vulnerability to poverty.

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that the ‘feminisation of poverty’ literature from developing countries is largely concerned with poverty differentials between female- and male-headed households at a single point in time.<sup>23</sup> Due, in large part, to the existing focus on female-headed households from the developed country literature, together with data constraints which limit poverty estimates over time and by gender, this body of literature has expended considerably more attention on female headship and the possible reasons for the greater vulnerability of this household type to income poverty. While difficult to generalise, the findings from the existing literature suggest that, on average, female-headed households are more vulnerable to income poverty in a number of diverse regions and countries. Several comprehensive reviews have, for example, shown that female headship is associated with poverty in more than half of the developing countries under review. In addition, there is also evidence to suggest that, even where female-headed households are not, on average, more likely to be poor (relative to male-headed households), several sub-types of female-headed households are particularly vulnerable.

The reasons for the greater vulnerability of female-headed households to poverty outlined in the developing country literature are also more diverse than those identified in the scholarship from

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<sup>23</sup> With the exception of the study by Medeiros and Costa (2007).

developed countries. Over and above the factors highlighted in the developed country literature (i.e. high dependency ratios and combined labour market and domestic burdens), female-headed households appear to be at a greater risk of poverty due to a combination of factors which include *inter alia*: cultural, political and legal barriers which may limit access to land, property rights and asset ownership; more entrenched inequalities in the labour market resulting in gender bias in access to formal employment for female heads; higher levels of widowhood and the greater prevalence of female heads who are elderly; and less support (both from partners and the state) for single mothers. On the whole, however, the literature from developing countries is credited with identifying the ‘triple burden’ (the head being more likely to be the sole earner of the household, labour market disadvantages associated with being a female, as well as time constraints due to commitments to managing the household and earning income) faced by female heads as explaining a substantial portion of the higher risk of poverty faced by these heads and the members of their households.

The association between female headship and vulnerability to poverty, however, is not always straightforward and is highly dependent on context. A major qualification, therefore, in describing female-headed households as more vulnerable to poverty is that, in some contexts, female-headed households are no more likely to be poor than male-headed households and may even be better off in some cases. In addition, the heterogeneity of both female- and male-headed households means that the household-level factors associated with poverty may actually be more important than the gender of the household head in identifying vulnerability to poverty. Therefore, some of the key lessons to be drawn from gender and poverty studies in developing countries include: the need to explore differences among female-headed households (and male-headed households); the importance of children, household size and composition to explaining vulnerability to poverty; and the role of routes into headship (i.e. marital status) in mediating the association between female headship and poverty (Buvinic 1993; Quisumbing et al. 1995; Lampietti and Stalker 2000). Moreover, studies from developing countries have highlighted the importance of interrogating what headship information, as captured in Censuses and household surveys, actually represents. As such, it is now considered good practice to explore several alternate definitions of headship (e.g. definitions based on seniority or income earning status) in



order to test the robustness of gendered poverty findings to differing assumptions about the nature of headship (Rosenhouse 1989; Quisumbing et al. 1995).

The next chapter now focuses specifically on the South African context and identifies, in particular, broader trends in employment and poverty. The chapter also considers the existing evidence for gendered changes in access to resources in the post-apartheid period and on the concerns with using headship-based analyses of poverty rates that have been raised in the South African literature.

## **Chapter Four- The South African Context**

### **1. Introduction**

In order to provide some context for the analysis of gendered poverty trends in South Africa, this chapter briefly describes the political economy of the post-apartheid period and identifies key trends in economic growth, employment, social policy, and income poverty before focusing more specifically on the existing evidence on gendered poverty trends and headship. In particular, the chapter highlights how the period has been characterised, on the one hand, by the ratification of a progressive constitution, relatively strong economic growth and the expansion of an already extensive social grant system (the latter two both occurring in the early 2000s) and, on the other hand, by the seemingly intractable problem of high unemployment alongside persistent income inequality (Seekings 2007b).

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. Section Two offers a broad overview of the country's growth trajectory following the political transition in 1994. In Section Three, the unemployment problem is summarised and evidence of a 'feminisation of the labour force' is reviewed. Section Four documents the key changes which have resulted in an expansion of the social grant system, particularly in the 2000s. In the following two sections, trends in overall income poverty (and inequality) and the existing evidence for a feminisation of poverty in the post-apartheid period are reviewed (Section Five and Section Six, respectively).

### **2. Political transition and economic growth in the post-apartheid period**

South Africa's political transition (away from apartheid) in the early to mid-1990s went hand-in-hand with the implementation of an economic policy framework characterised by trade and financial liberalisation, macroeconomic stability and relative fiscal austerity (Gelb 2005). As many commentators (cf. Gelb 2005; Roberts 2005; Seekings 2007b) have noted, the implementation of a relatively conventional neo-liberal policy package (formalised in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy of 1996) seemed distinctly at odds with the country's initial (1994) socio-economic policy framework, the needs-based Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), and with one of the world's most

progressive constitutions (which explicitly protects socio-economic rights and ‘income security’). As Gelb (2005) argues, however, the structural (fiscal) crisis inherited by the ANC in 1994 forced government’s hand in many respects and effectively ruled out many of the redistributive macroeconomic policy options favoured by some elements of the new government (e.g. the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)).

While largely unpopular with the left leaning organisations in the tripartite alliance (COSATU and the South African Communist Party (SACP)), the government’s economic policy is often associated with steady economic growth, particularly during the mid-2000s. Initially, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth was relatively low in the 1990s (and even negative in the fourth quarter of 1998) but began to improve by 2002, despite some fluctuations (Statistics South Africa 2011). Commenting on the state of the economy ten years after the advent of democracy, Gelb (2005) noted that, between 1994 and 2003, the average year-on-year growth in GDP was an ‘unspectacular’ 2.8 per cent. Between 2004 and 2007, however, GDP growth was consistently above three per cent and often went above five per cent. According to Statistics South Africa’s quarterly GDP reports, quarter-on-quarter growth peaked at 6.7 per cent during the second quarter of 2006 (Statistics South Africa 2011). This level of growth continued until the third and fourth quarters of 2008 when the economy went into decline in response to the global financial crisis (Statistics South Africa 2011). Such consistent levels of growth (together with a steady reduction in the fiscal deficit), particularly in the early to mid-2000s, naturally led to a sense of optimism in government and to the feeling that macroeconomic policy was on the right track (Gelb 2005).

### **3. Unemployment and the ‘feminisation’ of the labour force**

Despite this relatively robust economic growth in the 2000s (up until the crisis in 2008), unemployment has remained one of the government’s biggest challenges. One of the key frustrations for government in the post-apartheid period has been the increase in the size of the labour force in relation to the number of jobs being created (Klasen and Woolard 1999; Altman 2003; Casale et al. 2004; Burger and Woolard 2005; Gelb 2005; Roberts 2005; Banerjee et al. 2008). As a result of the inability of the economy to keep pace with the number of new entrants

to the labour market, unemployment rates have risen unabated despite positive economic growth. For example, both official and expanded unemployment rates (see Kingdon and Knight 2006) grew between 1994 and 2002 and peaked at 31.2 per cent according to a narrow definition of unemployment (42.5 per cent using an expanded definition) (Altman 2003; Nattrass 2003; Burger and Woolard 2005; Bhorat and Oosthuizen 2006; Seekings 2007b; Klasen and Woolard 2008).<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, between October 1995 and March 2003, the broad unemployment rate increased from 29 per cent to 43 per cent (or from 17 per cent to 32 per cent under the narrow definition) despite government's widespread (2004) claim of two million net new jobs being created over this period (Casale et al. 2004; Klasen and Woolard 2008). Moreover, Casale et al. (2004) found that real earnings among the employed actually declined over the period resulting in an increase in the percentage of the 'working poor' (i.e. the percentage of informal workers earning less than two dollars a day increased from 18 per cent to 42 per cent between 1995 and 2003).

Gendered trends in employment (and labour force participation more broadly) have been an important part of the employment story in the post-apartheid period and, in addition, provide some context to an analysis of gendered poverty trends. Like many other countries, South Africa has seen a growing number and proportion of women entering the labour force in recent years (Casale and Posel 2002; Casale 2004; Burger and Woolard 2005). Between 1995 and 2001, women increased their representation in the labour force from roughly 44 per cent to 50 per cent (Casale 2004). To some degree, this increase in female labour force participation has also yielded an increase in female employment. Over the same period, for example, the percentage of the employed that were women increased from 39 per cent to 44 per cent (Casale and Posel 2002; Casale 2004; Casale and Posel 2005).

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<sup>24</sup> The narrowly (or strictly) defined unemployed are working-age individuals who wanted work and looked for employment in the reference period specified in the LFSs, OHSs or the GHSs (e.g. over the past four weeks). The category of broadly unemployed then includes all of the narrow unemployed as well as those who wanted work but did not look for it during the specified recall period (see also Kingdon & Knight, 2006). These two categories of the unemployed are also often referred to as the 'searching' and 'non-searching' unemployed.

These relative gains for women, however, have not necessarily translated into more or better opportunities for decent work. The growth in female labour force participation during the post-apartheid period masks the fact that the trend has largely been associated with rising rates of female *unemployment*. The broad unemployment rate for women, for example, increased from 37.6 per cent to 48.2 per cent between 1995 and 2001 (Casale and Posel 2002; Casale 2004). Among men, the unemployment rate has also increased, but the absolute difference in unemployment rates between men and women only narrowed very slightly over the period. The increase in female labour force participation therefore was considerably larger than the rise in female employment, and consequently was largely associated with female unemployment.

The type of work that women have moved into also suggests that relatively few opportunities in terms of access to occupations for women have been realised. In particular, labour force data show that roughly half of the growth in female employment between the mid-1990s and 2001 can be attributed to jobs in the informal sector (Casale and Posel 2002; Casale 2004). Moreover, between 1995 and 2001 roughly a quarter of the total female workforce remained in the domestic sector while the percentage that was engaged in informal self-employment increased dramatically from six per cent to 20.6 per cent (Casale 2004). The increase in female employment was, therefore, largely concentrated in the informal sector where wages are lower, employment is less secure and benefits are non-existent.

Even where women have entered the formal labour market, however, there is evidence of a persistent gender wage differential (i.e. the ratio of female to male earnings did not change). After controlling for education levels, work experience and occupational sector, men continue to earn, on average, significantly more than women. For example, although real mean earnings decreased by about 14 per cent for both men and women, real median earnings decreased by 48.6 per cent among women, but by only 28.7 per cent among men between 1995 and 2001 (Casale 2004). On the whole, then, the feminisation of the labour force has meant that an increasing number of women have either joined the ranks of the unemployed or have engaged in informal and low paying employment.

#### 4. Social policy and the expansion of the social grant system

In view of the persistently high rates of unemployment (which are amongst the highest in the world), the expansion of the country's social assistance programme represents one of the post-apartheid government's most important poverty reduction strategies.<sup>25</sup> The programme, already well developed, particularly for Whites, under the apartheid government's 'White welfare state', was extended to cover all racial groups after 1994 (at a time when other countries were cutting expenditure on social assistance) and also expanded to include<sup>26</sup> a new grant to support the care-givers of children (the Child Support Grant, CSG) (Woolard 2003; du Toit and Neves 2006). However, while South Africa boasts the largest (and growing) social assistance programme of any developing country (measured as a share of GDP), there is still no specific protection for working-age individuals who want to work but who are unemployed (van der Berg 2002; Seekings 2007a; Whitworth and Noble 2008; Surender et al. 2010).<sup>27</sup> Instead, the current social assistance programme (in the form of non-contributory, means tested social grants) covers only children (by awarding grants to their care-givers), the disabled, and the elderly.

Table 4 documents the five most important social grants in the post-apartheid period in terms of both coverage and amount. The table lists the age requirements, eligibility criteria (e.g. the means

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<sup>25</sup> Many of the elements of the existing social assistance programme were actually introduced prior to the apartheid era (i.e. before 1948) and coverage was gradually expanded in three separate phases: the 1980s, the early 1990s and, most recently, in the 2000s (Seekings, 2007a).

<sup>26</sup> While many commentators consider the Child Support Grant to be a new addition to the post-apartheid social assistance package, it is, in some respects, a 'pro-poor' revision of the earlier State Maintenance Grant (Seekings, 2007a).

<sup>27</sup> The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) is the only protection currently available to workers but it provides partial cover (in terms of both benefits and duration of pay out). Only ten per cent of the strictly unemployed receive UIF benefits at any particular point in time and this is largely due to the fact that just over half of the unemployed have never had employment and have, therefore, never contributed to the fund (Leibbrandt et al., 2010).

test), and the value for the maximum monthly award for each respective grant in 2006.<sup>28</sup> As the information displayed in the table indicates, the only grant that is available to working-age adults (apart from those awarded to the care-givers of children) is the Disability Grant. In other words, there is currently no dedicated social assistance for able-bodied working-age adults who are unemployed.

The limited coverage for working-age adults, notwithstanding, the government has expanded coverage of several key grants (most notably the State Old Age Pension (now called the Grant for Older Persons), the Disability Grant and the Child Support Grant) and has regularly (from 2000 onwards) increased the nominal value of grant awards in order to compensate for inflation. Between 2000 and 2006, for example, the real value of the old age pension grew annually by about 2.1 per cent, the Disability Grant by 2.5 per cent and the Child Support Grant by six per cent (Pauw and Mncube 2006). The fastest growing grant type (in terms of up-take), the Child Support Grant, reached roughly 9.8 million recipients in mid-2010 and was recently (in 2010) expanded to include all children (subject to a means test) under the age of 18 (SASSA 2010).<sup>29,30</sup> By June 2010, approximately 14.3 million South Africans received a social grant of some type (SASSA 2010). As a result, total expenditure on non-contributory social assistance increased during the 2000s (starting in 2001-2) and the percentage of GDP spent on social grants rose from less than two per cent in 1993, to 3.5 per cent in 2005 and to 4.4 per cent in 2009 (Seekings 2007b; Leibbrandt et al. 2010). In real terms, annual government expenditure on non-contributory

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<sup>28</sup> More detailed information on the number of beneficiaries, trends in up-take and nominal increases in the value of grants over the study period is provided in the following chapter.

<sup>29</sup> The Child Support Grant was initially only awarded to children age six and younger. In 2003, this was extended to children under the age of 9, in 2004, to children under 11 and, in 2005, to children under the age of 14 (Seekings, 2007a). As of January 2010, all children under the age of 18 are eligible for the grant (subject to a means test) (SASSA, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> The two grants with the fewest beneficiaries are the War Veteran's Grant (for veterans of the Second World War and the Korean War- 1, 118 recipients in 2010) and the Grant in Aid (additional grant for recipients of War Veterans Grants, State Old Age Pensions and Disability Grants who require full-time attendance from another person due to a disability -53,297 recipients in 2010) (SASSA, 2010).

social grants more than doubled between 1994 and 2006 (from less than R20 billion in 1994 to just over R40 billion in 2006- in 2000 prices) (Seekings 2007a).

**Table 4 Means tested, non-contributory social assistance in South Africa as of April, 2006**

<b>Grant</b>	<b>Means test</b>	<b>Income threshold for the means test (annual income for a single person)</b>	<b>Age requirement</b>	<b>Other requirements</b>	<b>Maximum monthly grant as of April 2006</b>
<b>State Old Age Pension</b>	Yes	R31 296	60 or older for women; 65 or older for men <sup>31</sup>	-must not be cared for in another state institution	R 820.00*
<b>Disability Grant</b>	Yes	R31 296	18-59	-must not be cared for in another state institution  -must submit a medical report	R 820.00*
<b>Foster Care Grant</b>	No	NA	NA	-court order indicating foster care status - the foster parent must be a South African citizen, permanent resident or refugee -child must remain in the care of the foster parent	R 590.00

<sup>31</sup> In 2007, the age requirements for receipt of the pension were changed so that both men and women are now eligible when they turn 60 (SASSA, 2011).



*Table 4 continued...*

<b>Child Support Grant</b>	Yes	R30 000	Child must be under the age of 14	-applicant must be the primary care giver of the child concerned  -applicant cannot apply for more than six non biological children	R 190.00
<b>Care Dependency Grant</b>	Yes- except for foster parents	R129 600	Child must be under the age of 18	-must submit a medical / assessment or report confirming permanent, severe disability	R 820.00

Source: (SASSA 2007; SASSA 2011)

\*Sliding scale near the upper end of the means tested income threshold such that the maximum amount of the grant is progressively reduced

Social assistance has also been relatively well-targeted with about 60 per cent of total grant expenditure going to households in the lowest income quintile (van der Berg 2006; Seekings 2007b; Leibbrandt et al. 2010). By 2006, 69 per cent of the households in this quintile received a social grant (Leibbrandt et al. 2010). The grant with the largest number of beneficiaries, the state pension, also has a strong gender dimension since (as outlined in the table) women (until 2007) were eligible for the grant at an earlier age and because women tend to live longer than men. Accordingly, roughly three quarters of the grant are awarded to women (Burns et al. 2005). Despite the lower values of the Child Support Grant and the Foster Care Grant, roughly two thirds of the income from the poorest income quintile is derived from social grants and most of this income comes from the three child grants (i.e. the Child Support Grant, Care Dependency Grant and the Foster Care Grant) (Leibbrandt et al. 2010). These child care grants also have a

clear gender implication. In particular, the Child Support Grant is predominantly awarded (roughly 77 per cent of all CSGs in 2005) to working-age African women (on behalf of children) (Williams 2007). The grant is, therefore, the only form of social assistance in South Africa that is awarded to healthy working-age adults and recipients are mostly women (92 per cent of adult care-givers who receive the grant are women) (Williams 2007). Moreover, a substantial literature has demonstrated that social grants (particularly the State Old Age Pension, the Child Support Grant and the Disability Grant) are relatively effective in reducing income poverty (Case and Deaton 1998; Samson et al. 2001a; Lund 2002; Samson 2002; Woolard 2003; Samson et al. 2004; Booysen and van der Berg 2005; du Toit and Neves 2006), increasing labour force participation (Samson et al. 2004; Posel et al. 2006; Williams 2007; Eyal and Woolard 2011), as well as in improving child nutrition and school enrolment (Samson et al. 2001b; Duflo 2003; Samson et al. 2004; Case et al. 2005; Case and Ardington 2006; Agüero et al. 2007b; Williams 2007; Lund 2008).

## **5. Trends in inequality and income poverty in the post-apartheid era**

As a result of high and persistent levels of unemployment during the post-apartheid era, two of the key development concerns over the past decade, particularly in light of the legacy of apartheid, are income inequality and poverty. In order to begin addressing these concerns, the government, in 1995, commissioned the Poverty and Inequality Report (PIR) (see May et al. 1998). The report undertook a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of policy, income poverty, well-being and inequality in order to inform government's 'war on poverty' (May et al. 1998). In the years since the PIR, a large body of work, bolstered by the release of nationally representative survey data, has examined trends in inequality and, unfortunately, most of this work suggests that overall levels of inequality in access to income have remained high (the Gini coefficient for the period 2000-2010 is estimated at 0.58) (UNDP 2010). Moreover, there is now evidence to suggest that South Africa may have the rather dubious distinction of being the most 'consistently' unequal society in the world (with a Gini coefficient of 0.72 based on the 2005 Income and Expenditure Survey) (Bhorat et al. 2009).

Given the unique history of entrenched racial segregation in South Africa, much of the literature on income inequality is, not surprisingly, concerned with the difference in access to income between population or race groups. While much of the work on inequality (cf. Leibbrandt et al. 2000; Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001b; van der Berg and Louw 2004; Leibbrandt et al. 2008; Leibbrandt et al. 2010) suggests that the increase in within group inequality (particularly among Africans) is one of the main contributors to high levels of income inequality in South Africa, there is also recent evidence to suggest that increasing inequality between population groups (and particularly between Africans and non-Africans)<sup>32</sup> is driving overall inequality (Bhorat et al. 2009). This debate notwithstanding, there are important differences in access to income between population groups in South Africa. Africans, for example, were the only racial group in South Africa to experience negative real per capita income growth (-1.78%) between 1995 and 2005 (Bhorat et al. 2009). Not surprisingly then, recent data from the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) demonstrate that, while Africans make up 79.3 per cent of the population, 94 per cent of South Africans living below the poverty line (R322 per capita monthly household income in 2000 prices) are classified as Black South Africans (Argent et al. 2009).

The large body of scholarship documenting an increase in income inequality is accompanied by a literature which highlights the ongoing debate about trends in income poverty overall (for a review of this work, see Woolard and Woolard 2008). While there is also a growing literature on access to basic services and other measures of non-money-metric (e.g. asset-based) measures of well-being (see Booysen 2002; Bhorat et al. 2006; Woolard and Woolard 2008), this thesis is concerned specifically with changes in income poverty. Towards this end, Table 5 documents the poverty headcount estimates from a number of key post-apartheid income poverty studies. As the table demonstrates, most poverty studies in South Africa tend to agree (using different data sources and poverty lines) that income poverty probably increased slightly (but not necessarily

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<sup>32</sup> The population group classifications used throughout the thesis are the same as those employed by Statistics South Africa in its household surveys and Censuses and are generally well-accepted in South Africa. For example, 'African' is the term used to describe black South Africans, 'Coloured' refers to individuals of mixed-race origin, 'Indian' refers to people of Indian and Asian descent, and 'White' refers to those of European origin.

significantly) between 1995 and 2000 (Bhorat and Kanbur 2005; Hoogeveen and Özler 2005; Leibbrandt et al. 2006; Seekings 2007b; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008; van der Berg et al. 2008b).<sup>33</sup> Work based on post-2001 data sources, however, suggests that poverty rates have declined since 2000 (cf. UNDP 2004; Meth 2006; van der Berg et al. 2006; van der Berg et al. 2007; van der Berg et al. 2008b; van der Berg et al. 2009; Leibbrandt et al. 2010; Meth 2011). A recent analysis of the 2005 Income and Expenditure Survey (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008), for example, has suggested that the poverty headcount rate has likely decreased significantly since 2000 (from roughly 52.5 per cent in 1995 to 47.9 per cent in 2005).

Using an alternate, and somewhat controversial, data source, van der Berg et al. (2008b) estimate a reduction in the incidence of poverty from 50.1 per cent to 46.9 per cent between 1993 and 2004. Meth, however, argues that the decline has been less impressive and estimates a range of poverty rates (using the 2001 and 2004 Labour Force Surveys and the 2004 General Household Survey) to demonstrate that the poverty headcount most likely declined by 1.5 million people between 2001 and 2004 rather than the three million estimated by van der Berg and colleagues. Notably, much of the debate over poverty estimates in South Africa remains focused on issues of the comparability and reliability of nationally representative surveys and on the manner in which poverty statistics are presented (Seekings 2007b; Meth 2008; Meth 2011).

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<sup>33</sup> Van der Berg and Louw (2004), however, found that the poverty headcount ratio stabilised (or possibly declined very slightly) between 1995 and 2000 (see Table 5).

**Table 5 Poverty estimates in post-apartheid South Africa (headcount rates)**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Income measure</b>	<b>Headcount rates</b>	<b>Years</b>
May et al., 1998 (z=R488 )	1995 IES	Per adult equivalent expenditure	49.0	1995
Carter & May, 2001 (z=Household subsistence line)	KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamic Study 1993-1998	Per capita expenditure	26.8-42.5 (Increase)	1993 and 1998
May & Woolard, 2001 (z=R322)	1995 & 2005 IES	Per capita expenditure (re-weighted)	35.0-41.6 (Increase)	1995 and 2000
Woolard & Leibbrandt, 2001 (z=R330)	1993 PSLSD & 1995 IES	Per capita expenditure	46.9	1993
Van der Berg & Louw, 2004 (z=250)	1995 & 2005 IES	Per capita expenditure (adjusted in line with national accounts data)	38.8-38.6 (Decrease)	1995 and 2000
Hoogeveen & Özler, 2005 (z=R322)	1995 & 2000 IES	Per capita expenditure	58.0-58.0 (No change)	1995 and 2000
Ardington et al., 2006 (z=R322)	1996 & 2001 Censuses	Income data- multiple imputation	59.8-65.1 (Increase)	1996 and 2001
Leibbrandt et al., 2006 (z=R322)	1996 & 2001 Censuses	Income data	50.0-55.0 (Increase)	1996 and 2001
Meth, 2006 (z=R250)	LFS 2001 and 2004	Income data- zero incomes augmented with expenditure data	43.3-39.9 (Decrease)	2001 and 2004
Bhorat & van der Westhuizen, 2008 (z=R322)	1995 & 2005 IES	Per capita expenditure	52.5-47.9 (Decrease)	1995 and 2005
Van der berg et al., 2008 (z=R250)	All Media Products Survey	Income data- zero incomes augmented with expenditure data	51.7-50.8-46.9 (Decrease)	1995, 2000 and 2004
Leibbrandt et al., 2010 (z=R322)	1993 PSLSD, 2000 IES & 2008 NIDS	Per capita income	56.0-54.0-54.0 (Decrease)	1993, 2000 and 2008

*Note:* All poverty lines (z) expressed in 2000 prices

The origins of this debate are two-fold. First, differences in estimates of the size of the decline in poverty rates since 2000 have highlighted a number of concerns relating to the comparability of available datasets (both between different surveys and over time) and the reliability of nationally representative surveys in capturing income data, including concerns with possible sampling bias (e.g. in the 2005 Income and Expenditure Survey) and missing income data (Leibbrandt et al. 2006; Meth 2006; van der Berg et al. 2008b; Vermaak 2008). Thus, much of the current debate is concerned with which data sets are used and on the adjustments that are made to account for the inherent limitations in the available data sources— particularly for capturing income data (Seekings 2007b). Second, conflicting trends in the post apartheid period have tended to frustrate predictions as to how levels of poverty may have changed. In particular, it is not clear whether the increases in social grant expenditure (and the expanding coverage of these grants) have been enough to offset the persistent levels of high unemployment outlined earlier (Seekings 2007b; Meth 2011). As a result, the income poverty literature in South Africa continues to be characterised by a lively and ongoing debate about the extent of recent (post-2000) decreases in income poverty rates as well as the actual number of the poor.

## **6. Gender and poverty in post-apartheid South Africa**

Against the backdrop of this continuing debate in the poverty literature, this section now turns to the existing scholarship on gender, poverty and headship in post-apartheid South Africa. To begin with, however, it is important to acknowledge briefly the rich body of historical work (cf. Preston-Whyte 1978; Pauw 1979; Preston-Whyte and Zondi 1989) which has documented the emergence of female-headed households (or ‘families’- as much of this work prefers) as a result of socio-cultural pressures, declines in marriage rates, migration to towns and urban centres, and apartheid-era controls on settlement patterns. In particular, Pauw (1979) and Preston-Whyte (1978) have analysed the move away from the nuclear family and towards the separation of fertility and marriage in some detail. Related to this, later ethnographic work has highlighted some of the possible reasons for the increase in child-bearing among young women and girls in South Africa- often outside of marriage (Preston-Whyte and Zondi 1989). Preston-Whyte and Zondi (1989) further argue that teenage pregnancy out of wedlock (and the formation of female-

headed families more generally) has been supported, tacitly, through the relaxation and adaptation of traditional customs such as *umgezo* and *inhlawulo*.<sup>34</sup>

This scholarship was also the first to document the feminisation of migration into South African urban centres and towns and the likely contribution that this trend has made to the increase in female headship (Preston-Whyte 1978). Pauw (1979) also noted the much larger proportion of ‘post-marital’ women compared with men and concluded that when men are widowed the family often disbands or merges with other households while, when women are widowed, they maintain their families and ‘the foundations are laid for the formation of a [female-headed] household’ (Preston-Whyte 1978). These earlier accounts of the trend towards increasing female headship are supported by more recent (i.e. from the post-apartheid period) quantitative evidence of the increasing percentage of households with a female head (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008) and of a trend towards ‘female-dominated’ households (Sender 2002).<sup>35</sup>

Contemporary research on female headship and poverty finds that female-headed households have access to lower levels of per capita household income or are over-represented at the lower end of the income distribution (Budlender 1997; Bayat et al. 2000; Posel 2001; Budlender 2003). With respect to income poverty more specifically, several studies have demonstrated poverty levels for female-headed households are significantly higher than for male-headed households (May et al. 1998; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999; Ray 2000; Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a; Armstrong et al. 2008; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008).<sup>36</sup> Some work has indicated that

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<sup>34</sup> *Umgezo* refers to a cleansing process that aims to mitigate the impurity associated with an out of wedlock pregnancy. *Inhlawulo* is the Zulu custom of paying damages to the family of an unmarried woman who has become pregnant.

<sup>35</sup> Female-dominated households typically refer to those households in which the majority (or all) of adults are female.

<sup>36</sup> The magnitude of poverty differences between female- and male-headed households appears to be fairly large in South Africa. For example, Bhorat and van der Westhuizen (2008) found that, in 2005, 38.3 per cent of male-headed

female-headed households may be more vulnerable to poverty in post-apartheid South Africa because they tend to be larger, support more children, are based in rural areas, contain fewer working-age adults, and because female heads are more likely to be unemployed and earn lower wages than their male counterparts (May et al. 1998; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999; Ray 2000; Woolard 2002).

The changes in poverty rates *over time* and by the gender of the household head, however, have received considerably less attention and there is still no work which has examined the relative changes in poverty between males and females. The only study that has included a gender and a time element in South Africa is recent work by Bhorat and van der Westhuizen (2008).<sup>37</sup> They use the 1995 and 2005 Income and Expenditure Surveys to estimate changes in income poverty and inequality more broadly over the period (based on the frequently used poverty line of R322 per capita monthly household income in 2000 prices). Their study finds that the incidence of income poverty among female-headed households decreased significantly from about 65.6 per cent to 60.6 per cent over the ten year period (a decrease of five percentage points). The incidence among male-headed households over the same period, however, experienced a greater absolute decline (by roughly 7.5 percentage points from 45.8 per cent to 38.3 per cent). Therefore, the differences in poverty levels between female- and male-headed households widened over the period (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008). They also find that an increasing percentage of poor individuals lived in female-headed households between 1995 and 2005. In 1995, for example, 42.3 per cent of poor individuals lived in female-headed households. By 2005 more than half (54.8 per cent) of all poor South Africans lived in households with a female head (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008).

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households were below the poverty line and that the headcount rate was 60.6 per cent among female-headed households.

<sup>37</sup> Leibbrandt et al. (2010) also briefly document an increase in the poverty share of African females from 50 per cent to 51 per cent between 1993 and 2008.



As is the case in the international literature on female headship and poverty, the value of self-reported headship as an analytical category (and even as a survey tool) has been strongly contested in the South African literature (cf. Ardington and Lund 1995; Moultrie and Timaeus 2001; Budlender 2005). Budlender (2003) notes that these critiques stem, at least in part, from the way that headship is assigned in South African survey questionnaires. She cites, for example, the fact that in the annual October Household Surveys (the predecessor to the General Household Surveys), it is not possible to distinguish between 'real' household heads and 'acting heads' (i.e. an analysis based on headship would be collapsing acting heads and resident heads into the same category). Budlender also points out that the economic definition (e.g. working head) of headship as defined in the international literature (e.g. Rosenhouse 1989; Handa 1994; Fuwa 2000b) is far less practical in the South African context where roughly a quarter of households have no employed (or self-employed) members (according to the 1993 PSLSD) and would therefore have to be excluded from such an analysis.

Despite these concerns, some analysts have argued that headship is, at least theoretically, associated with some level of decision-making or the ability to provide income to the household (Zulu and Sibanda 2005). Some empirical evidence is also available to support this association in the South African context. Posel (2001), for example, found that, in the 1993 PSLSD data, although household heads were predominantly the oldest household member (89.2 per cent), they were often also the highest income earner (81.4 per cent), or were both the oldest and the highest income earner (74.4 per cent). Five years later, the KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study (which re-interviewed some of the same households that participated in the PSLSD) explored headship further by capturing information on decision makers in the household. In analysing this source of data, Posel (2001) also found a high degree of overlap (e.g. in 79 and 89 per cent of households where a 'final decision-maker' was identified for expenditure on 'large purchases' and 'livestock' respectively, this person was also reported as the head of the household) between being the self-reported household head and being identified as the 'final decision maker'.

On the whole, however, there is a very limited body of scholarship which has examined gender, poverty and headship in post-apartheid South Africa. The existing literature is restricted to a

handful of studies which have identified (self-reported) female-headed households as being particularly vulnerable to income poverty. In addition, there has been only one study which has examined poverty trends among female- and male-headed households over time and no work which has considered gendered changes in income poverty. Similarly, despite several robust critiques of the use of headship categories in poverty analyses, there have been very few investigations of headship and what it is capturing in the South African context.

There is, however, scope to extend the research on gender, poverty and headship in post-apartheid South Africa. The availability of regularly collected data sets with comparable measures of earned and social grant income (discussed in greater detail in the next chapter) allows for the possibility of estimating gender poverty differences (and differences in poverty between female- and male-headed households) over time. Moreover, applying a wider definition of the economic head (see for example Varley 1996; Fuwa 2000a) which considers the gender of the main contributor of earned income and social transfers to the household (rather than hours contributed in the labour market) allows for the possibility of a more nuanced analysis of headship in the South African data despite the high percentage of households with no employed members (Budlender 2003).

## **7. Concluding remarks**

The period under review (and the post-apartheid period more generally) has been characterised by a number of changes as South Africa has undergone a comprehensive political transition. On the one hand, macro-economic policy has adopted a relatively conservative neo-liberal set of policy prescriptions which have coincided with consistently positive economic growth (particularly in the mid-2000s). On the other hand, the ANC government oversaw the drafting of one of the world's most progressive constitutions and, particularly since the early 2000s, the expansion of an already comprehensive social grant programme.

In terms of socio-economic indicators, the results appear to have been mixed. Strong economic growth, for example, does not appear to have mitigated the rise in unemployment between 1995

and 2005 and there is further evidence that there has been an increase in the percentage of the 'working poor'. Moreover, income inequality has risen unabated throughout the post-apartheid period with evidence pointing to both within and between race group inequality increasing at various points over the period. While the increase in unemployment alongside the expansion of the grant system has, to some extent, confounded predictions as to whether, and by how much, the extent of poverty has decreased since the early 2000s, there is a consensus that the poverty headcount rate has fallen, particularly after 2000 (coinciding closely with the expansion of the social grant system). The extent of this decrease is still open for debate (see for example, Meth 2006; van der Berg et al. 2008b; Meth 2010), although the importance of the social grant system in reducing overall levels of income poverty is generally agreed (Leibbrandt et al. 2010).

As noted in the introductory chapter, there have also been conflicting trends which make it difficult to ascertain whether income poverty has been gendered in the post-apartheid period. In particular, the key question is whether the effects of the increase in female unemployment alongside the rising percentage of women living without men (e.g. often in female-headed households) has been offset by the expansion of the social grant system (and the fact that grants are well-targeted to poor women with children) and the increase in female employment rates. While some preliminary evidence points to the fact that the decrease in income poverty has been greater for male-headed households than for female-headed households, the empirical question of whether, and to what extent, post-apartheid poverty trends have been gendered has not yet been explored in detail.

Towards this end, the next chapter now discusses the available data sources that can be used to examine the feminisation of poverty and female headship in post-apartheid South Africa. In particular, the chapter outlines how the inherent data limitations (e.g. the incomplete capture of income and expenditure data) have been addressed. Following this, the chapter concludes with an overview of the approach to poverty measurement used in the empirical chapters and an acknowledgment of the limitations of this approach to a gendered poverty analysis.

## **Chapter Five- Data and Methods**

### **1. Introduction**

As Chapter Four noted, much of the debate in the post-apartheid poverty literature concerns the choice of which data source to use and whether and how to adjust for missing or incomplete income (and expenditure) data (see for example Meth 2006; van der Berg et al. 2008b; Meth 2010). One of the aims of this chapter is, therefore, to review the available sources of data that could be used to investigate gendered trends in poverty and to highlight the respective strengths and weaknesses of each of these data sources in relation to the task at hand. The main objective of this chapter, however, is to describe the data sources that have been selected for the analysis and to detail the adjustments that have been made to the data in order to compare gendered poverty estimates over time.

The chapter is structured as follows. The next section reviews the nationally representative data sets (as well as one panel data set) that capture income or expenditure data that can be used to measure poverty. The limitations of each data source are described as well as the adjustments that are required in order to create comparable estimates of income over time. Section Three then turns to the data sources used in this thesis and details the advantages of using these data in a gendered poverty analysis as well as the adjustments that need to be made in order to generate comparable measures of income in four different years. In Section Four a description of the method used to measure poverty as well as a discussion of the poverty lines chosen for measuring income poverty are outlined. Section Five concludes the chapter by acknowledging the limitations to the money-metric approach to measuring gendered access to resources.

## **2. Survey data and poverty measurement in post-apartheid South Africa**

Since 1993,<sup>38</sup> the country's official statistical agency, Statistics South Africa, has regularly collected nationally representative household survey data. Although several of these data sources have been used to estimate poverty rates in post-apartheid South Africa, none of these surveys was explicitly designed for the task of measuring poverty (Meth 2006). As a result, the use of different sources of income and expenditure data has contributed to the ongoing debate in the South African literature about the extent to which poverty has fallen in the post-apartheid period (see Meth 2006; Seekings 2007b; Meth 2008; van der Berg et al. 2008b). This section reviews the data sources that are available for estimating poverty in the post-apartheid period and, in particular, highlights the limitations of each respective source with regard to measuring changes in poverty rates *over time*.

### **2.1 Official data sources**

The Population Censuses (1995 and 2001) collect information on income and have been used in several key post-apartheid poverty studies (cf. Ardington et al. 2006; Leibbrandt et al. 2006; Leibbrandt et al. 2008). Census data, however, are plagued with several problems that limit their use, particularly for examining poverty rates over time. First and foremost, the Censuses are conducted at long intervals (the next Census only goes to field this year-2011) and income is captured in bands rather than as point estimates (Leibbrandt et al. 2006; van der Berg et al. 2008b). Furthermore, the income bands are not consistent over time and a considerable amount of work is required to make the income bands in 1996 and 2001 comparable with one another (Leibbrandt et al. 2006). A final limitation with the Census is that the data in both 1996 and 2001 feature very high numbers of zero-income households which has prompted poverty researchers to either exclude these households from the poverty analysis (Leibbrandt et al. 2006) or to adopt sophisticated imputation techniques in order to estimate income in these households (Ardington et al. 2006).

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<sup>38</sup> In 1993, Statistics South Africa conducted the first annual October Household Survey (Leibbrandt & Woolard, 2001a).

Perhaps the most frequently used sources of official data analysed in poverty studies (cf. Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a; Hoogeveen and Özler 2005; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008) are the Income and Expenditure Surveys (1995, 2000 and 2005). These surveys collect the most comprehensive income and expenditure data. However, the data are also collected at fairly long intervals (every five years) and recent changes in the survey methodology<sup>39</sup> compromise comparisons of income data over time (van der Berg et al. 2008b; Yu 2008). Concerns have also been raised about the sampling method used in the 2000 Income and Expenditure Survey. According to van der Berg and colleagues (2008b) sampling errors in the 2000 survey and inconsistencies in data management have meant that the income data collected in the 1995 and 2000 Income and Expenditure Surveys are largely incompatible.

Two additional sources of data from Statistics South Africa that have been used for poverty measurement in post-apartheid South Africa are the annual General Household Surveys<sup>40</sup> (or the October Household Survey prior to 2000) and the Labour Force Surveys (conducted bi-annually since 2000) (cf. Meth and Dias 2004; Meth 2007a). These surveys collect data more regularly, but the types of income that are captured are less comprehensive than in the IESs. The LFSs only collect information, for example, on income derived from employment and even this information is limited since it only includes income from a respondent's 'main job' (Meth 2006). In other words, there is no information on income from investments, private maintenance, remittances or gratuities. As a result, the income of households is underestimated and a large number of households are designated as having 'zero-income' (Meth 2006). Perhaps the largest constraint to the use of the LFSs to analyse poverty, however, is that information on social grant income is only collected at the household level. It is therefore only possible to identify whether any member

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<sup>39</sup> The 2005 Income and Expenditure Survey used a diary method to capture information on household expenditures over the past four weeks. In order to employ this new methodology, field workers were required to visit each household five times over a four week period and leave an expenditure (or acquisition) diary with respondents over this period. This approach differs significantly from past surveys (1995 and 2000) where respondents were asked to recall their expenditures over the most recent four week period.

<sup>40</sup> The limitations of the GHSs in capturing income and expenditure information are described in detail in Section 3.1.

of the household has received a social grant and not how many grants are received by household members (Meth 2006).

## **2.2 Other data sources**

Apart from these official data sources, a number of surveys conducted by other organisations (external to Statistics South Africa) have been used to analyse poverty. The 1993 Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (PSLSD) was conducted by the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) at the University of Cape Town. While the data have been used to estimate poverty rates (Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a), the survey has not been well suited for analysing poverty rates over time because the questionnaire is very different to official (i.e. Statistics South Africa) survey instruments and the data are therefore not readily comparable to subsequent datasets in South Africa.

Panel data have also been used to analyse poverty in post-apartheid South Africa, but only at a regional level. The KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study (KIDS), conducted by researchers from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, re-interviewed households in KwaZulu-Natal that had originally participated in the PSLSD survey (two subsequent waves of data were collected in 1998 and 2004). A number of studies (Carter and May 2001; Roberts 2001; Woolard and Klasen 2005; Adato et al. 2006; Agüero et al. 2007a; May and Woolard 2007) have used the KIDS data to examine poverty, but, while the longitudinal nature of the data is useful for investigating poverty dynamics, the survey is not nationally representative and is limited to the KwaZulu-Natal province. Moreover, the survey did not sample all population groups and only re-interviewed Africans and Indians who had participated in the PSLSD.

The most recent source of income and expenditure data available for analysing poverty trends is the 2008 National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS), the first wave of a nationally representative panel data set. NIDS is also conducted by SALDRU (the same institution that conducted the 1993 PSLSD) and is partially modelled on the PSLSD. However, it is difficult to use the two data sets for a trend analysis of poverty because there is a large time interval between the two surveys (15

years). In addition, there are several methodological differences in the survey design that may also compromise comparability between the PSLSD and NIDS. Perhaps most importantly, the PSLSD followed the approach of most household surveys in asking a designated household member to provide information on all other household members. The NIDS questionnaire, however, is completed by each household member. This difference in methodology between the two surveys is particularly problematic for income comparisons (and by extension, poverty comparisons) because it is not clear how these survey differences could influence reported income (Leibbrandt et al. 2010).

In terms of compatibility with official sources of data (most notably the Income and Expenditure Surveys), information on income captured by NIDS and the PSLSD, as outlined above, are not comparable with the data sources collected by Statistics South Africa. In particular, NIDS uses a shorter recall period ('the past month') when gathering income and expenditure data (compared with the 12 month recall period in the IES). Leibbrandt and colleagues (2010) investigated the possible bias from these differing recall periods and found evidence to suggest that the longer (12 month) recall period may underestimate income. Another possible limitation to compatibility is that the aggregation of income and expenditure categories differ in a number of ways from the IESs (for a fuller discussion, see Argent et al. 2009; Leibbrandt et al. 2010). In addition, NIDS captures detailed information on implied rental income and agricultural income which are not comparable with data collected by Statistics South Africa.

Finally, in response to the limitations of using the available official data sources to analyse poverty in post-apartheid South Africa, van der Berg and colleagues (2008b) have made use of an innovative but controversial source of income data, the All Media and Products Survey (AMPS), to investigate poverty trends. AMPS is conducted annually or semi-annually by the South African Advertising Research Foundation and, while the survey is used primarily for market research, its main objective is to collect information on household income. Where information on income is not reported, it can be imputed by using information on household expenditure that is also captured in the survey (van der Berg et al. 2008b). Poverty estimates derived from the AMPS data have attracted attention in policy circles but they have also been the source of intense criticism by poverty analysts (cf. Meth 2006; Meth 2007b; Seekings 2007b). Some of the main



problems with the AMPS data, as noted by poverty researchers, are that income data are collected in bands, the sampling frame and questionnaire are not available for public scrutiny, and there are concerns about the representivity of the AMPS sample (Meth 2006; Seekings 2007b).

### **3. The October Household Surveys and the General Household Surveys**

While all poverty studies in South Africa (and especially those that seek to identify poverty trends over time) are constrained by the data limitations outlined in the previous section, this study uses a data source that has been underutilised in analyses of poverty in the post-apartheid period. The poverty analyses presented in the following chapters make use of income and expenditure data from Statistics South Africa's October Household Surveys (collected annually from 1993 to 1999) and General Households Surveys (collected annually from 2002). The OHSs and the GHSs are nationally representative large-sample (approximately 30,000 households) household surveys that collect information on the social, economic and demographic characteristics of South African households. Both the OHSs and GHSs focus broadly on areas such as health, education, labour force participation, housing and access to basic services. Despite the relatively wide scope of these surveys, the questionnaires capture fairly detailed estimates of earned income. In both the OHSs and the GHSs respondents are asked to provide point estimates of income earned from wages and self-employment. Where respondents are unable or unwilling to provide point estimates, the questionnaires ask them to select from a range of fairly narrow income bands. Across the OHSs and the GHSs the vast majority of income for individuals with employment or earnings from self-employment is captured as point estimates (absolute values).

In terms of the measurement of poverty rates, one of the most important features of the OHSs and the GHSs is that they regularly collect data on earned income as well as information on *individual* access to social grants. This makes it possible to generate measures of income for individuals and households that can be further disaggregated by income source (i.e. pre- and post-transfer income). The ability to disaggregate a measure of household income is a potentially important attribute for a gendered analysis of poverty as some work (cf. Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a; Gornick and Jäntti 2010) has suggested that social grant income is more important for females and female-headed households (compared with males and male-headed households).

Moreover, one of the government's main poverty reduction interventions in the post-apartheid period has been the extension of the state social security system as well as the roll-out of several new social grants (Seekings 2007b; Leibbrandt et al. 2010). The OHSs and GHSs can, therefore, be used to contribute to the broader debate on poverty trends as well as to changes in gendered poverty rates.

In order to measure gendered poverty trends in the post-apartheid period, four surveys are analysed in the period between 1997 and 2006. The study uses the 1997 OHS as the base year because this is the first of the OHSs to capture comprehensive information on individual access to social grant receipt.<sup>41</sup> The 1998 OHS was not used because it sampled only 20,000 households due to budget constraints. In 2002, the first GHS was conducted but it did not capture individual access to social grant income and income measures derived from this survey are, therefore, not comparable with the 1997 and 1999 OHSs. In selecting two GHSs with which to analyse poverty in the 2000s, the 2004 and 2006 GHSs were chosen because, according to Statistics South Africa (2007), they use a sample design based on the same master sample.<sup>42</sup> Most importantly, however, the 2004 and 2006 GHSs capture detailed information on individual receipt of social grant income and are, therefore, largely comparable with the post-1996 OHSs.

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<sup>41</sup> The 1993-1996 OHSs only ask if each individual has received the 'old age pension/civil pension', 'disability grants/social grant', 'maintenance grant/child grant' or 'other grants'. In other words, the questionnaire does not identify which grant was received by the respondent. The social grant modules from the earlier OHS questionnaires are therefore not comparable with the 1997-1999 OHSs or the GHSs. The first OHS (1993) is also not comparable with the other OHSs because it did not include the former homeland states.

<sup>42</sup> The 2004-2006 GHSs all use a sample design that is based on a master sample that was first used for the 2004 GHS (Statistics South Africa, 2007).

### 3.1 Income data in the OHSs and the GHSs

While the OHSs (1997 and 1999) and the GHSs (2004 and 2006) used to measure poverty in this study all collect information on individual access to earned and social grant income, there are some important differences in the way that they capture income data. The 1997 OHS, for example, collects information on the value of income earned or received from a wide variety of sources (e.g. private pensions, investments, private maintenance, gratuities, remittances and ‘other sources’). The 1999 OHS and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs only record whether or not individuals received income from these sources and do not capture values. In order to generate comparable measures of income over time, income derived from these additional sources that are captured in the 1997 OHS (but not in the other surveys) are, therefore, excluded from the estimates of changes in income poverty over time. The sensitivity of poverty estimates to this adjustment, however, is considered in some detail in the following chapter.

The questions used to record income and expenditure are similar across the OHSs and GHSs. In both the OHSs and the GHSs, the income module captures information on an individual’s total pay/salary from their main job before deductions.<sup>43</sup> Respondents are asked to give point estimates for earned income, but if unable to do so, are prompted to select from income bands. Nominal income bands are constant across the OHSs and GHSs. Where point estimates are not available and income is reported in bands, the midpoint of the reported income bracket is used.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> One minor difference in the way that income is captured in the OHSs and GHSs is that the OHSs include a separate section for total income/turnover from self-employment or own activities. In the GHSs, all forms of income are captured in the same section- but only after all types of work activities are recorded in an earlier section (e.g. section 2.1 in the 2004 GHS).

<sup>44</sup> Observations with no income information at all, those with an absolute figure but no pay period information, with no income category information, or ‘don’t know’ or ‘refuse’ were set to missing. Roughly five per cent of the employed in the 1997 OHS and about six per cent of the employed in the 2006 GHS were assigned missing values for income.

An important difference in the way that income is recorded across the OHSs and the GHSs is in the capture of social grant income. The 1997 OHS records a monetary value for each social grant that is received by individual household members. In the 1999 OHS and the GHSs (from 2003 onwards), the value of social grants is not captured but the questionnaire identifies which grants are received by each individual household member. In order to derive comparable estimates of individual social grant income across the household surveys analysed in this chapter, information on the individual receipt of grants is converted to income values using the maximum value of each grant in each respective year.<sup>45</sup>

Table 6 lists the nominal, maximum value of each grant in respective years. In assigning the maximum value of each grant to measure social grant income, the estimates of the extent of social grant spending, if not the actual expenditure by grant type<sup>46</sup>, are reasonably in line with administrative records. According to Statistics South Africa (2009), weaknesses in administrative reporting systems, confusion between enumerators and respondents about the names of social grants, and incomplete information about population growth (due largely to the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic) are all likely to have contributed to the differences between survey and administrative estimates of social grant spending.

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<sup>45</sup> To the extent that social grant payments are means-adjusted, the measures of individual grant income will be over-estimated. However, because it is not known what income sources would have been declared by social grant applicants, the maximum value of the grant is used to generate comparable data across the surveys.

<sup>46</sup> While overall spending on social grants is captured fairly adequately, the household surveys do not match the administrative records in terms of individual grant receipt. For example, household survey data consistently tend to over-estimate the receipt of the pension while underestimating receipt of the Disability Grant. In the case of the State Old Age Pension, Statistics South Africa (2009) is aware of the problem and concludes that the over-estimation of the receipt of the state pension is caused by the erroneous capture of pensions received by retired employees of the state.

**Table 6 Maximum grant amounts in non-inflation adjusted Rands (nominal amounts)**

<b>Grants</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>State Old Age Pension (SOAP)</b>	470	520	620	700	780	820
<b>Disability Grant (DG)</b>	470	520	620	700	780	820
<b>Child Support Grant (CSG)</b>	---	100	130	160	180	190
<b>Care Dependency Grant (CDG)</b>	470	520	620	700	780	820
<b>Foster Care Grant (FCG)</b>	340	370	450	500	560	590

Source: Intergovernmental Fiscal Review- National Treasury (2007)

In order to examine the magnitude of the differences between survey estimates and official administrative records, spending on social grants is tabulated in Table 7 and Table 8. Table 7 documents estimates of social grant receipt based on responses from the OHSs and the GHSs (weighted data) while Table 8 lists the corresponding figures obtained directly from official administrative records. The adjusted totals presented in the last row of Table 8 exclude War Veteran Grants and Grants in Aid (two grants which are not consistently captured in the OHSs and the GHSs) so that the column totals can be compared directly with those presented in Table 7. In 1997, estimates from the OHS suggest that the government spent R14.7 billion on social grants. Estimates of social grant spending based on administrative records of the number of grant beneficiaries for the 1997/98 fiscal year place the figure at R13.6 billion.<sup>47</sup> The figures based on

<sup>47</sup> Historical administrative data for grant expenditure are not available for the period prior to 2001 (personal communication with National Treasury, Department of Social Development and the South African Social Security Agency, Jan.-Feb. 2010). In order to impute estimates for grant spending for the 1997/98 and 1999/00 fiscal years, the maximum value of each grant was multiplied by the number of grant beneficiaries reported in the administrative records (Table 8). This is not a perfect solution since the actual amount of the grant would be less than the maximum value in some cases. As such, the estimates presented in the first two columns of Table 8 represent upper-bound estimates of grant spending in those years.

data from the 1999 OHS are also relatively close to those derived from administrative records. However, the survey data seem to underestimate grant expenditure slightly in 1999 (the OHS estimates that government spent R14.3 billion while official data yield a figure of about R16.1 billion).

**Table 7 Annual social grant expenditure estimated from the household surveys, 1997-2006**

<b>R million</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>SOAP</b>	12 156 (2 155 496)	11 954 (1 915 827)	22 200 (2 516 446)	24 120 (2 632 943)
<b>DG</b>	2 415 (428 318)	2 060 (330 179)	10 176 (1 087 134)	10 248 (1 041 909)
<b>CSG</b>	---	133 (110 539)	9 468 (4 381 133)	15 360 (6 728 624)
<b>CDG</b>	74 (13 182)	91 (14 615)	541 (57 771)	720 (73 112)
<b>FCG</b>	73 (17 800)	49 (11 059)	617 (91 745)	1 025 (144 828)
<b>Total</b>	<b>14 718</b> <b>(2 614 796)</b>	<b>14 287</b> <b>(2 382 219)</b>	<b>43 002</b> <b>(7 986 124)</b>	<b>51 473</b> <b>(10 621 416)</b>

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs)

Notes: The data are weighted

Number of recipients in parentheses (actual numbers)

Rand values are nominal

Figures of social grant expenditure based on survey data are much closer to the numbers published by the National Treasury and the Department of Social Development in 2004 and 2006.<sup>48</sup> In 2004, the GHS estimates of social grant expenditure suggest that government spent a total of R43 billion on all social grants. According to the National Treasury (2007), the Department of Social Development spent approximately R44.8 billion on grants in the 2004/5 fiscal year. Similarly, in 2006, GHS data suggest that social grant spending was around R51.5 billion, while administrative records document spending at approximately R51.9 billion for the 2005/6 fiscal year and R56.9 billion for the 2006/7 fiscal year.

<sup>48</sup> This is likely due, in part, to improved record keeping after responsibility for the management of social security payouts was transferred to SASSA. Prior to 2001, it was the responsibility of provincial treasury departments to administer social grants and to keep records of expenditure (personal communication with the National Treasury, February 2010).

**Table 8 Annual expenditure (Rands) and number of recipients by grant type, administrative records**

<b>R million</b>	<b>1997/98</b>	<b>1999/2000</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>
<b>SOAP</b>	9 602 (1 702 647)	11 536 (1 848 726)	18 504 (2 093 075)	19 996 (2 144 117)	21 444 (2 186 189)
<b>DG</b>	3 723 (660 198)	3 791 (607 537)	12 570 (1 307 459)	14 438 (1 319 536)	15 510 (1 437 842)
<b>CSG</b>	---	418 (348 532)	11 431 (5 633 647)	14 483 (7 044 901)	16 575 (7 879 558)
<b>CDG</b>	57 (10 126)	142 (22 789)	760 (85 818)	938 (94 263)	1 040 (103 992)
<b>FCG</b>	179 (43 906)	221 (49 843)	1 563 (256 325)	2 044 (312 614)	2 376 (381 125)
<b>War Veteran Grant</b>	---	---	36 (3 340)	29 (2 832)	25 (2 326)
<b>Grant in Aid</b>	---	---	20 (23 131)	---	---
<b>Total</b>	---	---	<b>44 885</b>	<b>51 927</b>	<b>56 969</b>
	<b>(2 436 436)</b>	<b>(2 895 335)</b>	<b>(9 402 795)</b>	<b>(10 918 263)</b>	<b>(11 991 032)</b>
<b>Adjusted total</b>	<b>13 561</b> <b>(2 416 877)</b>	<b>16 108</b> <b>(2 877 427)</b>	<b>44 829</b> <b>(9 376 324)</b>	<b>51 898</b> <b>(10 915 425)</b>	<b>56 944</b> <b>(11 988 706)</b>

Sources: Department of Social Development Annual Reports, Inter-governmental Fiscal Reviews- National Treasury, Estimates of Public Expenditure- National Treasury

Notes: Number of recipients in parentheses (actual numbers)

Rand values are nominal

Estimates in the first two columns are derived by multiplying the maximum value of the grant by the number of beneficiaries

Estimates of social grant spending derived from the OHSs and the GHSs appear relatively similar, on the whole, to official records and they are therefore used to estimate poverty trends in this study. While the estimates presented in Table 7 are not an exact match with records of social grant spending from administrative data,<sup>49</sup> the OHSs and the GHSs are the only available data sources that consistently and regularly capture the individual receipt of social grant income.

<sup>49</sup> Another possible explanation (apart from the use of maximum social grant values to estimate grant expenditure in the surveys) for the slight divergence in expenditure estimates between the household surveys and official sources is the method of data collection. The administrative records are compiled at the end of each fiscal year while the survey

### 3.2 Data adjustments

One of the key challenges in measuring income with Censuses and household surveys in South Africa is the high number of zero-income households (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999; Leibbrandt et al. 2005; van der Berg et al. 2008b). Leibbrandt and colleagues (2005), for example, found that 23 per cent and 28 per cent of households in the 1996 and 2001 Censuses, respectively, reported zero or missing income. There are several reasons (apart from false reporting) why there may be zero-income households in the OHSs and the GHSs.<sup>50</sup> First, of the surveys analysed in the poverty analysis, only the 1997 OHS collects information on private pensions. As a result, many of the elderly, living in households where neither social grants nor earned income is reported, would be incorrectly identified as having no income. Second, only the 1997 OHS collects information on the value of remittances and private maintenance. This is a particularly important shortcoming for a poverty analysis since these are income sources that are more likely to be important for low-income households (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). Households that have no access to earned income or social grant income but which exist on savings, investments, private pensions, remittance transfers or private maintenance would therefore be identified as ‘zero-income’ households.

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data represent a ‘snapshot’ of grant receipt (i.e. they collect information on grant receipt in the month of the survey) and then annual expenditure estimates are obtained by multiplying by 12.

<sup>50</sup> This is a problem with a number of South African data sets (see van der Berg et al., 2008) and some poverty analysts have attempted to redress this problem by scaling up income estimates to bring them in line with national accounts data (see Meth, 2006; van der Berg et al., 2008). However, this exercise has been fraught with difficulties since inflating income data from household surveys to match national accounts data requires fairly unrealistic assumptions about under-reporting in surveys (see Meth, 2006) and because problems with national accounts data are likely to render them as relatively poor instruments with which to measure income levels (and may even overstate income levels) (Deaton, 2003; Ravallion, 2003). Because of these inherent problems with the available data (both survey and national accounts) and because this study is concerned with poverty rates over time (rather than with poverty estimates at any single point in time), the possible underestimation of income is investigated using the 1997 OHS but no effort is made to bring income estimates in line with national accounts data.



Table 9 describes the extent of zero-income households in the surveys analysed in this thesis. The table documents the number and percentage of households for which no earnings or social grants are reported. As the table suggests, the percentage of households that reported zero-income was much higher in the OHSs (23.4 per cent and 24 per cent in 1997 and 1999, respectively) compared with the GHSs (17 per cent and 14.4 per cent in 2004 and 2006, respectively). The decline in the number and percentage of households reporting zero-income in the GHSs notwithstanding, about 14 percent of all households in the 2006 survey still reported receiving neither earnings from employment nor grant income.

**Table 9 Zero-income households, 1997 – 2006**

	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>
	<b>Zero earnings + zero social grants</b>			
<b>Number</b>	6 972	6 273	4 449	4 031
<b>Percentage</b>	23.39	24.00	16.97	14.40

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

Notes: The data are not weighted

A 'zero-income' household is a household that reported receiving no income from either earnings or social grants.

Table 10 shows the percentage of individuals (by gender) who live in households that report no income from earnings or social grants. As the table suggests, a greater percentage of females, relative to males, were living in zero-income households in 1997 and 1999. In the GHSs, however, a slightly higher percentage of males were living in zero-income households. Among individuals living in zero-income households (not shown in table) females were over-represented (relative to their share in the population) in every year except 2004 (roughly half of individuals living in households that report zero-income were females in the 2004 GHS).

The treatment of these zero-income households therefore has important implications for the analysis of poverty presented in this thesis. If no correction is made for the underestimation of income in zero-income households (i.e. these households remain in the sample as having zero-income), poverty will likely be overestimated. If these households are removed from the analysis altogether (following the approach used by Leibbrandt et al. (2006) with Census data), then poverty rates would be underestimated if households identified as having 'zero-income' are typically very low income households. The decision to impute missing income data is therefore important for two reasons. First, the substantially higher percentages of zero-income households

in the OHSs would bias estimates of poverty trends over time. Second, leaving these households (and the individuals who live in them) as having zero income or removing them from the poverty analysis altogether would affect poverty estimates among both males and females.

**Table 10 Percentage of individuals living in zero-income households by gender, 1997-2006**

	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>
<b>All</b>				
<b>Number</b>	30 252	24 335	12 100	10 628
<b>Percentage</b>	21.61	22.82	12.45	10.05
<b>Males</b>				
<b>Number</b>	13 389	11 272	6 053	5 211
<b>Percentage</b>	20.79	22.17	13.14	10.54
<b>Females</b>				
<b>Number</b>	16 863	13 053	6 042	5 414
<b>Percentage</b>	22.20	23.41	11.82	9.63

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

*Note:* The data are not weighted

In order to redress the underestimation of income associated with ‘zero-income’, household income is augmented with expenditure data for zero-income households in the poverty analysis. Household income is imputed using information collected on household expenditure captured in the OHSs and the GHSs.<sup>51</sup> Although household expenditure is captured only through a single question, and is therefore a fairly crude proxy for total household income, it offers the means to approximate income in households that do not report earnings or grant income.

Table 11 demonstrates that imputing income using expenditure data in households with neither earnings nor social grants substantially reduces the number and percentage of zero-income

<sup>51</sup> The 1997 OHS captures household expenditure as a point value while the other surveys collect expenditure information in bands. Where expenditure is captured in bands, the midpoint of the expenditure bracket is assigned to households that report zero earnings and zero social grant income. Most households with zero income did *not* report expenditure in the lowest band. In 1999, 2004 and 2006, between 34.5 per cent and 41.5 per cent of households reported that their household expenditure was in the lowest band (R0-R399 total household monthly income). Income bands are constant across all three surveys.

households in both the OHSs and the GHSs.<sup>52</sup> Across all four survey years, the percentage of zero-income households is significantly reduced (to 1.90 per cent, 3.95 per cent, 1.34 per cent and 0.60 per cent, respectively) using this method to redress the underestimation of income (compared with the numbers and percentages of zero-income households reported in Table 9).<sup>53</sup> Moreover, average monthly per capita income among (formerly) zero-income households increases significantly in real terms (from R412.68 in 1997 to R559.42 in 2006) between 1997 and 2006 when expenditure is used to augment household income data. Imputing income with expenditure data therefore offers the means to substantially address the high percentage of zero-income households in the OHSs and the GHSs.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Where expenditure information is also missing, then these households have been dropped from the sample. As Table 11 shows, across all the years, a very small percentage of households reported neither income nor expenditure information.

<sup>53</sup> Across the four survey years, the real median difference between income and expenditure in households that report both income and expenditure information is positive and ranges from approximately R106 to R264.

<sup>54</sup> While this adjustment does reduce the number and percentage of zero-income households, the remaining concern with augmenting income data with household expenditure information in the OHSs and the GHSs is that these data are crude - the band sizes are large. The 2004 and 2006 GHSs, however, also include a more comprehensive measure of household expenditure (Q4.72a-f in 2004 and Q4.70a-f in 2006) in which respondents are asked about monthly expenditure on items such as food, clothing, transport, housing and personal expenses (respondents are asked to give point estimates). The OHSs only ask about spending on food and on transport and this information is collected in bands. It is therefore not possible to compare comprehensive measures of expenditure across the OHSs and GHSs used in the poverty analysis presented in the following chapters. However, the more comprehensive measure of expenditure from the GHSs does not appear to be a better proxy for income than the midpoint of the expenditure bands. For example, when income data are augmented with comprehensive expenditure information for households with zero income from earnings and grants (or even in households where reported income is less than expenditure), poverty rates based on this adjustment are not significantly different from poverty rates derived from income estimates based on the midpoint of the expenditure brackets in 2004 and 2006. Thus, even though the use of a single expenditure question captured in bands is relatively crude, there is no evidence to suggest that this approach is underestimating household income in the GHSs. The underestimation of income in the OHSs will be further explored in the sensitivity analysis in the following chapter.

**Table 11 Effects of augmenting income data with expenditure in zero-income households, 1997-2006**

	<b>Remaining zero-income households after imputing income from expenditure data</b>			
	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>
<b>Number</b>	566	1 033	350	167
<b>Percentage</b>	1.90	3.95	1.34	0.60
<b>Real per capita</b>	412.68	351.98	585.78	559.42
<b>monthly household</b>	(19.89)	(13.56)	(23.03)	(23.34)
<b>income (2000 prices)</b>				

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

Notes: Real per capita income is only for the (formerly) zero-income households

Data are weighted in the last row of the table

Standard errors in brackets

#### **4. Poverty measurement**

Throughout the descriptive poverty analysis presented in the following chapters, poverty estimates are based on three different measures of per capita monthly household income. The first measure (measure I) consists of earned income from wages or self-employment only (i.e. pre-transfer income). The second measure (measure II) combines earned income with social grant income but offers no correction for the remaining zero-income households (which receive neither). In order to redress the underestimation of income (zero-income in measure I and measure II) the third measure (measure III) augments earned and social grant income with expenditure data for households that report zero-income (as described in the previous section). The first measure of income, therefore, is used to measure what the extent, depth and severity of poverty would have been had individuals and households relied only on the earnings of resident household members. The second measure highlights how the inclusion of social grant income changes poverty estimates.<sup>55</sup> Finally, measure III corrects for the likely underestimation of

<sup>55</sup> Changes in poverty estimates from measure I to measure II do not imply a causal relationship between poverty status and the receipt of grants. The analysis presented here cannot claim to describe the counterfactual situation (or in other words, the difference between pre- and post-transfer income does not represent the impact of social grant income because it is not possible to estimate what the level of poverty *would have been* without grant income), but rather attempts to describe the types of income that are important to the differences in gendered poverty rates.

income in the OHSs and the GHSs caused by the incomplete capture of information on all income sources.

In estimating poverty, the study uses the conventional Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) (see Foster et al. 1984) series of poverty measures to identify trends in the incidence, depth and severity of income poverty among both males and females. The notation for the FGT series is as follows:

$$P_{\alpha} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^q \left( \frac{z - y_i}{z} \right)^{\alpha}$$

where  $z$  is the poverty line,  $y_i$  is individuals  $i$ 's level of income, and  $\alpha$  denotes the degree of aversion to poverty. As the parameter denoting  $\alpha$  increases, the measure of poverty becomes more sensitive to individuals living farther below the poverty line. For example, if  $\alpha$  is equal to zero then the index simply yields the poverty headcount (the number or percentage of individuals below the poverty line); if  $\alpha$  is estimated as one then the index measures a given sample's average distance from the poverty line (the depth of poverty or the poverty gap ratio); and if  $\alpha$  is selected as two then the index measures the severity<sup>56</sup> of poverty.

Two poverty lines are used to measure poverty in this study. The 'cost of basic needs' approach to the selection of a poverty line (see Ravallion 1994) is used to select monthly per capita household poverty lines ( $z$ ) of R322 and R174 (in constant 2000 prices).<sup>57</sup> The poverty line of R322 per capita monthly household income was first identified as a plausible poverty threshold by Hoogeveen and Özler (2006). Individuals are, therefore, identified as being poor if they live in households where average per capita household monthly income is below R322 (2000 prices). Using this poverty line has the added advantage of comparability with other post-apartheid poverty studies in South Africa that have used the same poverty line (Ardington et al. 2006;

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<sup>56</sup> Often referred to as the 'poverty gap squared', the severity of poverty is less intuitive than the poverty headcount rate and the poverty gap. By squaring the proportionate shortfall from the poverty line, the severity of poverty ( $P_2$ ) is an indicator that assigns a greater weight to the individuals farthest below the poverty line.

<sup>57</sup> Income measures were adjusted for inflation using Statistics South Africa's consumer price index (yearly average) with 2000 as the base year.

Hoogeveen and Özler 2006; Leibbrandt et al. 2006; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008). The R174 poverty line, while substantially lower than the R322 threshold, has also been commonly adopted in other studies as a lower-bound poverty line (Hoogeveen and Özler 2006; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008) and is roughly comparable to the international \$2/day poverty threshold (Hoogeveen and Özler 2006). This lower poverty line is, therefore, used both as an indicator of ‘extreme poverty’ (i.e. the well-being of those individuals who live in households where per capita household monthly income is well below the plausible threshold of R322) and to test the sensitivity of poverty estimates to an alternate specification of the poverty threshold. As in other conventional poverty analyses, household resources (income) are assumed to be shared equally among household members.

## **5. Limitations of the money-metric approach to measuring gender inequality**

While this thesis aims to explore gendered poverty trends using comparable data sources that are relatively well suited to the task at hand, there are several limitations to the study design. First, and as noted above, conventional poverty studies assume that household resources are equally shared and therefore cannot explore the implications of intra-household resource allocations for individual poverty measures. In other words, female poverty will be under-estimated if some women living in non-poor households consume resources below the poverty threshold (Chant 2003c; Chant 2006a).

Second, there remains a strong critique which questions whether income and, by extension, money-metric measures of deprivation can adequately capture gender inequality (Fukuda-Parr 1999; Razavi 1999a; Chant 2006a; Chant 2006b; Molyneux 2006). Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept and income is only one component of material deprivation. Similarly, it is very likely the case that income poverty denotes only one element of gender inequality in access to resources. Gender analysts have pointed out, for example, that the concept of income poverty is, itself, value laden and carries the assumption that men and women have similar needs and experiences such that many measurements of income poverty are ‘gender blind’ (Chant 2003c).

Moreover, and as Chant (2007b) argues, the command over household resources may actually be more important to the overall well-being of female heads (or women more generally) compared with the actual level of income or resources in the household. In addition, she suggests that measures of poverty such as the multiple indices of deprivation<sup>58</sup> (Wright and Noble 2009; Noble et al. 2010) or time poverty<sup>59</sup> (cf. Bardasi and Wodon 2006; Lawson 2006; Lawson 2008) may be more appropriate in the gender context and that collapsing gender into a money-metric poverty framework detracts from the notion that, while there is certainly an overlap between gender and poverty, gender inequality and income poverty are separate phenomena (Chant 2003c). A capabilities framework, as advocated by Sen (1985; Sen 1990), therefore, is often proposed as a way of capturing more (but certainly not all) of the gendered determinants of well-being beyond income (Baden 1999; Fukuda-Parr 2003).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The measure of ‘multiple indices of deprivation’ operationalises the notion that well-being is experienced across a number of different domains. In the South African context, this work has been relatively well-developed by Noble and colleagues (see for example Noble et al., 2010) who suggest that deprivation can be separated into domains such as: income, employment, health, education and living environment. While particularly useful from a planning perspective, data constraints currently do not allow the comparison of trends over time (the release of the 2011 Census, however, will make such analyses possible) (Noble et al., 2010).

<sup>59</sup> Gendered estimates of time poverty have been employed in some contexts to demonstrate that women are often disadvantaged in terms of their ‘leisure’ time. One way that this has been highlighted (Lawson, 2008) is through evidence showing that, even when women gain access to employment, the time that they spend in unpaid domestic work does not decrease accordingly. As a result, women often enjoy less leisure or ‘non-productive’ time than their male counterparts.

<sup>60</sup> A capability framework, for example, recognises the ‘capability to function’ as one of the core elements of an individual’s well-being (see for example Sen, 1985). In empirical terms, these capabilities have been measured (most famously in the United Nations Development Programmes’s Human Development Index (HDI)) in terms of life expectancy (longevity), education (knowledge) and income (as a proxy for the freedom to make decisions an individual enjoys as a result of her or his capabilities) (Sen, 1985). In terms of gender and the capabilities approach, gender equity has contributed theoretically to the evolution of the human development approach and, in practical terms, a capabilities-based measure of well-being (i.e. the HDI and the Gender Development Index (GDI)) have been used to identify gender differences in access to basic rights (e.g. longevity), education and political empowerment (Fukuda-Parr, 2003).

These limitations to a money-metric approach to investigating gendered access to resources notwithstanding, income is widely accepted as one of the best available proxies for poverty (Ravallion 1994; Deaton and Holmberg 1997; Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a). A distinct advantage is that money-metric approaches to the measurement of poverty are the most common and, thus, have the advantages of comparability and ease of interpretation for policy makers (Blackwood and Lynch 1994; Ravallion 1994; Lampietti and Stalker 2000). Despite criticisms concerned with the application of a money-metric approach to measuring gendered poverty in particular (BRIDGE 2001; Chant 2003c; Chant 2006a), it continues to offer a viable way of analysing poverty and gender. The non-welfarist approaches<sup>61</sup> to poverty measurement, despite their perceived theoretical advantages, have not fared as well in practice and, in particular, have not succeeded in explaining the different ways that poverty is experienced by men and women (Ravallion 1994; Baden 1999). In the South African context, a money-metric approach is uniquely positioned to investigate the claims (cf. Taylor 1997; Thurlow 2006) that post-apartheid economic policy has had a gendered impact on household access to resources and well-being and to examine the gendered implications of the reach of the social grant system. Moreover, the approach has been dominant in the analysis of poverty more generally in post-apartheid South Africa (Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a; Seekings 2007b) and, as such, offers a framework for comparing gendered poverty estimates with an established literature.<sup>62</sup>

Differences in income poverty levels between female- and male-headed households are also of interest to a study on gendered poverty trends despite the caveats that are often cited in the literature. Because conventional poverty analyses cannot go beyond the level of the household

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<sup>61</sup> Non-welfarist approaches to the conceptualisation of poverty such as Sen's capabilities approach, the basic needs approach and 'social exclusion' typically focus on capabilities, entitlements and social networks rather than on maximising income to measure welfare or well-being (Laderchi et al., 2003).

<sup>62</sup> In South Africa, data on time use and non-monetary indicators of well-being are also not collected consistently in surveys.



(i.e. income is assumed to be shared equally by all household members), estimating the (changing) aggregate differences between female- and male-headed households allows for an additional analysis of gender and access to resources. While the convention of measuring poverty differences between these two broad household types in developing countries stems, in part, from data constraints, the distinction is also of interest in its own right. In other words, this type of analysis (i.e. estimating poverty differentials between female- and male-headed households) is not intended to proxy for a gendered poverty analysis but rather highlights the implications of living in a particular household type in which a female may be the primary economic support or the key decision maker.

In addition, the critiques of headship based analyses of poverty have highlighted the importance of unpacking empirical findings further by identifying the heterogeneity within broad household types and by exploring further what characteristics (e.g. labour market, economic support, decision-making or merely symbolic seniority in the household) are captured by the term headship. Thus, even if many of the concerns with headship are well-founded (i.e. headship does not denote any consistent characteristics), there is still a place for headship based analyses and, as Varley (1996: 506) argues, ‘a philosophical rejection of the concept of head of household is therefore accompanied by a pragmatic need for more information about headship’. Towards this end, many of the alternative definitions of headship reviewed in the previous chapter allow for the opportunity to test empirically the association between particular types of headship (e.g. households that are supported by a female vs. households where there are no adult males in residence) and the risk of poverty (Fuwa 2000a; Fuwa 2000b). In turn, these definitions can be used to test the sensitivity of headship based findings which describe aggregate differences between female- and male-headed households.

## **6. Concluding remarks**

This chapter began by reviewing the available sources of survey data that can be used to estimate changes in income poverty over the post-apartheid period. As highlighted in much of the recent poverty literature, the Censuses and household surveys conducted since 1993 are a significant improvement over earlier data sources but are still not particularly well suited for analysing

poverty rates over time. In particular, the income data captured in most of these surveys are not compatible and missing or zero-income values are often a problem. Moreover, there have been very few surveys during the post-apartheid period which have regularly and consistently captured individual access to earned and social grant income.

The chapter then described two data sources, the OHSs and GHSs, that are conducted annually, capture information on earnings and social grants, and have been relatively under-utilised in poverty analyses. While these surveys do not consistently capture all types of income (e.g. remittances, investments, private pensions etc.), it is possible to augment income data with information on household expenditure. Another advantage of these surveys is that income measures can be disaggregated so that the ‘effect’ of grant income on poverty estimates can be isolated and, using more sophisticated techniques, the relative contributions of both earned and social grant income to the reduction of poverty can be identified. The next chapter now presents empirical work and estimates trends in the incidence, depth and severity of poverty, by gender, in the South African post-apartheid period.

## Chapter Six- Estimating Gendered Poverty Trends in South Africa, 1997- 2006<sup>63</sup>

### 1. Introduction

A feminisation of poverty consists of two concepts: i) the poverty rate among females relative to males and ii) changes in this poverty differential over a specified period of time. This direct comparison of poverty rates (between males and females) is important because it is not sensitive to demographic changes which may have resulted in a change in the total number or proportion of females (female-headed households) in the population as a whole. It also allows for a more nuanced comparison of poverty between males and females (i.e. relative changes in differentials in the extent, depth and severity of poverty between females and males can be estimated) (Medeiros and Costa 2007). While there has been some evidence of a feminisation of poverty in the South African poverty literature, there has been no comprehensive study of gendered poverty trends in the post-apartheid period. There have been, for instance, isolated attempts to look at poverty headcount rates among females at two points in time (e.g. by Bhorat and van der Westhuizen (2008) in 1995 and 2005), but there has been very little work which has studied gendered poverty trends in detail and there has been no research which has investigated the reasons underpinning the feminisation of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa (however, see

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<sup>63</sup> Parts of the work presented in the empirical chapters of this thesis have been published as working papers, conference papers and/or as peer-reviewed journal articles. This published work is cited as follows:

Posel, D. & Rogan, M. (2012) Gendered trends in poverty in the post-apartheid period, 1997-2006. *Development Southern Africa*, 29(1), Forthcoming.

Posel, D. & Rogan, M. (2011) Gendered trends in poverty in the post-apartheid period, 1997 – 2006. *Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA) Working Paper No. 205*. Cape Town, Economic Research Southern Africa.

Posel, D. & Rogan, M. (2010) Gendered trends in income poverty in post-apartheid South Africa, 1997-2006. *Ten Years of War Against Poverty Conference*. September 8-10. Manchester, United Kingdom.

Rogan, M. (2010) Poverty and headship in post-apartheid South Africa, 1997-2006. *Development Policy Research Unit Conference 2010*. October 27-29. Johannesburg.

Posel, D. & Rogan, M. (2009) Women, income and poverty: gendered access to resources in post-apartheid South Africa. *Agenda*, 81, 25-34.

Posel and Rogan 2009; Posel and Rogan 2010; Rogan 2010; Posel and Rogan 2011; Posel and Rogan 2012).

This chapter now examines gendered income poverty trends in South Africa between 1997 and 2006 using the three different measures of income outlined in the previous chapter. The analysis focuses on changes in *individual* poverty rates by gender and highlights some of the likely reasons for these changes over the period. In the interest of avoiding ambiguity, the chapter is concerned specifically with a comparison of the extent, depth and severity of female and male poverty over time while the next chapter turns to the issue of female headship.

The chapter is structured as follows. The next section provides a descriptive analysis of overall poverty trends and of trends by gender. The sensitivity of these poverty estimates to the inclusion of additional sources of income, to adjustments for household composition, and to alternate specifications of the poverty line is tested in Section Three. Following this, Section Four presents a decomposition analysis to identify the contribution of different income sources to poverty reduction, by gender. The final section (Section Five) concludes the chapter with a summary of gendered poverty trends in post-apartheid South Africa and of the sources of income that have contributed to these trends.

## **2. Individual poverty trends**

The poverty analysis presented in this section is descriptive and, using income and expenditure information from the OHSs and the GHSs, it examines gendered poverty trends based on three measures of income.<sup>64</sup> This section first considers gendered changes in the poverty headcount rate between 1997 and 2006, and then examines changes in both the depth and severity of poverty

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<sup>64</sup> Recall from the previous chapter that three measures of income have been derived from the data:

-Measure I: consists of earned income from wages or self-employment only (i.e. pre-transfer income)

-Measure II: combines earned income with social grant income but offers no correction for the remaining zero-income households (which receive neither)

-Measure III: augments earned and social grant income with expenditure data for households that report zero-income

among males and females during the period under review. Finally, the section looks at gendered trends in the incidence, depth and severity of poverty among Africans, in particular.

## 2.1 Poverty trends by gender

Table 12 presents poverty headcount ratios<sup>65</sup> from 1997 to 2006, estimated from the three measures of income. Within each year, and as would be expected, poverty rates are lowered considerably as the measure of income becomes more comprehensive. In 1997, for example, 65.3 per cent of South Africans lived in earnings-poor households (measure I). With the receipt of social grant income, the headcount rate falls to 62.5 per cent; and when the income measure is augmented with data on household expenditure, the poverty rate declines further to 59.5 per cent.

In terms of poverty trends over the entire period (1997 to 2006), the poverty headcount rate decreased overall, but this masks an initial increase in poverty rates from 1997 to 1999. The incidence of poverty then began to decline between 1999 and 2004, when social grants (II) and household expenditure (III) are included in the measure of income (e.g. overall poverty rates decreased significantly, according to estimates based on measure III). If only earned income (measure I) is considered, however, then poverty would only have started to decline between 2004 and 2006. Therefore, from 2004 to 2006, according to all three income measures, there was a large and significant fall in poverty rates. The estimates based on measure II and measure III, moreover, suggest that these declines were driven particularly by social grant income. This role of grant income is illustrated, for example, by the finding that, in 2006, approximately 64.3 per

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<sup>65</sup> Males and females of all ages (i.e. including children) are included in the poverty analysis presented in Table 12. Appendix A examines poverty trends by age group (children, working-age adults and the elderly). The role of elderly women in feminisation of poverty studies, in particular, has been investigated since the 1970s (see Pearce, 1978; McLanahan et al., 1989; Stone, 1989; Stapf, 1994; Rake & Daly, 2002; Chant, 2003c; Smeeding & Sandstrom, 2005; Finley, 2007; Brady & Kall, 2008). As Table 1A shows, there has been a feminisation of poverty among both working-age adults *and* among the elderly in post-apartheid South Africa. The growing difference in poverty rates between males and females therefore cannot be explained simply by the fact that the elderly are more likely to be poor and that women, on average, live longer than men.

cent of all South Africans would have been poor had they relied only on income earned from employment. With the inclusion of social transfers, however, the extent of poverty falls by five percentage points, to 59.1 per cent.

**Table 12 Poverty estimates ( $P_0$ ) for South Africa, 1997 – 2006 (per capita)**

Headcount (P <sub>0</sub> )					
	OHS 1997	OHS 1999	GHS 2004	GHS 2006	Relative change 1997-2006
Earnings only (I)					
All	65.33 (0.595)	68.08* (0.606)	68.87 (0.655)	64.26* (1.892)	-1.64%
Male	62.73 (0.619)	65.61* (0.628)	65.96 (0.698)	60.77* (1.927)	-3.12%
Female	67.74 (0.595)	70.41* (0.619)	71.69 (0.660)	67.67* (1.880)	-0.10%
Earnings + social grants (II)					
All	62.46 (0.604)	66.26* (0.609)	65.25 (0.665)	59.07* (1.808)	-5.43%
Male	59.97 (0.624)	63.94* (0.629)	62.37* (0.705)	55.70* (1.809)	-7.12%††
Female	64.78 (0.609)	68.43* (0.626)	68.05 (0.674)	62.36* (1.827)	-3.74%
Including household expenditure (III)					
All	59.51 (0.639)	63.62* (0.645)	61.60* (0.718)	55.96* (2.009)	-5.97%
Male	57.11 (0.655)	61.32* (0.663)	58.40* (0.750)	52.28* (1.997)	-8.46%††
Female	61.75 (0.647)	65.78* (0.662)	64.70 (0.732)	59.55* (2.034)	-3.56%

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

Turning specifically to gender differences in poverty, Table 12 also shows that, in each year, poverty estimates are significantly and consistently higher for females than for males across all

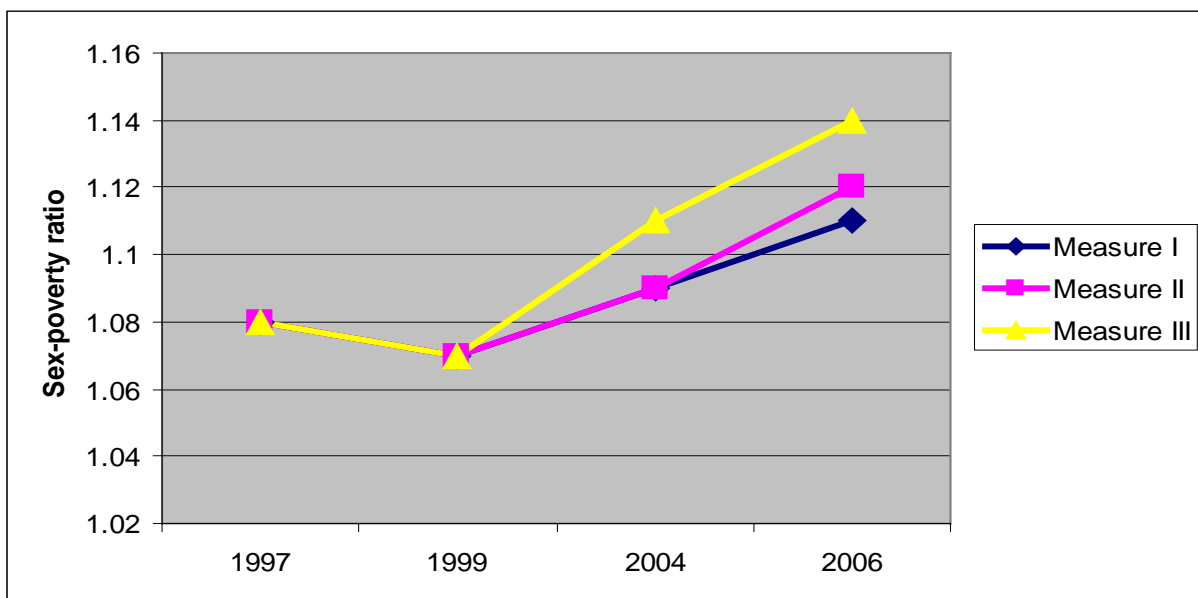
three measures of income. In 1999, for example, 65.8 per cent of females lived in poor households compared to only 61.3 per cent of males (according to measure III). Between 1997 and 2006, trends in poverty rates by gender are similar to overall trends, with headcount ratios rising for both males and females from 1997 to 1999 and then falling in 2004 and 2006. However, the data presented in the table demonstrate that, despite a decline in the extent of poverty among both males and females, gender differences in poverty actually widened over the decade. Moreover, across all three measures of income, the relative fall in poverty was greater for males than for females. According to measure III, for example, approximately 57.1 per cent of males lived in poor households in 1997 compared to 61.8 percent of females. By 2006, poverty rates had fallen to 52.3 per cent among males, but only to 59.6 per cent among females. This represents a relative fall of 8.5 per cent for males, but only a 3.6 per cent fall among females (and the change in the female headcount rate between 1997 and 2006 was not statistically significant).

Another common way of measuring relative changes in female poverty levels is to estimate sex poverty ratios (see for example McLanahan et al. 1989; Brady and Kall 2008). The ratio of women's poverty to men's poverty yields the sex poverty ratio such that when the ratio is greater than one, women are more likely to be poor than men. A higher sex poverty ratio therefore reflects a greater difference between women's and men's poverty headcount rates. Figure 1 depicts trends in the sex poverty ratio between 1997 and 2006 (according to the three measures of income).<sup>66</sup> The figure clearly demonstrates that the difference in the gender poverty differential increased over the period (after a slight decrease between 1997 and 1999). The ratios also demonstrate, in line with the poverty estimates presented above, that the difference between women's and men's poverty rates are slightly greater *after* social grant income is included in the income measure (and even larger after zero-income is augmented with expenditure data).

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<sup>66</sup> Appendix B presents estimates of the sex poverty ratios in table form.

**Figure 1 Sex-poverty ratios in post-apartheid South Africa, 1997-2006** <sup>67</sup>



Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

The poverty trends presented in Table 12 and the sex poverty ratios depicted in Figure 1 therefore both demonstrate that, despite decreasing levels of poverty overall (in line with other key post-apartheid studies), the difference in the level of poverty between males and females has widened over the decade under review. Furthermore, the data presented in this section have shown that, while social grant income has been important to the reduction of poverty overall, gender poverty differences (somewhat surprisingly) are actually slightly narrower when only pre-transfer income (measure I) is considered.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> There appears to be no distinction between the three measures of income in 1997 and 1999 in the figure because the sex-poverty ratios were the same in these two years across all three income measures (1.08 and 1.07, respectively). The difference in sex-poverty ratios only began to appear in 2004 and became far more noticeable by 2006. In other words, the difference in poverty rates between males and females increased over the period, but the differences in these ratios only began to widen according to the income measures in the 2000s.

<sup>68</sup> The reasons for this seemingly greater ‘effect’ of social grant income on the extent of male poverty are examined further in Section Four of this chapter.



## 2.2 The depth and severity of poverty, by gender

Table 13, which presents poverty gap ratios (or the depth of poverty), underscores the increasing contribution (particularly in the 2000s) of social grant income to reducing the depth of poverty. In 1997, for example, the poverty gap ratio drops from 0.53 on the basis of earned income only (I), to 0.44 with the inclusion of social grant income (II); and in 2006 it drops also from 0.53 but to 0.36. Furthermore, the table shows that although poverty gap ratios are consistently higher for females than for males, the receipt of grant income has likely had a greater impact on the depth of female poverty. Across all four years, the greatest absolute change in the poverty gap after including social grant income occurs among females. In 2006, for example, the poverty gap declines from 0.50 to 0.35 for males, once grant income is included, but it drops from 0.56 to 0.38 for females. The impact of social grant income on females can also be seen in gendered changes in the depth of poverty over the period. According to measure II, the poverty gap ratio decreased by 16.7 per cent (from 0.42 in 1997 to 0.35 in 2006) among males, but by about 17.4 per cent among females (from 0.46 in 1997 to 0.38 in 2006). Once income is augmented with expenditure information in zero-income households (measure III), however, the poverty gap ratio decreased significantly by 14.7 per cent (from 0.34 to 0.29) among males compared to a 10.8 per cent relative fall (from 0.37 to 0.33) among females from 1997 to 2006. According to the most comprehensive measure of income from the OHSs and the GHSs, then, the difference in the depth of poverty between males and females also widened over the decade.

Aside from highlighting the contribution of social grant income to the reduction of the depth of poverty among females, the table also demonstrates that the absolute difference in the depth of poverty between females and males is greatest when estimates are based on income measure I. In other words, earnings from employment were not enough to reduce gender differences in the poverty gap and, as shown in the table, the depth of female poverty would actually have increased (marginally) between 1997 and 2006 (from 0.55 to 0.56) on the basis of earned income only. This is likely explained, in part, by changes in labour market status, by gender, over the period. According to estimates (own calculations) from the OHSs and GHSs, the broad unemployment rate among working-age women (age 16 to 59, inclusive) increased from roughly

46 per cent to 50 per cent, but only from 30 per cent to 32 per cent among men between 1997 and 2006.

Moreover, even among the employed, females continue to earn less than males. In the 1997 OHS, the female-male ratio of median earnings was 0.65; by 2006 it had dropped to 0.61 (own calculations). In other words, the median earnings of employed women were only 61 per cent of the median earnings of employed men. Although women's employment (and labour force participation) has grown over the last decade, women are increasingly over-represented among low-wage workers. In 1997, 53 per cent of all those earning less than R600 a month (in 2000 prices) were women; by 2006, this had risen to 57 per cent (at the same time women accounted for only 40 per cent of all the employed in that year). These findings support the existing work (Casale and Posel 2002) in South Africa which suggests that women have not necessarily 'gained' much from their growing labour force participation since much of the increase is associated with movement into unemployment or very low paying jobs. In particular, the findings presented in Table 12 and Table 13 suggest that the increasing presence of women among low income earners, has not yielded much in terms of their movement out of poverty or, based on the poverty gap ratio calculated from measure I, even in a reduction in their aggregate shortfall from the poverty line (i.e the depth of female poverty).

**Table 13 The poverty gap (P<sub>1</sub>), 1997 – 2006**

<b>Poverty gap (P<sub>1</sub>)</b>					
	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>	<b>Relative change 1997-2006</b>
<b>Earnings only (I)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.53 (0.006)	0.56* (0.006)	0.58* (0.006)	0.53* (0.019)	0.00%
<b>Male</b>	0.50 (.006)	0.54* (0.006)	0.55 (0.007)	0.50* (0.019)	0.00%
<b>Female</b>	0.55 (0.006)	0.58* (0.006)	0.60* (0.007)	0.56* (0.019)	0.02%
<b>Earnings + social grants (II)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.44 (0.005)	0.49* (0.005)	0.42* (0.005)	0.36* (0.011)	-18.18%†
<b>Male</b>	0.42 (0.005)	0.47* (0.005)	0.41* (0.005)	0.35* (0.012)	-16.67%†
<b>Female</b>	0.46 (0.005)	0.50* (0.006)	0.43* (0.005)	0.38* (0.011)	-17.39%†
<b>Including household expenditure (III)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.36 (0.005)	0.41* (0.005)	0.36* (0.005)	0.31* (0.013)	-13.89%†
<b>Male</b>	0.34 (0.005)	0.39* (0.005)	0.34* (0.005)	0.29* (0.013)	-14.71%†
<b>Female</b>	0.37 (0.005)	0.42* (0.005)	0.37* (0.005)	0.33* (0.013)	-10.81%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty gap between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty gap between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

With respect to the measure of poverty which is the most sensitive to individuals living in households furthest below the poverty line, Table 14 shows that, for both males and females, estimates of the severity of poverty (P<sub>2</sub>) are largely in line with trends in the extent and depth of poverty from 1997 to 2006. More specifically, and with respect to gender differences, the severity of poverty is significantly higher for females across all four years and decreases are relatively greater for males (roughly 21 per cent) than for females (15 per cent). According to the most

complete measure of household per capita income (III) that can be derived the data, then, the poverty headcount as well as the depth and severity of poverty decreased by more among males than among females between 1997 and 2006.

**Table 14 Severity of poverty (P<sub>2</sub>) by gender 1997-2006 (measure III)**

	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>	<b>Relative change 1997-2006</b>
<b>All</b>	0.25 (0.004)	0.30* (0.004)	0.25* (0.004)	0.21* (0.009)	-16.00%†
<b>Males</b>	0.24 (0.004)	0.29* (0.004)	0.23* (0.004)	0.19* (0.009)	-20.83%†
<b>Females</b>	0.26 (0.004)	0.31* (0.004)	0.26* (0.004)	0.22* (0.009)	-15.38%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the severity of poverty between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the severity of poverty between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

*Notes:* The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

The poverty trends, disaggregated by three measures of income have, thus far, demonstrated that poverty has decreased over a recent ten year period and that social grant income (particularly in 2004 and 2006) has likely contributed to this decrease. However, while the extent, depth and severity of poverty fell over the decade for both males and females, these decreases mask important gender differences. Among individuals living in households that earn less than R322 per capita per month, males, on average, moved closer to the poverty line than females (as seen in the greater relative declines in the depth and severity of male poverty). Gendered trends in the depth and severity of poverty therefore demonstrate that the widening differences in poverty measures between males and females are observable at several levels (i.e. not just in the number or percentage of individuals that moved out of poverty). In other words, gendered changes in income have resulted in not only a growing gender gap in the incidence of poverty, but poverty has also been experienced less intensely among males, relative to females, over the period.

### **2.3 Gendered poverty trends among Africans**

In light of the legacy of apartheid, many poverty studies over the past decade (Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a; Hoogeveen and Özler 2005; Leibbrandt et al. 2006) have examined poverty rates by race. Unsurprisingly, all of these studies have found that Africans have the highest levels of poverty among all population groups and that Africans remain over-represented among the poor. Table 15 demonstrates that Africans have higher rates of the extent, depth and severity of poverty compared with overall poverty rates (i.e. poverty estimates presented in Table 12). Moreover, among all South Africans, African females experience the highest rates of poverty.

In 1997, a staggering 72.6 per cent of African females were estimated as living in poor households. The table shows further that, among Africans, the percentage of males living below the poverty line decreased significantly from 67.3 per cent in 1997 to 60.6 per cent in 2006 (a relative fall of almost ten per cent). Among African females, the headcount ratio fell only to 69 per cent over the period (a relative fall of only about five per cent). Among this population group, relative decreases in the depth of poverty (15 per cent for males and 11.4 per cent for females) and in the severity of poverty (20.7 per cent for males and 16.1 per cent for females) were also greater for males over the period. Therefore, among Africans, relative decreases in poverty estimates (incidence, depth and severity) among both males and females were greater than overall decreases- although these decreases were from a much higher base. From a gender perspective, the decrease in the extent of income poverty (as well as in the depth and severity of poverty) was greater for African males than for African females. Consequently, gender differences in the risk of living in poor households widened, particularly among Africans over the decade.

**Table 15 Poverty estimates among Africans, 1997 - 2006 (measure III)**

	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>	<b>Relative change 1997-2006</b>
<b>Headcount (P<sub>0</sub>)</b>					
<b>All</b>	70.04 (0.558)	72.98* (0.579)	71.22 (0.655)	64.86* (1.651)	-7.39%†
<b>Male</b>	67.25 (0.604)	70.10* (0.632)	67.64* (0.734)	60.57* (1.784)	-9.93%†
<b>Female</b>	72.61 (0.547)	75.67* (0.575)	74.68 (0.641)	68.99* (1.549)	-4.99%††
<b>Poverty gap (P<sub>1</sub>)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.42 (0.005)	0.47* (0.005)	0.42* (0.005)	0.36* (0.011)	-14.29%†
<b>Male</b>	0.40 (0.005)	0.44* (0.005)	0.39* (0.006)	0.34* (0.012)	-15.00%†
<b>Female</b>	0.44 (0.005)	0.49 (0.005)	0.44 (0.005)	0.39 (0.010)	-11.36%†
<b>Severity of poverty (P<sub>2</sub>)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.30 (0.004)	0.34* (0.004)	0.29* (0.004)	0.25* (0.008)	-16.67%†
<b>Male</b>	0.29 (0.004)	0.33* (0.005)	0.27* (0.005)	0.23* (0.009)	-20.69%†
<b>Female</b>	0.31 (0.004)	0.36* (0.005)	0.30* (0.004)	0.26* (0.008)	-16.13%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

The data presented in the poverty analysis, thus far, document an increase in income poverty between the mid to late 1990s and the early 2000s. After the expansion of the social grant system in 2001, however, the poverty headcount began to decline. The headcount estimates (measure III) presented in this chapter correspond closely with the overall trend identified in the literature and are very similar to the findings, in particular, of Ardington and colleagues (2006)- (see Table 5 from Chapter Four). The poverty analysis presented in this section demonstrates further that

females are more likely than males to live in households where average per capita monthly household income lies below a poverty line of R322 (2000 prices).

Despite the overall decline in poverty measures between 1997 and 2006, the estimates presented in this section have demonstrated that the decrease in poverty rates has been both absolutely and relatively smaller for females and that gender differences in the incidence of poverty therefore widened in favour of males. Moreover, among individuals living below the poverty line, the depth and severity of poverty decreased by significantly more among males than among females. With the receipt of social grant income, both the extent and depth of poverty are significantly lower than they would have been had households relied only on the earnings of members. While these transfers were not enough to narrow gender differentials in the incidence or depth of poverty according to the most comprehensive measure of income (measure III), the gender differences in the depth of poverty, in particular, would likely have been greater without social grant income.

### **3. Sensitivity tests**

#### **3.1 The underestimation of income in the OHSs and the GHSs**

While the advantage to using the OHSs and the GHSs to estimate gendered poverty trends is that they consistently and regularly capture information on individual access to both earned and social grant income, the disadvantage is that they do not consistently collect information on income from other sources (only the 1997 OHS captures relatively comprehensive income data). The primary risk, therefore, is that income may be under-estimated since information on a number of different sources has not been captured. Moreover, some of these non-labour income sources (e.g. remittances, private maintenance, gratuities, and ‘other’ income) may be particularly important for low-income households and their omission would likely create an upward bias in poverty estimates. In empirical terms and, as illustrated earlier in Table 9 (Chapter Five), the omission of these other income sources resulted in a significant percentage of households in which neither earned income nor social grant income were reported (recorded as ‘zero-income’ households). In

the poverty analysis presented in the previous section, the problem of underestimation resulting in zero-income households was corrected by replacing zero-incomes with data on reported (per capita) household expenditure (i.e. measure III). This section now considers whether this relatively simple imputation has effectively addressed the underestimation of household income and, more specifically, whether poverty estimates based on these imputed income values (i.e. measure III) are robust to comparisons with estimates based on more comprehensive income data.

In the poverty analysis, information on some of the income sources that had been captured in the 1997 OHS was not included in the income measure for 1997 so that income could be compared across all four years. In this section, a new measure of total household income for 1997 is created. This new measure consists of earnings and social grant income (measure II) augmented with all of the income sources that were captured in the 1997 OHS but not in the 1999 OHS and the GHSs. These additional sources of income include: private pensions, worker's compensation, state maintenance grants, private maintenance, the unemployment insurance fund (UIF), remittances, gratuities and 'other' sources.

Table 16 presents estimates of poverty derived from this new measure of income and, for purposes of comparison, repeats estimates derived from measure III as reported in Table 12. The table shows that the incidence of poverty is slightly (but not significantly) *higher* for this new measure compared with measure III. For example, in 1997, 60.2 per cent of individuals would have been classified as poor had the household income measure been constructed from all of the income sources captured in the 1997 OHS. In comparison, 59.5 per cent of individuals were estimated as poor using the expenditure-augmented measure of household income (measure III). The depth of poverty is also lower (and significantly so) for measure III among both males and females (compared with estimates based on the comprehensive income measure).

Therefore, while it would be preferable to collect comprehensive information on all sources of income across all four survey years, the data presented in Table 16 suggest that is very unlikely that, with income measure III, income continues to be underestimated relative to other income



measures. In particular, the table demonstrates that measure III is relatively effective in addressing the underestimation of income compared with a measure of income which includes a greater number of income sources- particularly those (e.g. remittances and private maintenance) which are more likely to be important sources of income in poor households (and which were excluded from the poverty trend analysis from the previous section).<sup>69</sup> These findings therefore suggest that gendered trends in the incidence and depth of poverty (as reported in the previous section) would be robust to the inclusion of remittance transfers and income derived from other sources not consistently captured in the OHSs and the GHSs.

**Table 16 Including all sources of income: poverty estimates in 1997**

	<b>Measure II + all sources</b>	<b>Measure III</b>
<b>Headcount (P<sub>0</sub>)</b>		
<b>All individuals</b>	60.21 (0.616)	59.51 (0.639)
<b>Male</b>	57.90 (0.633)	57.11 (0.655)
<b>Female</b>	62.36 (0.624)	61.75 (0.647)
<b>Poverty Gap (P<sub>1</sub>)</b>		
<b>All individuals</b>	0.38 (0.005)	0.36* (0.005)
<b>Male</b>	0.37 (0.005)	0.34* (0.005)
<b>Female</b>	0.40 (0.005)	0.37* (0.005)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS

\* Denotes a significant change from the preceding column at the 95 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Measure III includes expenditure data only for zero-income households

<sup>69</sup> This new measure of total income (II + all income sources) was further augmented with household expenditure information (for the remaining zero-income households) and poverty estimates based on this adjustment were compared with those based on measure III. The extent and depth of poverty were slightly lower based on this adjusted measure of total income but the poverty estimates were not significantly different to those derived from income measure III. There were also no significant changes in the differences in poverty rates by gender between estimates based on adjusted total income and those based on measure III.

### 3.2 Adjusting for household composition

Following both international (Ravallion 1994) and South African (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999) best practice, this section tests whether gendered poverty estimates are robust to adjustments for household composition. Using the 1993 PSLSD in what is, arguably, the most comprehensive study of income poverty in post-apartheid South Africa, Woolard and Leibbrandt (1999) found that their poverty estimates were relatively insensitive to adult equivalent adjustments for the number of children in the household and to adjustments for household economies of scale (see also Woolard and Leibbrandt 2001). This section tests whether the same conclusion holds for the data used to estimate gendered poverty trends in this chapter (the OHSs and the GHSs).

In choosing the most appropriate values for the adult equivalence adjustment for South African households, the sensitivity test follows May et al. (1995) and Woolard and Leibbrandt (1999) in estimating that children<sup>70</sup> consume half the resources of adults and in specifying an economy of scale parameter of 0.9. The R322 per capita monthly household income poverty line (2000 prices) has been adjusted for adult equivalence according to the method described in the *United Nations Poverty Handbook* (2005). Following this approach, the adult equivalent poverty line is set to the effective monthly per adult equivalent income of households of an average size and composition that have a real per capita monthly household income of R322. The result is a poverty line of R417 per adult equivalent in 2000 prices.

Table 17 compares per capita estimates (measure III) of the extent, depth and severity of poverty with per adult equivalent estimates in 2006. The comparison suggests that estimating poverty rates using a per adult equivalent measure makes very little difference to overall poverty estimates. As the table shows, per adult equivalent estimates are consistently (although not significantly) lower than poverty estimates based on per capita income. In 2006, for example, the poverty headcount ratio is 55.96 based on income measure III in per capita terms. If the adult

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<sup>70</sup> The estimation follows Woolard and Leibbrandt (1999) in defining children as those aged ten and younger. The following formula is used to adjust for per adult equivalence:  $(A + \alpha K)^0$ .

equivalent adjustment is applied, only 55.13 per cent of individuals are poor. This slight difference between the adult equivalent estimates and per capita poverty estimates is expected since the adjustment favours larger households that have a higher number of children. Since poor households tend to be larger on average, and to have a higher than average number of children, the poverty headcount is slightly (but not significantly) reduced.

**Table 17 Per capita and per adult equivalent poverty estimates, 2006 (measure III)**

	Per capita (Z=R322)			Per adult equivalent (Z=R417)		
	P <sub>0</sub>	P <sub>1</sub>	P <sub>2</sub>	P <sub>0</sub>	P <sub>1</sub>	P <sub>2</sub>
<b>All</b>	55.96 (2.009)	0.31 (0.013)	0.21 (0.009)	55.13 (1.963)	0.30 (0.012)	0.20 (0.008)
<b>Male</b>	52.28 (1.997)	0.29 (0.013)	0.19 (0.009)	51.83 (1.960)	0.28 (0.012)	0.19 (0.008)
<b>Female</b>	59.55 (2.034)	0.33 (0.013)	0.22 (0.009)	58.35 (1.985)	0.32 (0.012)	0.21 (0.008)

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

\* No per adult equivalent poverty estimates are significantly different from the per capita estimates

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 and R417 per capita and per adult equivalent poverty lines in 2000 prices, respectively

Adult equivalence was calculated by  $(A + \alpha K)^\theta$  where  $\alpha = 0.5$  and  $\theta = 0.9$

Following Woolard and Leibbrandt (2001), K = children aged ten and younger

Table 18 examines poverty estimates based on per adult equivalent income by comparing per capita trends in the extent of poverty with per adult equivalent estimated trends. The table demonstrates that overall poverty trends and poverty trends by gender are not greatly affected by the adjustment for an adult equivalence measure of income. There is no difference, for example, in the relative decrease in overall poverty rates over the decade when per adult equivalent income is used (i.e. poverty levels decrease by 5.97 per cent (between 1997 and 2006) according to both per capita and per adult equivalent measures). In terms of gendered poverty trends, poverty decreases by slightly more under the per adult equivalent measure (by 3.84 per cent compared with 3.56 per cent using the per capital income measure) among females and by slightly less among males (by 8.05 per cent in adult equivalent terms and by 8.46 per cent according to per capita estimates). On the whole, however, the level of male poverty still decreases by considerably more than does female poverty over the period (i.e. a relative fall of eight per cent

for males compared with a fall of only 3.8 per cent for females).<sup>71</sup> Thus, decreases in the extent of poverty are still absolutely and relatively greater for males when adjustments are made for household composition.

**Table 18 Per capita and per adult equivalent poverty trends**

	OHS 1997	OHS 1999	Headcount (P <sub>0</sub> )		Relative change 1997-2006
			GHS 2004	GHS 2006	
<b>Measure III- per capita (Z= R322)</b>					
<b>All</b>	59.51 (0.639)	63.62* (0.645)	61.60* (0.718)	55.96* (2.009)	-5.97%
<b>Male</b>	57.11 (0.655)	61.32* (0.663)	58.40* (0.750)	52.28* (1.997)	-8.46%††
<b>Female</b>	61.75 (0.647)	65.78* (0.662)	64.70 (0.732)	59.55* (2.034)	-3.56%
<b>Measure III- per adult equivalent (Z=R417)</b>					
<b>All</b>	58.60 (0.636)	63.26* (0.651)	60.86* (0.714)	55.13* (1.963)	-5.97%
<b>Male</b>	56.37 (0.652)	61.04* (0.692)	57.87 (0.745)	51.83* (1.960)	-8.05%††
<b>Female</b>	60.68 (0.645)	65.35* (0.725)	63.74 (0.728)	58.35* (1.985)	-3.84%

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 and R417 per capita and per adult equivalent poverty lines in 2000 prices, respectively

Adult equivalence was calculated by  $(A + \alpha K)^{\theta}$  where  $\alpha = 0.5$  and  $\theta = 0.9$

Following Woolard and Leibbrandt (2001), K = children aged ten and younger

In line with the findings by Woolard and Leibbrandt (1999; Woolard and Leibbrandt 2001), then, the estimates presented in this section suggest that poverty rates based on measure III are not sensitive to adjustments for household size and composition. Estimated poverty trends are not

<sup>71</sup> It is not surprising that per adult equivalent income adjustments reduce estimates of female poverty by more than for males. Females, on average, lived in larger households (5.4 members) than males (4.9 members) in 2006 and also resided with a greater number of children (1.5 compared with 1.3 for males) (own calculations from the 2006 GHS).

significantly changed and, most importantly for this analysis, the findings related to gendered trends in the poverty rate (i.e. the widening of poverty differences between males and females) are robust to adult equivalent adjustments.

### **3.3 Robustness to different poverty thresholds**

#### ***3.3.1 Extreme poverty***

Poverty analyses that rely on a single poverty line (or even on several poverty lines) risk over- or underestimating poverty by basing estimates on what are essentially arbitrary points in the income distribution (Ravallion 1994). In the case of a gender analysis, focusing on a single poverty threshold (e.g. R322) could potentially obscure gendered changes in income among individuals residing in households with incomes above and below the fixed poverty threshold. Since the analysis is concerned primarily with gendered changes in income poverty over time, it is important to consider changes over a range of possible poverty thresholds. This section again considers gendered poverty estimates; this time using the lower-bound poverty threshold (R174 per capita monthly household income). Individuals are identified as living in ‘extreme’ poverty if they live in households in which average monthly real per capita income is less than R174 (in 2000 prices). Once again, poverty estimates are presented for the three different measures of income.

Table 19 presents headcount estimates for extreme poverty between 1997 and 2006. As would be expected, estimates of the extent of poverty are considerably lower than those based on the upper-bound poverty line (R322) since households below the lower threshold would also be under the upper bound line. With respect to poverty changes over time and on the basis of earned income only, extreme poverty increased in each year from 1997 to 2004 and only decreased between 2004 and 2006. Moreover, according to the measure of earned income only, extreme poverty increased slightly (but not significantly) over the entire period. When measures II and III are considered, then trends in extreme poverty resemble those of income poverty over the period (i.e. poverty rates initially increase in 1999 and then decrease in both 2004 and 2006). Moreover,

overall poverty estimates based on these two measures of income suggest that the extent of income poverty decreased significantly over the decade as a whole (1997-2006).

**Table 19 Extreme poverty estimates for South Africa, 1997 – 2006 (per capita)**

Headcount (P <sub>0</sub> )					Relative change 1997-2006
OHS 1997	OHS 1999	GHS 2004	GHS 2006		
Earnings only (I)					
All	54.38 (0.619)	58.60* (0.644)	59.88 (0.698)	54.77 (1.988)	0.72%
Male	51.66 (0.633)	56.21* (0.654)	57.18 (0.728)	51.39* (1.979)	-0.52%
Female	56.91 (0.629)	60.84* (0.669)	62.50 (0.714)	58.07 (2.002)	2.04%
Earnings + social grants (II)					
All	47.57 (0.597)	53.05* (0.626)	47.30* (0.652)	40.70* (1.429)	-14.44%†
Male	45.13 (0.605)	51.07* (0.636)	45.55* (0.676)	38.32* (1.433)	-15.09%†
Female	49.84 (0.613)	54.92* (0.653)	48.99* (0.678)	43.01* (1.447)	-13.70%†
Including household expenditure (III)					
All	42.08 (0.608)	47.32* (0.639)	42.46* (0.691)	36.30* (1.650)	-13.74%†
Male	39.87 (0.614)	45.16* (0.650)	40.36* (0.708)	33.63* (1.638)	-15.65%†
Female	44.14 (0.627)	49.36* (0.666)	44.49* (0.720)	38.91* (1.672)	-11.85%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R174 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

In terms of gendered trends in extreme poverty, females would have fared considerably worse than males between 1997 and 2006 on the basis of earned income only. According to the estimates in Table 19, the extent of extreme poverty among females would have actually

increased over the period while decreasing very slightly, but not significantly, for males. Once social grant income is included (measure II), however, poverty decreases between 1997 and 2006 for both males (by 15 per cent) and females (by 13.7 per cent). According to measure III, extreme poverty decreased by a greater amount in both relative and absolute terms for males (from 39.9 per cent to 33.6 per cent) compared with females (from 44.1 per cent to 38.9 per cent).

Examining gendered changes in the depth of extreme poverty highlights quite clearly the role of social grant income. Table 20 displays poverty gap ratios in relation to the extreme poverty line and according to the three measures of income. Perhaps most significantly, the data presented in the table suggest that social grant income has had a considerable effect on the depth of extreme poverty among females. Augmenting earned income (i.e. comparing the difference between poverty gap ratios based on measure I with those based on measure II) with social grant income in 2004, for example, results in a 43 per cent decrease in the depth of extreme poverty among males (from 0.49 to 0.28) and a 45 per cent decrease among females (from 0.53 to 0.29). Moreover, by 2006 the depth of extreme poverty decreased to just .24 for both males and females (according to income measure II), thus erasing the gender difference in the depth of extreme poverty.

The fact that differences in the depth of extreme poverty between males and females narrowed substantially over the period (e.g. a relative decrease of 31.4 per cent for females compared with only a 22.6 per cent decrease for males) according to measure II indicates that social grant income has been particularly well targeted to females below the extreme poverty threshold. Using the lower bound poverty threshold (i.e. examining changes among the poorest individuals) therefore highlights how social grant income has moved many of these poor individuals closer to the poverty line (if not actually above the threshold) and, in particular, how females below the extreme poverty line have likely benefited the most from social grants.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Examining the receipt of individual social grants among males and females offers an explanation for why social grant income has been important in narrowing the gender differences in the depth of poverty (according to measure II) and extreme poverty (according to both measure II and III). In 2006, for example, 77.2 per cent of men over the age of 64 received the State Old Age Pension. Women are not only eligible for the grant at an earlier age (i.e. age

Even after income data is augmented with expenditure information (measure III), the gender difference in the depth of extreme poverty still narrowed (i.e. over the entire period under review, the depth of extreme poverty decreased by about 20 per cent among males and by 22 per cent among females). Thus, even though gender differences in the incidence of extreme poverty widened over the decade, the estimates presented in Table 20 suggest that the gender differences in the depth of extreme poverty narrowed and that the receipt of social grant income played a part in this. Among individuals residing in households with a real monthly per capita income of less than R174, females therefore fared slightly better than males over the period.

On the whole, the estimated trends in the incidence and depth of extreme poverty are similar to those of poverty (according to the R322 poverty line). One key difference, however, is that, while gender differences in the incidence of extreme poverty widened significantly over the period, gender differences in the depth of extreme poverty actually narrowed. A possible explanation, suggested by the descriptive poverty analysis, is that social grant income, in particular, improved the situation more for females (relative to males) living in households below the extreme poverty line even though it raised relatively fewer females above the extreme poverty threshold.

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60), but among those over the age of 64, a significantly greater percentage (87.1 per cent) received the pension. There is very little difference in the receipt of the Disability Grant by gender, but adult women (i.e. over the age of 15) are more likely to receive a grant to help support a child. While it is difficult to estimate the percentage of women that are in receipt of a Child Support Grant (since the grant is often linked with the child, rather than the caregiver, in the OHSs and the GHSs), it is possible to estimate access to the Child Support Grant at the household level. For example, 39.4 per cent of women over the age of 15 live in a household with at least one CSG (compared with only 25.9 per cent of men). Women also live in households with a significantly greater average number of CSGs relative to men (.81 compared with .50) (own calculations from the 2006 GHS).

These findings would therefore suggest that women (and women below the extreme poverty threshold, in particular) are more likely to be in receipt of an old age pension and a Child Support Grant. It is also not surprising that the receipt of a Child Support Grant narrows the gender difference in the depth of poverty (and extreme poverty) but is not enough to narrow the gender difference in the *extent* of poverty. This is likely to be explained by the relatively low value of the grant (e.g. R190 per month in 2006- nominal value). In other words, receipt of this grant helps move recipients closer to the poverty line (and the extreme poverty line) without actually lifting them above it.



**Table 20 The extreme poverty gap, 1997 – 2006**

Poverty gap (P <sub>1</sub> )					Relative change 1997-2006
OHS 1997	OHS 1999	GHS 2004	GHS 2006		
Earnings only (I)					
All	0.47 (0.006)	0.50* (0.006)	0.51 (0.007)	0.47 (0.019)	0.00%
Male	0.44 (0.006)	0.48* (0.006)	0.49 (0.007)	0.44* (0.018)	0.00%
Female	0.49 (0.006)	0.52* (0.006)	0.53 (0.007)	0.50 (0.019)	2.04%
Earnings + social grants (II)					
All	0.33 (0.005)	0.38* (0.005)	0.29* (0.004)	0.24* (0.007)	-27.27%†
Male	0.31 (0.005)	0.37* (0.005)	0.28* (0.005)	0.24* (0.007)	-22.58%†
Female	0.35 (0.005)	0.40* (0.005)	0.29* (0.005)	0.24* (0.007)	-31.43%†
Including household expenditure (III)					
All	0.22 (0.004)	0.27* (0.004)	0.21* (0.004)	0.17* (0.008)	-22.73%†
Male	0.20 (0.004)	0.26* (0.004)	0.19* (0.004)	0.16* (0.008)	-20.00%†
Female	0.23 (0.004)	0.28* (0.004)	0.22* (0.004)	0.18* (0.008)	-21.74%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty gap between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty gap between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R174 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

### **3.3.2 Poverty trends without poverty lines**

Another way of testing whether poverty trends are robust to different poverty thresholds is to derive a cumulative distribution function (CDF) of income. Figure 2 presents the cumulative distribution function for the shift in real monthly per capita household incomes (measure III) among individuals, by gender, between 1997 and 2006. The vertical axis of the figure represents

the cumulative proportion of individuals who have access to monthly per capita household income that is equal to or less than the corresponding value from the horizontal axis. The figure represents the lower end of the income distribution and only includes incomes for individuals residing in households where per capita monthly household income (measure III) is less than R1,000 in 2000 prices.<sup>73</sup> The vertical lines denote the poverty lines used in the poverty analysis in this chapter (R174 and R322).

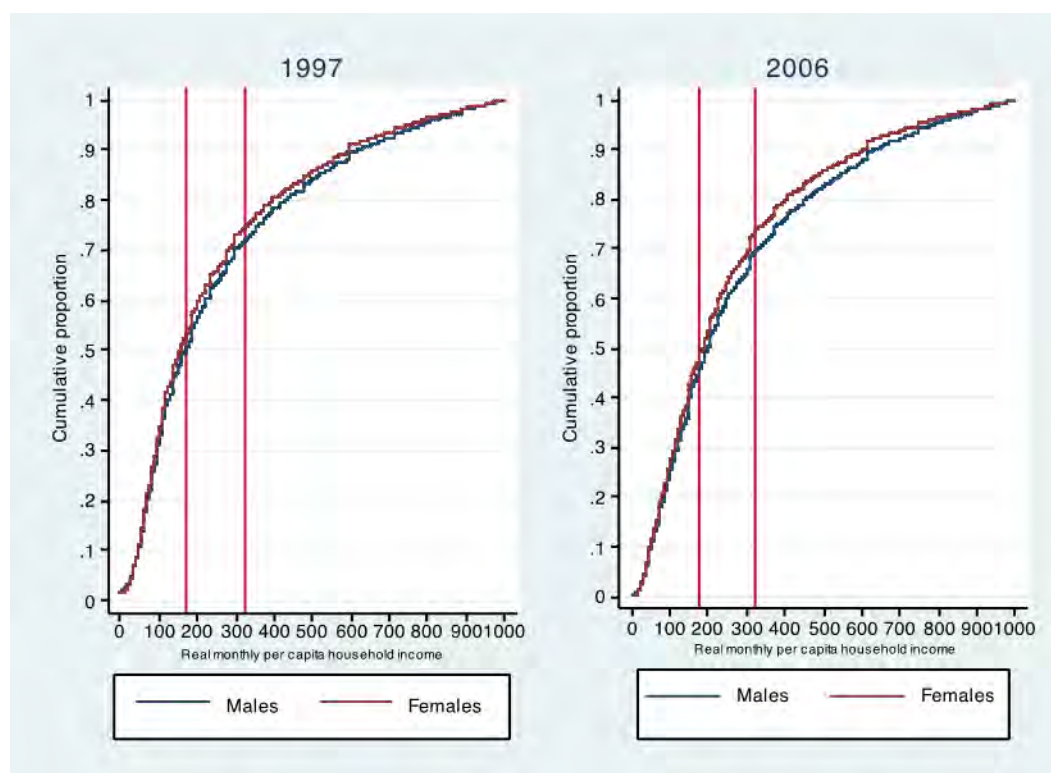
Figure 2 depicts a clear visual representation of the widening gender gap in income poverty between 1997 and 2006. In both 1997 and 2006, the CDF plot for males (the blue line) falls clearly below the plot for females (the red line) at any point in the income distribution (representing first order dominance).<sup>74</sup> More importantly, though, the gap between the male and female plots is noticeably wider in 2006 than in 1997. In the section of the income distribution between the two poverty lines, the gap between the male and female distributions is clearly larger in 2006. Similarly, at any point in the distributions above the upper-bound poverty line (R322), the gap between the male and female income distributions grew between 1997 and 2006. Thus, over a range of plausible poverty lines (e.g both above and below R322) the gap in real monthly per capita incomes between males and females has widened over the period. Irrespective of the specification of any single poverty threshold, then, the difference in gendered poverty rates has increased between 1997 and 2006.

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<sup>73</sup> Restricting the sample to only those individuals who reside in households that report a real monthly per capita income of less than R1,000 aids in the graphical representation of gendered income, but this means that poverty rates will be noticeably higher than the national estimates presented earlier.

<sup>74</sup> First order (stochastic) dominance occurs when the cumulative distribution functions of two populations are not equal to one another at any point in the distribution (in this case between R0 and R1000). In Figure 2, the distribution for males does not appear cross the distribution for females at any point. Moreover, the distributions are farther apart near the poverty line (R322).

**Figure 2 Cumulative distribution function of real monthly per capita household income (measure III) by gender, 1997 and 2006**



Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS

#### 4. Poverty decompositions by income source

The preceding sections in this chapter have demonstrated that income poverty has declined by absolutely and relatively more for males than for females in post-apartheid South Africa. The descriptive poverty analysis has also suggested that social grant income may have been relatively more important for the reduction in the depth of poverty (and extreme poverty in particular) among females (compared with males) during the period under review. The potential role of social grant income in reducing poverty rates among females, as identified in the poverty analysis, however, is merely suggestive. This is because the three measures of income, upon which the poverty estimates are based, are not able to describe the counterfactual situation (i.e. the situation without social grants). In other words, even though measure II (i.e. post-transfer income) considers the value of social grants relative to income from employment only, it is not

possible to estimate what the income of individuals or households *would have been* without this social grant income and therefore by how much poverty is reduced as a direct result of social grant receipt.

There are two main reasons for this. First, the simple comparison between pre- and post-transfer income (i.e. measure I vs. measure II) is fairly crude and relies on the very unlikely assumption that the availability (or not) of social grant income has no influence on the behaviour of individuals or households in terms of their ‘economic decisions’ (e.g. labour market participation, the choice to send a household member away for work (labour migration), engaging in informal work or even choices affecting household formation) (see for example Burns et al. 2005).

Second, making inferences about the ‘effect’ of social grant income on poverty (and on gendered poverty trends more specifically) from comparisons of measure I and measure II assumes that the effect of social grant income comes *after* the poverty reducing effect of earned income (referred to as the order specific bias). In other words, the pre- and post-transfer income comparisons potentially ignore the distributional effects of income sources and, as a result, are biased by the order in which each source is considered. The decomposition technique presented in this section overcomes this limitation by estimating the average marginal effect of each income source on the reduction of poverty rates over all possible combinations of income sources- thereby avoiding the order specific bias of individual income sources. The technique is briefly outlined below and then the remainder of this section examines the relative effects of income sources captured in the OHSs and GHSs on gendered poverty trends.

A large body of literature on decomposition techniques (cf. Lerman and Yitzhaki 1985; Datt and Ravallion 1992; Lerman and Yitzhaki 1994; Shorrocks 1999; Kolenikov and Shorrocks 2005) has recently yielded new approaches to decomposing poverty measures by population sub-group and by income source. This section employs a relatively new adaptation of the Shapley decomposition (see Shapley 1953) which allows for the decomposition of poverty measures by income source (a technique initially applied only to inequality measures). By using Shapley values (adopted from the game theory literature), the decomposition adheres to several key

axioms. The first is that, if an income source does not lift at least one individual (or household) above the poverty line then its impact on poverty will be zero. Second, if two income sources have the same poverty reducing effect, regardless of which other sources of income have already been taken into account, then their contribution towards the reduction of poverty is identical (for a fuller discussion see Makdissi and Wodon 2004; Bibi and Duclos 2009).

The formula is notated as follows:

$$\hat{P}\left(z; \alpha; y = \sum_{k=1}^K s_k\right) = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i \left(1 - \frac{y}{z}\right)_+^{\alpha}}{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i}$$

where there are  $k$  income sources and  $S_k$  represents source  $k$ .  $W_i$  is the weight given to individual  $i$  and  $n$  is the sample size (Duclos and Araar 2006; Araar and Duclos 2009; Araar and Duclos 2009a). In order to estimate this decomposition, the analysis presented in this section makes use of the Distributional Analysis STATA Package (DASP) module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007) to estimate Shapley values.<sup>75</sup> The package estimates the income share, absolute contribution and relative contribution of each specified income source to the reduction of poverty. The income share describes the percentage share of each income source in total income, the absolute contribution measures the percentage reduction in poverty associated with each income source (at the mean) and the relative contribution denotes the contribution of each respective income source, relative to the other sources, after controlling for the different distributional properties between the income components.

Because a greater number of income sources are captured in the 1997 OHS while only earned income, social grant income and household expenditure are captured in the OHSs after 1997 and

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<sup>75</sup> The algorithm developed by Araar and Duclos (2006) estimates the contribution of each income source to the elimination of poverty by comparing what the FGT measures *would have been* without each particular source of income. By making use of the Shapley values, the model estimates the average marginal effect of each income source over all possible combinations of income sources (income subsets)- thereby avoiding the bias associated with the order in which income sources are included in the model.

in the GHSs, a full comparison of the relative contributions of all income sources to the reduction of poverty over time is not possible. The decompositions presented in the following tables therefore present comparisons between the various components of income measure III (i.e. earned income, social grant income, and 'other' income in zero-income households) to reducing poverty in 1997 and 2006.

Table 21 documents changes in the relative contribution of different income sources to the reduction in the poverty headcount (based on measure III) by gender and over time. The relative contribution of earned income, social grant income and other income sources (among zero-income households) are presented in the table. The first column in the table describes the percentage of total income that is derived from each of the three income sources. While it is tempting to draw conclusions regarding the contribution of the respective income shares of each income source to the reduction of poverty, the share of income does not necessarily say anything about how this income is distributed (as outlined earlier). In 2006, for example, 85.9 per cent of all income received by individuals was in the form of earned income. However, the relative contribution of earned income to the reduction of the poverty headcount was slightly lower (84.2 per cent).

In terms of gender differences, the relative contribution of income sources to the reduction of poverty headcount rate suggests several important differences between males and females. Earned income, for example, accounted for a greater proportion of the reduction in male poverty (compared to female poverty). In 2006, 85 per cent of the reduction in poverty (relative to what it would have been) was due to the receipt of earned income. For females, however, a slightly lower percentage (83.5 per cent) of the reduction in the poverty headcount is attributed to earnings. Earned income was therefore relatively more important (in both 1997 and 2006) to the reduction of male poverty than to female poverty. On the other hand, and in contrast to the descriptive poverty analysis from Section Two, social grant income has been more important among females. In 1997, the relative contribution of social grant income to reducing poverty among females was 5.6 per cent. This contribution increased to nearly ten per cent by 2006. Among males, the effect of social grant income also increased, but only from 4.6 per cent to eight per cent. Therefore,

even though the decrease in pre- and post-transfer poverty headcount rates was greater for males than for females in the poverty analysis, the decomposition demonstrates that social grant income was actually *relatively* more important in reducing female poverty (compared with male poverty).<sup>76</sup>

**Table 21 Decomposition of poverty headcounts by income source, 1997 and 2006 (measure III)**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share (%)	Relative Contribution(%)	Income share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)
<b>All</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	86.10	87.62	85.91	84.18
<b>Grant income</b>	5.83	5.10	8.45	8.74
<b>Other income</b>	8.07	7.28	5.65	7.07
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Males</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	87.46	88.72	87.48	84.85
<b>Grant income</b>	5.17	4.61	7.12	7.98
<b>Other income</b>	7.37	6.68	5.40	7.17
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Females</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	84.63	86.46	84.02	83.45
<b>Grant income</b>	6.55	5.62	10.04	9.59
<b>Other income</b>	8.83	7.92	5.94	6.95
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

At the same time, the relative contribution of earned income decreased among both males and females, while the contribution of other income (among zero-income households) decreased slightly among females and increased among males. The results from the decomposition analysis therefore highlight that, while social grant income was not enough to actually narrow the difference in the poverty headcount rate between males and females, it has been relatively more important for the reduction of poverty among females (compared with males). Gendered

<sup>76</sup> The difference in these findings (compared with the poverty analysis) is explained largely by the fact that (as outlined in this section) the comparison between measure I and measure II is a fairly crude way of estimating the effect of an income source (e.g. social grants) on poverty reduction.

differences in the poverty headcount rate would, therefore, likely have widened even more (at the upper-bound poverty threshold)<sup>77</sup> over the period in the absence of social grants.<sup>78</sup>

Table 22, which presents a decomposition of the depth of poverty, confirms the importance of social grant income to those living below the poverty line and for females especially. First and foremost, however, the findings presented in the table demonstrate that, in line with other recent work which has decomposed the effect of social grant income on poverty in South Africa (cf. Samson et al. 2004; Armstrong and Burger 2009), the relative contribution of social grant income increases markedly as the sensitivity of the poverty measure increases (i.e. as  $P_0$  increases to  $P_1$ ).<sup>79</sup> In other words, the contribution of grant income is even greater for the reduction of the depth of poverty. This particular finding again confirms that social grant income is relatively well targeted to individuals living in households well below the poverty line. As such, the greater relative contributions of social grants highlight the fact that grant income plays an important role in moving these individuals closer to the poverty line, if not actually above it. In 2006, for example, social grant income made up only 8.5 per cent of individuals' (per capital household) income, on average, but the relative contribution of grant income to reducing the depth of poverty was 26 per cent.

In identifying key differences by gender, the decomposition also shows that, between 1997 and 2006, changes in the relative contribution of grant income were particularly marked among

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<sup>77</sup> At the lower bound poverty threshold (R174 per capita monthly household income), the role of social grant income in reducing poverty among females is even more pronounced. For example, the relative contribution of social grant income to extreme poverty reduction increased from 12.1 per cent to 22.3 per cent among females. Among males, the relative contribution of social grant income also increased, but only from 10.4 per cent to 18.3 per cent. Social grant income was therefore more important to the reduction of extreme poverty among females even though gender differences in the extreme poverty headcount widened over the period (See Appendix C).

<sup>78</sup> The higher rates of female poverty are explained, at least in part, then, by the smaller impact of earned income on moving females above the poverty threshold.

<sup>79</sup> The relative contribution of social grant income increases even more when decomposing the severity of poverty ( $P_2$ ) by income source (not shown in table).



females. The relative effect of grant income on reducing the depth of female poverty, for example, increased from 17.2 per cent in 1997 to 28.8 per cent in 2006. Among males, the increase was only from 15 per cent to 23.2 per cent. Concomitantly, the relative contribution of earned income and of income reported in zero-income households (other income) decreased by considerably more among females. In short, the impact of earned income and other income sources on the depth of female poverty decreased over the period and social grant income, therefore, contributed relatively more to the reduction in the depth of poverty among females compared with males.

**Table 22 Decomposition of poverty gaps by income source, 1997 and 2006**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)	Income share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)
<b>All</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	86.10	71.26	85.91	66.02
<b>Grant income</b>	5.83	16.13	8.45	26.00
<b>Other income</b>	8.07	12.61	5.65	7.97
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Males</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	87.46	73.36	87.48	68.42
<b>Grant income</b>	5.17	15.01	7.12	23.24
<b>Other income</b>	7.37	11.63	5.40	8.34
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Females</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	84.63	69.21	84.02	63.57
<b>Grant income</b>	6.55	17.23	10.04	28.84
<b>Other income</b>	8.83	13.56	5.94	7.59
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms (R322)

In further decomposing social grant income by the individual types of social grants, the role of the State Old Age Pension and the Child Support Grant in reducing the poverty headcount rate among females, in particular, can be seen (Table 23). In 1997, for example, the state pension was responsible for 3.7 per cent of the reduction in poverty among males and for 4.7 per cent among females. By 2006, this contribution has increased to 4.1 per cent among males and to 5.2 per cent

among females. In 2006, the Child Support Grant also contributed to a reduction in poverty among both males and females, but its effect was considerably smaller. The relative contribution of the Child Support Grant to the reduction of poverty among males, for example, was 1.5 per cent in 2006 and, not surprisingly, was slightly higher (two per cent) among females.

**Table 23 Decomposition of the contribution of social grant income to reducing the poverty headcount by gender, 1997-2006**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)	Income share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)
<b>Males</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	87.46	88.74	87.48	84.93
<b>State Old Age Pension</b>	4.33	3.75	3.32	4.14
<b>Disability Grant</b>	0.79	0.80	1.55	2.13
<b>Care Dependency Grant</b>	0.02	0.03	0.11	0.15
<b>Child Support Grant</b>	---	---	2.00	1.46
<b>Foster Care Grant</b>	0.03	0.01	0.15	0.21
<b>Other income</b>	7.37	6.68	5.40	7.17
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Females</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	84.63	86.45	84.02	83.53
<b>State Old Age Pension</b>	5.60	4.71	4.71	5.19
<b>Disability Grant</b>	0.90	0.83	1.84	2.10
<b>Care Dependency Grant</b>	0.03	0.04	0.13	0.17
<b>Child Support Grant</b>	---	---	3.15	2.03
<b>Foster Care Grant</b>	0.03	0.04	0.20	0.26
<b>Other income</b>	8.83	7.92	5.94	6.95
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

The real impact of the State Old Age Pension and the Child Support Grant on gender differences in poverty estimates, however, is in their respective contributions to the depth of poverty (Table 24). In 2006, 10.4 per cent of the reduction in the depth of male poverty was attributed to the state pension and, among females, the contribution was 13 per cent. Similarly, the Child Support Grant

contributed to 7.1 per cent of the reduction in the depth of male poverty but about ten per cent to reducing the depth of poverty among females. These two grants therefore had the greatest relative effect on individuals (both males and females) below the poverty line and were particularly important income sources in terms of moving poor females closer to the poverty threshold (R322).

**Table 24 Decomposition of the contribution of social grant income to reducing the depth of poverty by gender**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)	Income share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)
<b>Males</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	87.46	73.36	87.48	68.45
<b>State Old Age Pension</b>	4.33	12.67	3.32	10.43
<b>Disability Grant</b>	0.79	2.20	1.55	4.89
<b>Care Dependency Grant</b>	0.02	0.06	0.11	0.32
<b>Child Support Grant</b>	---	---	2.00	7.11
<b>Foster Care Grant</b>	0.03	0.07	0.15	0.47
<b>Other income</b>	7.37	11.63	5.40	8.34
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Females</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	84.63	69.21	84.02	63.60
<b>State Old Age Pension</b>	5.60	14.82	4.71	13.01
<b>Disability Grant</b>	0.90	2.27	1.84	5.22
<b>Care Dependency Grant</b>	0.03	0.06	0.13	0.33
<b>Child Support Grant</b>	---	---	3.15	9.69
<b>Foster Care Grant</b>	0.03	0.08	0.20	0.55
<b>Other income</b>	8.83	13.56	5.94	7.59
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

The decompositions presented in this section have therefore highlighted that, as the sensitivity of the poverty measure increases (i.e. as  $P_0$  increases to  $P_1$  or  $P_2$ ) and as the poverty threshold decreases (i.e. from R322 to R174- Appendix C) then the relative effect of social grant income (and the Child Support Grant and the old age pension in particular), on the reduction of female

poverty increases substantially. In other words, the poverty decompositions have developed further the findings from the previous section of this chapter (which compared pre- and post-transfer income measures) and have highlighted the way in which social grant income (particularly in 2006) has helped reduce the depth of (female) poverty.

At the same time, estimates of the relative contribution of social grant income have suggested that grants are well targeted and have been especially important in moving poor households in which females live closer to the poverty line. While the income share and the contribution of social grant income increased for both males and females between 1997 and 2006, the increases were relatively greater among females. Moreover, the source of income that contributed the most to the reduction of the extreme poverty gap among females (relative to males) was social grant income.<sup>80</sup> Confirming the findings of the descriptive poverty analyses, then, the narrowing of the gender difference in the depth of extreme poverty was driven largely by social grant income. Perhaps the greatest contribution of social grant income, from a gender perspective, is, therefore, the alleviation (if not the actual reduction) of poverty among females living in households below the extreme poverty threshold.

## **5. Concluding remarks**

The period under review (1997-2006) has been characterised by modest increases in employment and, due to the increasing size of the labour force relative to the creation of new jobs, very high and persistent rates of unemployment. Over the same period, however, government expanded the reach and coverage of its social grant system such that, as a percentage of GDP, South Africa's spending on social assistance is now comparable to the level of expenditure in many European

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<sup>80</sup> The income share and relative contribution reveal that social grant income was responsible for a greater reduction in the extreme poverty gap among females compared with males. In 1997, social grant income comprised about 5.2 per cent of total income among males (increasing to 7.1 per cent in 2006) and about 6.6 per cent of total female income (increasing to ten per cent in 2006). In relative terms, the contribution of social grant income also increased by considerably more among females (from 21.8 per cent to 35.4 per cent) than among males (from 19.4 per cent to 29 per cent) during the period (see Appendix D).

countries at the height of the 'welfare state' (i.e. the 1980s) (van der Berg et al. 2008a). As highlighted in much of the poverty and social policy literature in South Africa, the expansion of the existing social assistance package was largely associated with the increased take-up of the old age pension and the Disability Grant (particularly after 2000-2001) as well as the introduction of the Child Support Grant in 1998 (Pauw and Mncube 2006; van der Berg 2006; Lund 2008). Moreover, the grants providing support to the care-givers of children (i.e. the Foster Care Grant, the Care Dependency Grant, and the Child Support Grant) are particularly well targeted to African working-age women and contribute significantly to household income in the lowest income quintile (Williams 2007).

Against this backdrop of rising unemployment alongside a substantial expansion of the social assistance programme, a rich poverty literature in post-apartheid South Africa has documented a modest but significant decline in overall income poverty rates since 2000 (after an initial increase between the mid to late 1990s). In line with the findings of this established literature, the poverty analysis presented in this chapter has suggested that poverty rates decreased slightly between 1997 and 2006 and that poverty rates began to decline particularly in the 2000s (after an initial increase between 1997 and 1999). The findings have emphasised, however, that, while the percentage of both males and females living in households with less than R322 monthly per capita income decreased significantly over the decade, the decrease was slightly greater for males than for females. As a result, the difference in poverty headcount rates between males and females actually *widened* even though poverty rates *decreased* among both males and females. At the lower-bound poverty threshold, the gender difference in the incidence of (extreme) poverty widened even further (in favour of males) at the same time that the extreme poverty headcount also decreased significantly among both males and females. In terms of the extent of poverty then, overall decreases in poverty levels have masked the fact that these declines in poverty rates were greater for males than for females at two well established (and widely used) poverty thresholds.

Trends in the depth and severity of poverty offer further evidence of a feminisation of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa. Gendered differences in both the depth and severity of poverty at the

upper-bound poverty threshold widened significantly over the period. At the extreme poverty line (R174 per capita monthly income in constant 2000 prices), however, the depth of poverty narrowed significantly in favour of females over the period. The income of households in extreme poverty therefore increased by relatively more among households which contained females, but not by enough to reduce gender differences in the *extent* of extreme poverty. Sensitivity tests demonstrated further that the gendered poverty trends described in Section Two are robust to the possible underestimation of income in the OHSs and the GHSs, to adjustments for household size and composition, and to alternate specifications of the poverty line.

The chapter has also added to the existing poverty literature by highlighting the role of social grant income in mitigating the widening of the poverty gap between males and females. The decomposition analysis presented in the chapter demonstrated that social grant income had a greater effect on the reduction of the extent and depth of poverty among females relative to males. In particular, social grant income (and the old age pension and the Child Support Grant especially) became increasingly important (relative to males) in reducing both the extent and depth of income poverty among females. While social grant income was not enough to actually narrow the gender gap in the extent and depth of poverty over the period, the decomposition analysis has shown that the difference in poverty rates between males and females would likely have been significantly wider in the absence of these transfers. In other words, as a result of their disadvantage in the labour market (i.e. in terms of unemployment and lower earnings), income from earnings has not been enough to reduce female poverty by as much as male poverty in post-apartheid South Africa. Therefore, while grant income was not enough to move poor females above the poverty threshold, it has been instrumental in moving them closer to the poverty line.

The next chapter now extends the poverty analysis and examines how demographic trends (i.e. changes in household formation and living arrangements) may have contributed to a feminisation of poverty in South Africa. The chapter is concerned in particular with the rise in, and the composition of, female-headed households. Changes in poverty levels (as well as the depth and severity of poverty) among these household types are examined and a decomposition analysis of income sources is undertaken at the household level and by the gender of the household head.

## **Chapter Seven- Household Poverty and Female Headship in South Africa, 1997-2006**

### **1. Introduction**

The previous chapter has demonstrated that males, relative to females, are increasingly more likely to live in households above the poverty line and that if individuals had relied on income from earnings only, the gender poverty gap would have been even wider (i.e. the gender poverty differential would have been even greater without social grant income). Gender differences in access to earned income (and resources more generally), however, are also the result of *household* resource levels. In other words, the gender differences in earned income highlighted in the decompositions are not simply the result of differences in employment rates between males and females or the gender wage gap, but they also reflect the income earned by other household members. In order to highlight the implications of gender differences in access to resources for the gender poverty differential, many gender poverty studies look specifically at female- and male-headed households (as highlighted in earlier chapters). The assumption of these studies is that female-headed households are more likely than male-headed households to rely on income earned or received by women. The remainder of the thesis now focuses on household compositional changes which may be gendered (and which may affect access to earned income) and, in line with the gender and poverty literature, on poverty risks in female- and male- headed households.

This chapter first considers changes in household composition by gender and in the extent of female-headed households in Section Two, and it then examines poverty trends among female- and male-headed households (Section Three). The main focus of the chapter is on the changing *differences* in poverty rates between female- and male-headed households. In Section Four, the chapter then considers (again using the decomposition technique based on Shapely values) how different sources of income have contributed to the reduction of poverty in these two broad household types. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the key trends in poverty among male- and female-headed households.

## 2. Female headship and household formation over the period

Before exploring changes in poverty rates among female- and male- headed households, this section briefly considers some of the key changes in household composition and female headship over the period. If changes in female headship have coincided with changes in gendered household formation (or living arrangements more broadly) then examining the relative well-being of those who live in female-headed households highlights the role of these broader trends with respect to gendered poverty rates during the post-apartheid period. As Table 25 shows, these household compositional changes provide some evidence for an increase in what Preston-Whyte (1978) described as ‘female-linked households’ (and what other analyses such as that of Francis (1996) and Sender (2002) call ‘women-dominated’ or ‘female-dominated’ households). That is, a growing percentage of females living in households without an adult male present.

**Table 25 Presence of adult and working-age males in households, 1997 – 2006**

<b>Percentage of females living in households where there are:</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
No adult men	23.23 (0.164)	24.52* (0.206)	26.04* (0.243)	27.71* (0.267)
No working-age men	24.26 (0.167)	25.27* (0.210)	26.56* (0.246)	28.44* (0.269)
<b>Percentage of female adults living in households where there are:</b>				
No adult men	22.67 (0.212)	24.91* (0.267)	25.88 (0.304)	27.76* (0.338)
No working-age men	24.29 (0.220)	26.50* (0.275)	26.84 (0.310)	29.11* (0.346)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

\* Denotes a significant change from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

Between 1997 and 2006, the percentage of all females who lived in households without an adult male (aged 18 and older) rose significantly from 23.2 per cent to 27.7 per cent. Similarly the percentage of females living in households with no working-age men (age 16 to 65) also increased (from 24.3 per cent to 28.4 per cent). Among adult females (age 18 and older), the percentage living in households without adult males grew from 22.7 per cent to 27.8 per cent



over the period (the percentage of adult females living in households without working-age males also increased- from 24.3 per cent to 29.1 per cent). The table therefore demonstrates that a growing percentage of females of all ages are living in households in which there is no adult male residing in the household.

Furthermore, and as highlighted in the international literature (e.g. through a focus on single motherhood and divorce in developed countries and on decreasing marital rates and rising rates of female headship in developing countries), decreasing access to male earnings is likely to be an important factor behind the widening poverty rates, by gender. Accordingly, estimates from the OHSs and the GHSs (own calculations, not shown in the table), show that the percentage of females living in households with no employed men increased from 56.7 per cent in 1997 to 59.4 per cent in 2006. Thus, if females are increasingly living in households in which there is no access to male earnings, and if women are less likely to be employed (relative to men), then the rising percentage of females living in households without adult men, and without working-age men in particular, is likely to coincide with the feminisation of poverty described in the previous chapter.

Table 26 considers changes in the percentage of households headed by women and shows that, in line with other work from the post-apartheid period (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008), both the number and percentage of households headed by women increased from 1997 to 2006. Since the rise in the number of female-headed households outstripped the growth in the number of households overall, the percentage of all households which are female-headed increased significantly over the period, from 35.2 per cent to 37.5 per cent.

**Table 26 Male- and female-headed households, 1997 - 2006**

	<b>1997</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Male-headed</b>	5 981 957 (35 144)	6 647 800* (43 464)	7 664 456* (65 833)	8 073 892* (82 953)
<b>Female-headed</b>	3 244 538 (25 996)	3 735 295* (35 973)	4 520 349* (49 458)	4 858 648* (57 856)
<b>Percentage female-headed</b>	35.17 (0.294)	35.96 (0.335)	37.07* (0.383)	37.48 (0.418)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

\* Denotes a significant change from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

Table 27 documents that the percentage of female-headed households which did not contain any adult men (age 18 and older) increased from 55.4 per cent in 1997 to 58.4 per cent in 2006. At the same time, the percentage without working-age men also increased (from 50.5 per cent to 54.2 per cent) over the period.<sup>81</sup> The broader trend of a growing percentage of women living in households without adult males thus coincides fairly closely with the rising number of female-headed households that do not contain working-age or adult men. This particular change in household formation (which mirrors findings from the international literature) is, therefore, one reason that the study of poverty rates among female-headed households (relative to male-headed households) has become an important part of gendered poverty studies.

**Table 27 Female-headed households and the presence of male householders, 1997-2006**

<b>Percentage of female-headed households in which there are:</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
No adult men	55.36 (0.489)	58.91* (0.557)	56.18* (0.620)	58.38 (0.655)
No working-age men	50.52 (0.494)	54.32* (0.567)	51.77 (0.626)	54.23* (0.661)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

Notes: The data are weighted . Standard errors in brackets.

\* Denotes a significant change from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

<sup>81</sup> Another way of considering the overlap between female-linked households and female-headed households is to estimate the percentage of female-linked households that are also female-headed. In 2006, for example, 82.1 per cent of households without a working-age male were also female-headed. Not surprisingly, the overlap is even greater for households with no adult males. Roughly 98.2 per cent of these households were identified as female-headed (own calculations from the 2006 GHS).

There is also evidence to suggest that a growing percentage of all females are living in female-headed households. Table 28 shows that between 1997 and 2006, the percentage of females (of all ages) living in female-headed households rose from about 46.5 per cent to 51.1 per cent (among adult women the increase was from 46.7 per cent to 51.6 per cent). The percentage of males living in female-headed household decreased marginally over the same period from 33.3 per cent to 32.7 per cent (the decrease among adult males was more pronounced with the percentage declining from 25.8 per cent to 23 per cent). As a result, the percentage of individuals (of all ages) living in female-headed households who are female grew slightly (but significantly) from 60 per cent in 1997 to 61.7 per cent in 2006. Among all adults residing in female-headed households, the gender composition changed by considerably more with the percentage that are female increasing significantly from 68.4 per cent to 72.9 per cent over the period.

**Table 28 Gender composition of households, 1997-2006**

	<b>1997</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Percentage of females living in female-headed households</b>	46.52 (0.196)	46.83 (0.239)	50.63* (0.277)	51.10 (0.304)
<b>Percentage of <u>adult</u> females living in female-headed households</b>	46.68 (0.256)	47.75 (0.307)	51.22* (0.347)	51.56 (0.387)
<b>Percentage of males living in female-headed households</b>	33.28 (0.197)	31.67* (0.231)	33.01* (0.269)	32.69 (0.295)
<b>Percentage of <u>adult</u> males living in female-headed households</b>	25.81 (0.240)	21.65* (0.270)	22.32 (0.302)	22.99 (0.326)
<b>Percentage of individuals living in female-headed households who are female</b>	60.04 (0.217)	61.21* (0.264)	61.29 (0.294)	61.72 (0.314)
<b>Percentage of <u>adults</u> living in female-headed households who are female</b>	68.41 (0.296)	71.18* (0.338)	72.12 (0.357)	72.95 (0.388)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

Notes: The data are weighted . Standard errors in brackets.

Adults are age 18 and older

\* Denotes a significant change from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

The descriptive statistics presented in this section have therefore demonstrated that the majority of women (and females more generally) in South Africa live in households without men and that this trend has increased over the decade. These shifts in patterns of household living arrangements are also captured by the changes in female headship over the period. The data show that female-headed households are an increasingly common household type in post-apartheid South Africa and that, by 2006, the majority of all females, and of adult women specifically, lived in female-headed households. Even if a larger percentage of poor females live in male-headed households, the investigation of the changes in poverty rates among male- and female-headed households is one way in which to capture at least some of the impact of the increasing percentage of females living without males on gendered poverty rates in post-apartheid South Africa. Examining changes in poverty rates at the household level and by the gender of the household head is therefore one way of highlighting the potential implications of the changing gender composition of households during the period under review.

### **3. Poverty estimates among female- and male-headed households, 1997-2006**

#### **3.1 The incidence of poverty in female- and male-headed households**

This section now examines poverty trends at the household level and considers, in particular, differences in poverty estimates between households headed by a male and households with a female head. As a point of departure, the self-reported head of the household, as captured by the OHSs and the GHSs (and by almost all household surveys and Censuses conducted in South Africa), is the person identified as such by the household member who participates in the interview.<sup>82</sup> In the 2006 General Household Survey, 73 per cent of self-identified household

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<sup>82</sup> It is important to note, however, that the household head must meet the residency requirement set out in the instructions to the enumerators at the beginning of each questionnaire. So if, for example, the person identified as the head of the household did not stay in the household *for at least four nights on average per week during the last four weeks*, then no information on that individual will be captured in the household roster. In such a case an individual in the household who meets the residency criteria and is identified as the 'acting head' will be assigned headship status. The resulting problem is that it is not possible to distinguish between household heads who are actual heads or

heads (from households that reported some level of household income) earned or received the highest (or joint highest) level of income in the household.<sup>83</sup> A cursory look at headship in these surveys therefore suggests that household heads are often the main earner or income provider in the household.<sup>84</sup>

Throughout this section, poverty estimates are, once again, disaggregated by the three measures of income introduced in Chapter Five. Households are identified as being poor if their average per capita monthly income is less than R322 (and R174, for extreme poverty) in 2000 prices. The household poverty estimates presented in this chapter are considerably lower than the individual poverty figures presented in the previous chapter. This is the case because poor individuals tend to live in larger households in South Africa. In order to illustrate this relationship between household size and poverty, Figure 3 displays household poverty headcount rates (based on measure III) by the number of household members. The figure demonstrates, for example, that the poverty rate among households with an average number of household members (five members) is 58.5 per cent. Among households with seven members, however, the poverty headcount rate increases dramatically to 75.8 per cent. Among larger households (e.g. those with ten members), the poverty rate rises even more (80.5 per cent of households with ten members were poor in 2006).

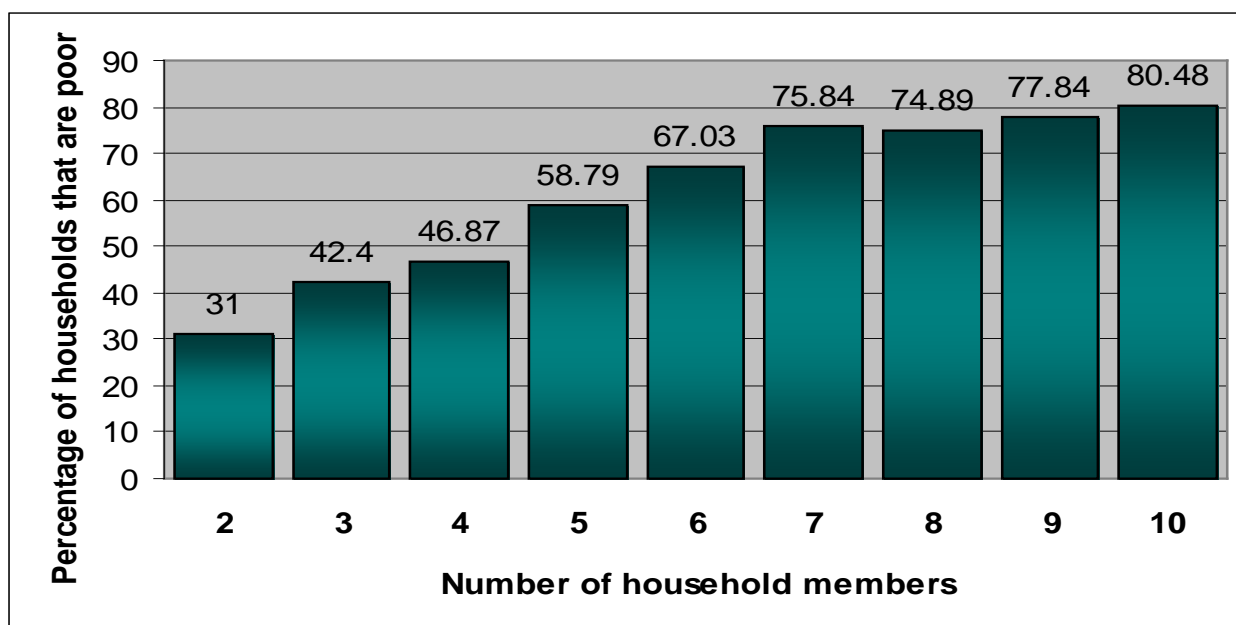
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‘acting heads’ in the OHSs and the GHSs (Budlender, 2003). It is therefore also not possible to distinguish between households in which the head is resident or absent from the household.

<sup>83</sup> Eighty per cent of male heads were the highest earner in the household in the 2006 GHS. Among female-headed households, the head was the highest earner in 64 per cent of households.

<sup>84</sup> Headship categories are explored further in Chapter Nine.

**Figure 3 Household poverty levels by household size (measure III), 2006**



Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are weighted

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income (measure III)

Turning now to estimates of poverty rates over time, Table 29 presents household level poverty trends at the upper-bound monthly per capita poverty threshold identified in Chapter Five (R322 in 2000 prices). Across all measures of income, the overall percentage of households that are poor decreased between 1997 and 2006. While the poverty rate initially increased between 1997 and 1999, poverty began to decline in 2004 (except for poverty estimates based on measure I) and particularly in 2006. Including social grant income (measure II), as with individual poverty estimates, has a marked impact on the poverty headcount rate among households, particularly in the 2000s. In 1997, for example, 58 per cent of all households would have been poor had they relied only on earned income; but when social grants are included in the measure of income, the poverty rate falls to 54.1 per cent (a 6.7 per cent decrease). In 2004 and 2006, and corresponding to the widening of the social assistance net, the fall in the extent of poverty is even greater after the inclusion of social grant income. In 2006, the poverty headcount decreases from 55.8 per cent to 49.4 per cent after grant income is included (an 11.5 per cent drop).

**Table 29 Poverty estimates among households, by household type, 1997 – 2006**

<b>Headcount (P<sub>0</sub>)</b>					
	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>	<b>Relative change 1997-2006</b>
<b>Earnings only (I)</b>					
<b>All</b>	57.97 (0.612)	58.73 (0.616)	59.31 (0.701)	55.84* (1.752)	-3.67%
<b>Male-headed</b>	47.60 (0.659)	49.14* (0.661)	49.49 (0.799)	45.10* (1.562)	-5.25%
<b>Female-headed</b>	77.09 (0.648)	75.81* (0.697)	75.96 (0.690)	73.72* (1.711)	-4.37%
<b>Earnings + social grants (II)</b>					
<b>All</b>	54.09 (0.608)	55.58* (0.607)	54.64 (0.681)	49.40* (1.557)	-8.67%†
<b>Male-headed</b>	44.16 (0.643)	46.57* (0.644)	44.84* (0.762)	39.00* (1.354)	-11.68%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	72.41 (0.691)	71.63 (0.723)	71.27 (0.721)	66.70* (1.573)	-7.89%†
<b>Including household expenditure (III)</b>					
<b>All</b>	48.63 (0.652)	50.88* (0.643)	48.23* (0.718)	43.59* (1.813)	-10.36%†
<b>Male-headed</b>	38.84 (0.663)	41.69* (0.660)	37.24* (0.739)	32.54* (1.541)	-16.22%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	66.68 (0.772)	67.24* (0.789)	66.88 (0.794)	61.98* (1.882)	-7.05%††
<b>Percentage of poor living in FHHs (measure III)</b>	51.44 (0.178)	49.38* (0.214)	53.45* (0.246)	55.01* (0.275)	6.94%†
<b>Percentage of poor females in FHHs (measure III)</b>	56.81 (0.236)	55.28 (0.289)	60.07* (0.327)	61.84* (0.359)	8.85%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Table 29 further demonstrates, however, that combining earned income and social grant income (measure II) still underestimates household income and therefore overestimates the poverty headcount. Across all four years, poverty rates are further (and significantly) reduced by augmenting measure II with expenditure data for zero-income households (measure III). In 1997, for example, the percentage of poor households is further reduced (from 54.1 per cent according to measure II) to 48.6 per cent. This overestimation of the extent of poverty based on measure II (earned income and social grant receipt) is particularly pronounced in male-headed households. In 2006, for example, the extent of poverty among male-headed households decreases from 39 per cent to 32.5 per cent (from 66.7 to 61.9 per cent for female-headed households) once expenditure data are added. When household income is augmented with household expenditure, the difference in poverty rates between male- and female-headed households is therefore most pronounced.

In terms of poverty estimates based on the gender of the household head, female-headed households were much more likely to be poor than male-headed households across all four years (and according to estimates based on all three income measures). Moreover, the magnitude of the poverty differential between female- and male-headed households is considerable (e.g. 62 per cent compared with 32.5 per cent in 2006, based on measure III), particularly by international standards.<sup>85</sup> In terms of trends over time, the fall of the poverty headcount across all households conceals important differences by the gender of the household head. Table 29 clearly demonstrates that the relative decline in the extent of poverty has been greater among male-headed households. Between 1997 and 2006, and according to the most comprehensive measure of income (measure III), the incidence of poverty decreased from 38.8 to 32.5 per cent (16.2 per cent) among male-headed households but only from 66.7 to 62 per cent (seven per cent) among

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<sup>85</sup> Recall from the review in Chapter Three that the absolute difference in poverty rates between female- and male-headed households in other sub-Saharan countries is often in the range of five to 11 percentage points. Based on this comparison, post-apartheid South Africa would be an outlier since there is an astounding 29.5 percentage point difference between female- and male-headed households in 2006 (based on measure III).



female-headed households.<sup>86</sup> While male-headed households experienced a greater initial (between 1997 and 1999) absolute and relative rise in their poverty headcount, this was more than offset, once overall poverty rates began to decrease (in 2004 and again in 2006). With respect to overall poverty rates, the table also demonstrates that a growing percentage of the poor population lives in female-headed households (the percentage of poor individuals living in female-headed households increased significantly from 51.4 per cent in 1997 to 55.0 per cent in 2006) and that this relative increase (6.9 per cent) corresponds closely to the rise in female headship (6.5 per cent) over the same period.<sup>87</sup> The table also shows that a large and growing percentage of poor females lived in female-headed households over the period. By 2006, nearly 62 per cent of all poor females (of all ages) lived in a household with a female head (an 8.9 per cent increase from 1997).

The poverty rates presented in Table 29 also suggest (perhaps surprisingly) that the receipt of social grant income may have had a relatively larger ‘effect’ on the reduction of the extent of poverty among male-headed households relative to female-headed households. The inclusion of social grant income, for example, results in a 7.2 per cent decline (e.g. from 47.6 per cent to 44.2 per cent) in the extent of poverty among male-headed households, in 1997, but only a 6.1 per cent decline among female-headed households.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, comparing poverty trends based on measure I with those derived from measure II, the decline from 1997 to 2006 is relatively larger

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<sup>86</sup> The absolute difference in poverty rates (based on measure III) also widened over the period. In 1997, the difference in poverty rates between male- and female-headed households was 27.9 percentage points. By 2006, it had widened to 29.5 percentage points.

<sup>87</sup> Based on this evidence, it is not possible to conclude whether the increasing percentage of poor individuals living in female-headed households has been driven by the growth in female headship or the widening gap in poverty differences between female- and male-headed households. The most that can be claimed from these descriptive statistics is that the rise in the percentage of the poor living in female-headed households marginally outpaced the increase in female headship.

<sup>88</sup> Across all four years, the relative decrease in the extent of poverty after the inclusion of social grant income is greater for male-headed households than for female-headed households.

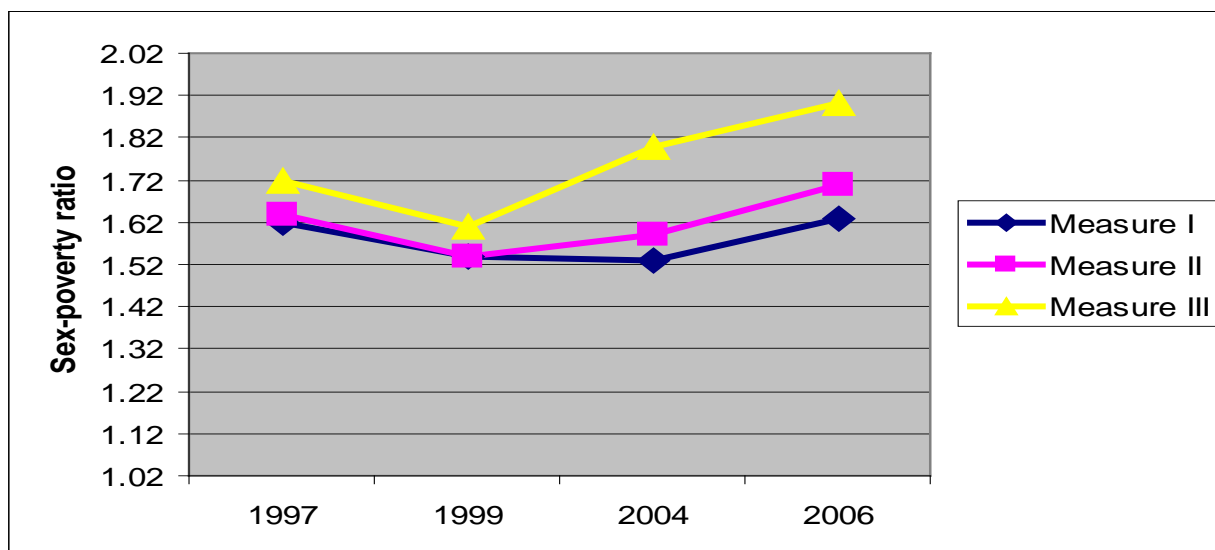
among male-headed households than among female-headed households. From 1997 to 2006, poverty rates estimated using measure II fell by 11.7 per cent among male-headed households (from 44.16 per cent to 39 per cent), but only by 7.9 per cent among female-headed households (from 72.41 per cent to 66.7 per cent). The difference in the relative decline in the extent of poverty between male- and female-headed households therefore widens even further when using income measure II (compared with income measure I).<sup>89</sup>

Estimating sex-poverty ratios once again, the growing divergence in the incidence of poverty between female- and male-headed households and the role of social grant income are depicted graphically in Figure 4. Across all three income measures, the difference in household poverty rates increased between 1997 and 2006. According to the comprehensive measure (III), for example, the sex-poverty ratio increased from 1.72 in 1997 to 1.9 in 2006. In other words, by 2006, the poverty headcount rate among female-headed households was nearly double the rate for male-headed households. In addition, the figure shows how the difference in poverty rates between these two household types increases with each measure of income. The difference in poverty rates between female- and male-headed households therefore actually increases (in favour of male-headed households) once social grant income is included (measure II) and then again when zero incomes are augmented with expenditure data (measure III).

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<sup>89</sup> According to measure I, the poverty rate decreased by 5.3 per cent (from 47.6 per cent to 45.1 per cent) among male-headed households and by 4.4 per cent (from 77.1 per cent to 73.7 per cent) among female-headed households between 1997 and 2006.

**Figure 4 Sex-poverty ratios (female-headed to male-headed households), 1997-2006**



Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

The seemingly greater role of social grant income in reducing the extent of poverty in male-headed households is particularly surprising given the relative importance of social grant income in these two household types. Table 30, for example, examines household income sources and presents a breakdown of the contribution of different sources of income relative to total household income and, in the absence of comprehensive information on all income sources (e.g. remittances)<sup>90</sup> in the GHSs, offers some indication of trends in the receipt of earned income, social grant income, remittances and agricultural income in both male- and female-headed households.

The information in the table is derived from a question that was added in the GHSs that identifies the ‘main’ source of income in the household.<sup>91</sup> The importance of social grant income in female-headed households, in particular, is clear from the table. Income received from salaries and wages was considerably more important in male-headed households relative to female-headed

<sup>90</sup> For a comprehensive review of migration and remittance information in household surveys, see Posel (2003).

<sup>91</sup> Both the 2004 and the 2006 GHSs capture this information in a single question (Q4.70 in 2004 and Q4.68 in 2006).

households in both 2004 and 2006. Social grant income, however, was identified as the main income source in a significantly greater percentage of female-headed households in both years (e.g. 36.3 per cent of female-headed households in 2006).

**Table 30 Main source of income among male-and female-headed households, 1997 and 2006**

	GHS 2004		GHS 2006	
	MHHs	FHHs	MHHs	FHHs
<b>Salaries/wages</b>	65.98 (0.492)	39.30 (0.615)	67.88 (0.537)	41.89 (0.666)
<b>Remittances</b>	9.58 (0.291)	21.92 (0.545)	7.83 (0.321)	15.57 (0.447)
<b>Pensions and grants</b>	15.11 (0.337)	32.29 (0.572)	16.57 (0.395)	36.29 (0.630)
<b>Sales of farm products and services</b>	1.23 (0.117)	.66 (0.101)	1.39 (0.116)	1.07 (0.204)
<b>Other non-farm income</b>	6.18 (0.302)	4.56 (0.251)	3.20 (0.198)	2.80 (0.214)
<b>No income</b>	1.74 (0.141)	1.17 (0.136)	2.35 (0.202)	1.92 (0.203)

Source: Own calculations from the 2004 and the 2006 GHSs

Notes: The data are weighted  
Standard errors in brackets

In addition, even in the (short) two year period between the 2004 and 2006 GHSs, the percentage of female-headed households that received the largest share of their income from pensions and grants increased from 32.3 per cent to 36.3 per cent (among male-headed households the increase was only from 15.1 to 16.6 per cent). As expected, remittances are the main source of income in a far greater percentage of female-headed households. The relative importance of remittances, however, decreased (relative to other income sources) significantly in both household types. On the whole, the table suggests that social grants, in particular are becoming an increasingly important income source in female-headed households and that, concurrently, remittances are becoming less important.

Related to the finding that social grant income is (increasingly) more likely to be the main income source in female-headed households, the data presented in Table 31 reveal that female-headed households are far more likely to receive a social grant than male-headed households. The table documents the mean number of social grants, by grant type, that are reported in female- and

male-headed households. The findings demonstrate that, on average, female-headed households receive a greater number of grants, per household, than male-headed households. While this is the case in both 1997 and 2006, the difference in grant receipt widened considerably over the period. By 2006, for example, female-headed households received nearly twice as many grants as male-headed households (1.18 vs. 0.61).<sup>92</sup> Not surprisingly, the increasing access to social grants, particularly in female-headed households, is due largely to the receipt of the Child Support Grant in these households.<sup>93</sup> Female-headed households, as documented in the table, received more than twice as many CSGs relative to male-headed households in 2006 (0.79 vs. 0.35).<sup>94</sup>

This chapter has, thus far, demonstrated that the difference in poverty rates (at the upper-bound poverty threshold) between female- and male-headed households widened over the period.<sup>95</sup> The

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<sup>92</sup> In 2006, 58.3 per cent of female-headed households received at least one social grant. A far lower percentage of male-headed households (30.7 per cent) received a grant in the same year (own calculations from the 2006 GHS).

<sup>93</sup> There was, however, also a considerable increase in access to the Disability Grant in female-headed households. In 1997, female-headed households reported receiving half the number of Disability Grants, on average, relative to male-headed households. By 2006, female-headed households actually received a greater number of these grants. Female-headed households also received a significantly greater number of social pensions, on average, in both 1997 and 2006.

<sup>94</sup> The value of these grants, however, is far lower than that of the state pension and Disability Grant (e.g. the nominal value of the CSG in 2006 was only R 190/month compared with R820/month for the pension and the Disability Grant).

<sup>95</sup> The estimates of the extent of poverty in female- and male-headed household are robust to adjustments based on the same equivalence scale outlined in the previous chapter. According to the per adult equivalent poverty estimates (see Appendix E), for example, the declines in poverty levels were still significantly greater for male-headed households than for female-headed households between 1997 and 2006. Among male-headed households, for example, the poverty headcount (based on per adult equivalent adjustments) decreased significantly from 39 per cent to 33.4 per cent between 1997 and 2006 (a fall of 14.4 per cent). The poverty headcount among female-headed households, however, also decreased significantly, but only from 67.2 per cent to 61.7 per cent over the period (a fall of only 8.2 per cent). Therefore, even after adjusting for household size and composition, the differential in poverty rates by the gender of the household head widened in favour of male-headed households between 1997 and 2006.

descriptive statistics presented in the section have also demonstrated that, while social grant income is more likely to be the main source of income in female-headed households and while female-headed households receive more social grants, on average, than male-headed households, these social transfers seem to have had a greater impact on poverty headcount rates in male-headed households.

**Table 31 Social grant receipt among male- and female-headed households, 1997 and 2006**

		<b>OHS 1997</b>		<b>GHS 2006</b>	
		<b>MHHs</b>	<b>FHHs</b>	<b>MHHs</b>	<b>FHHs</b>
<b>Number of grants received</b>					
	CSG <sup>96</sup>	---	---	0.35 (0.009)	0.79 (0.015)
	SOAP	0.20 (0.004)	0.31 (0.005)	0.17 (0.005)	0.26 (0.006)
	DG	0.04 (0.002)	0.02 (0.002)	0.07 (0.003)	0.10 (.005)
	FCG	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.01 (0.001)	0.02 (0.002)
<b>Total number of grants received (by the household)</b>		0.25 (0.004)	0.37 (0.005)	0.61 (0.011)	1.18 (0.018)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are weighted  
Standard errors in brackets

### 3.2 Estimates of extreme poverty among female- and male-headed households

Presenting estimated changes in the extent of extreme poverty among female- and male-headed households is a particularly useful entry point for a fuller discussion on the role of social grant income in household poverty trends. One possible reason why grant income is more important to poverty reduction in male-headed households is that female-headed households (relative to male-headed households) are clustered further below the upper-bound (R322) poverty line (and

<sup>96</sup> The CSG was only rolled out in April of 1998 so there is no information on these grants captured in the 1997 OHS.

therefore are less likely to be pushed out of poverty by grant income). Evidence in support of this explanation can be seen in estimates of the extent of extreme poverty.

The overall poverty headcount rates at the lower bound threshold (R174 per capita monthly household income) between 1997 and 2006 (Table 32) are substantially lower than those presented earlier (i.e. from Table 29).<sup>97</sup> In terms of changes in extreme poverty over time, however, there are some similarities with the trends estimated from the upper bound poverty line. Across all three measures of income, for example, extreme poverty increased between 1997 and 1999 and then began to decrease in 2004 and again in 2006. These decreases are only significant, however, when estimates are derived from measures II and III. On the basis of earned income alone, extreme poverty at the household level did not decline significantly between 1997 and 2006. Put differently, it is likely that changes in access to earnings alone were not enough to reduce the extent of extreme poverty over the period.

Rather, it is, once again, the inclusion of social grant income that has had a particularly marked effect on the reduction of extreme poverty, especially among *female-headed households*. In 1997, for example, 48.9 per cent of all households would have been below the extreme poverty line on the basis of earned income alone. If social grant income is included, the extent of extreme poverty falls to 40.5 per cent. Among female-headed households the fall in the extent of extreme poverty 'due' to social grant income in 1997 was 19.1 per cent (from 69.6 per cent to 58.4 per cent) and 25.3 per cent (from 37.6 per cent to 30.9 per cent) among male-headed households. By 2006, however, the inclusion of social grant income decreases the extent of extreme poverty by 28.6 per cent (from 66.2 per cent to 47.2 per cent) among female-headed households and by 28.5 per cent (from 37 per cent to 26.4 per cent) among male-headed households.

Two principle conclusions can be drawn from these findings. The first is that, since the extent of extreme poverty remains consistently higher among female-headed households, it is apparent that a far greater percentage of female-headed households (relative to male-headed households) are

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<sup>97</sup> This is, again, the case simply because all of those households below the R174 monthly per capital poverty are *also* below the upper-bound threshold.

concentrated well below the upper-bound poverty threshold. Second, the contribution of social grant income to female-headed households is seen very clearly in the reduction of extreme poverty (according to measure II) or, in other words, among the very poorest female-headed households. Moreover, it seems that social grant income became particularly important for the reduction of extreme poverty among female-headed households towards the latter part of the period under review (i.e. the period during which there was a substantial increase in government spending on social grants).

It would appear, however, that, as with poverty trends at the upper-bound poverty line, the underestimation of income in male-headed households according to measure II means that, once the comprehensive measure of income (measure III) is considered, the difference in extreme poverty between male- and female-headed households widens once again. Based on measure III, extreme poverty decreased from 23.1 per cent to 18.7 per cent (a relative fall of 18.9 per cent) among male-headed households but only from 47.2 per cent to 40.6 per cent among female-headed households (a relative fall of 14 per cent) over the entire period. According to the most comprehensive measure of income that can be derived from the OHSs and the GHSs, then, the difference in the extent of extreme poverty between male- and female-headed households widened significantly in favour of male-headed households between 1997 and 2006.



**Table 32 Extreme poverty estimates among households, by household type, 1997 – 2006**

<b>Headcount (P<sub>0</sub>)</b>					
	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>	<b>Relative change 1997-2006</b>
<b>Earnings only (I)</b>					
<b>All</b>	48.85 (0.598)	50.53 (0.602)	51.73 (0.685)	47.95 (1.685)	-1.84%
<b>Male-headed</b>	37.58 (0.601)	40.61* (0.610)	36.38* (0.743)	36.99 (1.380)	-1.57%
<b>Female-headed</b>	69.62 (0.702)	68.20 (0.752)	61.45* (0.750)	66.18* (1.816)	-4.94%
<b>Earnings + social grants (II)</b>					
<b>All</b>	40.54 (0.542)	43.35* (0.552)	39.77* (0.587)	34.26* (1.053)	-15.49%†
<b>Male-headed</b>	30.88 (0.542)	35.14* (0.561)	32.15* (0.641)	26.44* (0.885)	-14.38%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	58.37 (0.699)	57.96 (0.742)	52.70* (0.765)	47.24* (1.219)	-19.06%†
<b>Including household expenditure (III)</b>					
<b>All</b>	31.57 (0.533)	33.23 (0.534)	31.97 (0.592)	26.94* (1.281)	-14.67%†
<b>Male-headed</b>	23.08 (0.511)	25.32* (0.515)	23.36 (0.576)	18.71* (1.032)	-18.93%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	47.22 (0.715)	47.33 (0.760)	46.58 (0.796)	40.61* (1.456)	-14.00%†
<b>Percentage of the poor living in FHHs</b>	56.08 (0.208)	52.50* (0.249)	57.56* (0.297)	59.78* (0.335)	6.60%†
<b>Percentage of poor females living in FHHs</b>	61.04 (0.272)	57.47* (0.334)	64.13* (0.389)	66.52* (0.428)	8.98%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R174 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

It is also significant, however, that the magnitude of the difference in extreme poverty rates between these two household types is considerable. By 2006, for example, the difference had widened such that female-headed households were more than twice as likely to be (extremely) poor than male-headed households. At the same time, the percentage of individuals living in households below the extreme poverty threshold who were living in female-headed households also increased significantly over the period. In 2006, nearly 60 per cent of all individuals in extreme poverty lived in a household headed by a female. Once again, the link between female headship and the gendered poverty trends presented in the previous chapter is clear from the last row of the table. Between 1997 and 2006, the percentage of females below the lower poverty threshold who lived in a female-headed household increased by about nine per cent so that, in 2006, about 66.5 per cent of females in extreme poverty lived in a female-headed household.

The last two sections of this chapter have therefore identified a widening gap in the extent of poverty between female- and male-headed households at both the upper- and lower-bound poverty lines (based on the most comprehensive income measure). The poverty analysis presented in these sections has also highlighted grant income, in particular, as being important to the reduction in the extent of poverty among male-headed households. However, once the analysis focuses on the extent of extreme poverty there is evidence that grant income was a key contributor to the reduction of poverty in female-headed households. As suggested throughout the analysis, this is likely the case because female-headed households are more likely to be clustered further below the upper-bound poverty line (as seen by the higher percentage of female-headed households below the extreme poverty threshold).

### **3.3 The depth of poverty and extreme poverty among households, 1997-2006**

In order to investigate these findings further, this section now considers trends in the depth of poverty and extreme poverty in Table 33 and Table 34, respectively. Between 1997 and 2006, the poverty gap (at the upper-bound poverty line) among all households decreased, having first increased from 1997 to 1999, and then fallen in both 2004 and 2006 (Table 33). As expected, the drop in the poverty gap ratio over the period is, once again, particularly noticeable when social

grant income is considered. Including social grant income (measure II), for example, reduces the poverty gap from 0.48 in terms of earnings alone to 0.39 in 1997 and by even more in 2006 (from 0.47 to 0.32).

**Table 33 The poverty gap among households, by household type, 1997 – 2006**

<b>Poverty Gap (P<sub>1</sub>)</b>					
	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>	<b>Relative change 1997-2006</b>
<b>Earnings only (I)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.48 (0.006)	0.49 (0.006)	0.50 (0.006)	0.47* (0.016)	-2.08%
<b>Male-headed</b>	0.37 (0.006)	0.40* (0.006)	0.41 (0.007)	0.36* (0.013)	-2.70%
<b>Female-headed</b>	0.68 (0.007)	0.66 (0.007)	0.67 (0.007)	0.64* (0.017)	-5.88%
<b>Earnings + social grants (II)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.39 (0.005)	0.41* (.005)	0.37* (0.005)	0.32* (0.009)	-17.95%†
<b>Male-headed</b>	0.30 (0.005)	0.34* (0.005)	0.31* (0.006)	0.26* (0.008)	-13.33%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	0.55 (0.006)	0.54 (0.007)	0.47* (0.006)	0.43* (0.010)	-21.81%†
<b>Including household expenditure (III)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.28 (0.004)	0.30* (0.004)	0.27* (0.005)	0.23* (0.010)	-17.86%†
<b>Male-headed</b>	0.21 (0.004)	0.24* (0.004)	0.20* (0.004)	0.16* (0.008)	-23.81%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	0.40 (0.005)	0.41* (0.004)	0.38* (0.006)	0.34* (0.012)	-15.00%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty gap between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty gap between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

In addition, it is by looking specifically at the poverty gap ratio that the ‘gendered’ effect of social grant income is most visible. In 2004, for example, the addition of social grant income to earned income lowers the poverty gap in female-headed household by twenty percentage points,

from 0.67 to 0.47, (compared to a fall from 0.41 to 0.31 among male-headed households). Moreover, between 1997 and 2006, the depth of poverty actually decreased by considerably more among female-headed households (by 21.8 per cent vs. 13.3 per cent for male-headed households) when social grant income is considered (based on measure II). Overall, however, the depth of poverty still decreased by relatively more among male-headed households (from 0.21 to 0.16- a fall of 23.8 per cent) compared with female-headed households (from 0.40 to 0.34- a fall of only 15 per cent) over the period according to measure III.

Examining changes in the depth of extreme poverty at the household level provides the strongest evidence of the role of social grant income in alleviating poverty among female-headed households (Table 34). On the basis of earned income only, the extreme poverty gap did not change significantly between 1997 and 2006. Once social grant income is included (measures II and III), however, the depth of extreme poverty declines significantly over the period and, thus, resembles trends in the extent and depth of poverty (based on the R322 threshold).

The impact of social grant income, however, is even more pronounced among female-headed households. In 2006, for example, including social grant income decreases the extreme poverty gap by 37.5 per cent (from 0.32 to 0.20) among male-headed households, but by 49.2 per cent (from 0.59 to 0.30) among female-headed households. The likely importance of social grant income to the depth of extreme poverty among female-headed households notwithstanding, the extreme poverty gap among female-headed households did not decline by as much as it did among male-headed households according to measure III. Using this comprehensive income measure, the depth of extreme poverty decreased by 33.3 per cent among male-headed households, but only by 20.8 per cent among female-headed households between 1997 and 2006.

**Table 34 Extreme poverty gap among households, by household type, 1997 – 2006**

<b>Poverty Gap (P<sub>1</sub>)</b>					
	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>	<b>Relative change 1997-2006</b>
<b>Earnings only (I)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.43 (0.006)	0.44 (0.006)	0.46 (0.006)	0.42* (0.015)	-2.33%
<b>Male-headed</b>	0.32 (0.005)	0.35* (0.006)	0.36 (0.007)	0.32* (0.012)	0.00%
<b>Female-headed</b>	0.64 (0.007)	0.61* (0.007)	0.61 (0.007)	0.59 (0.018)	-5.00%††
<b>Earnings + social grants (II)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.31 (0.004)	0.34* (0.005)	0.28* (0.004)	0.24* (0.006)	-22.58%†
<b>Male-headed</b>	0.23 (0.004)	0.28* (0.005)	0.24* (0.005)	0.20* (0.006)	-13.04%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	0.45 (0.006)	0.45 (0.006)	0.34* (0.006)	0.30* (0.007)	-33.33%†
<b>Including household expenditure (III)</b>					
<b>All</b>	0.16 (0.003)	0.19* (0.003)	0.15* (0.003)	0.12* (0.006)	-25.00%†
<b>Male-headed</b>	0.12 (0.003)	0.15* (0.003)	0.10* (0.003)	0.08* (0.005)	-33.33%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	0.24 (0.004)	0.26* (0.005)	0.22* (0.005)	0.19* (0.008)	-20.83%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty gap between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty gap between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R174 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

The extent and depth of both poverty and extreme poverty are therefore consistently and considerably higher for female-headed households than for male-headed households over the entire period of analysis.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, although poverty measures have fallen significantly in

<sup>98</sup> Trends in the severity of poverty (P<sub>2</sub>) in female- and male-headed households are similar to the changes in the extent and depth of poverty presented in this chapter (see Appendix F). In other words, the severity of poverty decreased significantly in both household types between 1997 and 2006 (after an initial increase between 1997 and 1999). The decrease, however, was both absolutely and greater for male-headed households. As a result, the

both male- and female-headed households, the decline has been relatively larger in male-headed households. The data presented in this section, however, demonstrate that receipt of social grant income, particularly in the 2000s, may have contributed more to the relief of the depth of poverty as well as the extent and depth of extreme poverty among female-headed households. The importance of social grant income to female-headed households notwithstanding, the difference in the extent and depth of poverty (at both poverty lines) between male- and female-headed households widened in favour of male-headed households between 1997 and 2006.

#### **4. Poverty decompositions by income source**

While the conclusions regarding the role of social grants in reducing the extent and depth of household poverty are compelling, the pre- and post-transfer poverty statistics presented in this chapter are, as in the previous chapter, merely suggestive. This section, therefore, again makes use of Shapely values to examine further the contributions of different income sources to the reduction of poverty. As in the decompositions from Chapter Six, the three components of income measure III are the focus of the decomposition, but in this section, their relative contribution to the reduction of the extent and depth of poverty at the household level (and by the gender of the household head) is considered.

Table 35 presents estimates of the impact of income sources to the reduction of household poverty headcount rates in 1997 and 2006. On one hand, the data suggest that the effect of earned income did not change considerably. Among all households, for example, the share of income derived from earnings increased slightly (from 85.7 per cent to 86.7 per cent) between 1997 and 2006. In relative terms, however, the contribution of earned income to the reduction of household poverty levels actually decreased (from 82.8 per cent to 80 per cent) over the period. On the other hand, and given the considerable increases in expenditure on grant income in the 2000s, it is not surprising that the contribution of grant income to the reduction of household poverty levels increased between 1997 and 2006. During the period under review, the share of household

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differential (between female- and male-headed households) in the severity of poverty also widened over the period in favour of male-headed households.

income attributable to social grants increased and, concomitantly, the relative effect of grant income on poverty reduction grew from 6.6 per cent to 9.8 per cent. At the same time, the contribution of other income (captured as expenditure information for households that do not report receiving either earned or grant income) decreased slightly, in relative terms, from 10.6 per cent to 10.2 per cent.

**Table 35 Decomposition of poverty headcounts at the household level by income source, 1997 and 2006**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)	Income share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)
<b>All households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	85.68	82.77	86.70	79.98
<b>Grant income</b>	4.36	6.59	6.06	9.81
<b>Other income</b>	9.96	10.64	7.24	10.22
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Male-headed households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	89.27	86.39	89.91	82.67
<b>Grant income</b>	2.85	4.91	3.86	7.87
<b>Other income</b>	7.88	8.70	6.23	9.46
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Female-headed households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	70.82	70.52	74.48	72.07
<b>Grant income</b>	10.62	12.27	14.41	15.49
<b>Other income</b>	18.56	17.21	11.11	12.44
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms (measure III)

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

This overall picture of the role of earned and social grant income in reducing poverty rates, however, obscures several important differences between male- and female-headed households. First, and as would be expected, the contribution of earned income to poverty reduction is far greater for male-headed households (82.7 per cent) than for female-headed households (72.1 per cent in 2006). Second, the decomposition analysis, in contrast to the findings relating to the impact of social grant income from Section Three of this chapter, highlights the considerably

greater impact of grants in reducing poverty levels in female-headed households.<sup>99</sup> In 2006, grant income accounted for roughly 15.5 per cent of the reduction in the poverty headcount rate in female-headed households but for only 7.9 per cent in male-headed households. Given the far greater importance of grants, and the state pension and the Child Support Grant especially, in female-headed households it is not surprising that grant income has been more important to poverty reduction in female-headed households. In line with the descriptive statistics presented in the previous section, it is the impact of the pension and the Child Support Grant which is likely to explain the greater poverty-reducing effects in female-headed households.

In 2006, for example, the state pension accounted for five per cent of the reduction in poverty among male-headed households and for 9.4 per cent among female-headed households (Table 36). The smaller impact of the Child Support Grant in actually moving female-headed households *above* the poverty threshold is also clear from the table. In 2006, the Child Support Grant contributed to a reduction in poverty among both male- and female-headed households and, although its impact was much smaller than that of the pension, its effect was considerably greater for female-headed households (i.e. 0.8 per cent in male-headed households and 2.2 per cent among female-headed households).

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<sup>99</sup> The explanation for the finding that grant income actually has a greater impact on poverty in female-headed households (contrary to the findings from the poverty analysis) is that, once again, the comparison of measure I and measure II is a fairly crude method for approximating the ‘effect’ of income sources on poverty reduction.



**Table 36 Social grant income and the headcount rate, by household type, 1997 and 2006**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share(%)	Relative Contribution (%)	Income share(%)	Relative Contribution (%)
<b>Male-headed households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	89.27	86.40	89.91	82.65
<b>State Old Age Pension</b>	2.35	4.17	2.15	4.96
<b>Disability Grant</b>	0.48	0.69	0.96	1.97
<b>Care Dependency Grant</b>	0.02	0.04	0.05	0.07
<b>Child Support Grant</b>	---	---	0.65	0.82
<b>Foster Care Grant</b>	0.01	0.00	0.05	0.09
<b>Other income</b>	7.88	8.70	6.23	9.46
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Female-headed households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	70.82	70.52	74.48	72.10
<b>State Old Age Pension</b>	9.28	10.63	7.83	9.38
<b>Disability Grant</b>	1.25	1.52	2.58	3.46
<b>Care Dependency Grant</b>	0.05	0.05	0.14	0.25
<b>Child Support Grant</b>	---	---	3.63	2.17
<b>Foster Care Grant</b>	0.04	0.07	0.23	0.32
<b>Other income</b>	18.56	17.21	11.11	12.44
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Once again, and in line with the descriptive poverty analysis, the contribution of social grant income to the reduction of the *depth* of household poverty demonstrates the real impact of social grants. Table 37 highlights, in particular, the increasing importance of social grant income in reducing the poverty gap ratio. Among all households, the relative contribution of social grant income to the reduction in the depth of household poverty was 14.3 per cent in 1997 and then increased to 21.1 per cent in 2006. While social grant income contributed to a decrease in the poverty gap among both male- and female-headed households during the period under review, its contribution was far greater among female-headed households and it became increasingly more important (relative to male-headed households) over time. Among male-headed households, the

relative contribution of earned income declined from 78.3 per cent to 74.2 per cent between 1997 and 2006. At the same time, the relative role of social grant income increased by about four percentage points (from 10.4 per cent to 14.5 per cent). There was very little change, among male-headed households, in the contribution of other income sources over the period (the relative contribution of other income was just over 11 per cent in both 1997 and 2006).

**Table 37 Decomposition of the depth of household poverty by income source, 1997 and 2006**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)	Income share(%)	Relative Contribution(%)
<b>All households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	85.68	70.35	86.70	67.24
<b>Grant income</b>	4.36	14.27	6.06	21.11
<b>Other income</b>	9.96	15.38	7.24	11.65
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Male-headed households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	89.27	78.35	89.91	74.21
<b>Grant income</b>	2.85	10.36	3.86	14.54
<b>Other income</b>	7.88	11.30	6.23	11.25
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Female-headed households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	70.82	50.95	74.48	52.50
<b>Grant income</b>	10.62	23.76	14.41	35.00
<b>Other income</b>	18.56	25.30	11.11	12.49
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms (R322)

Among female-headed households, earned income and social grant income, in particular, both became relatively more important to the reduction of the poverty gap (although the effect of earned income on the depth of poverty remained far greater for male-headed households). In 1997, the relative contribution of earned income was about 51 per cent in female-headed households and this increased to 52.5 per cent by 2006. The increase in the relative importance of social grant income was considerably greater. Among these households, the effect of social grant income increased from 23.8 per cent to 35 per cent during the period under review. Another key change among female-headed households is that this increase in the role of social grant income in

reducing the depth of poverty occurred alongside a notable decrease in the relative contribution of other income sources. In 1997, other income sources had a 25.3 per cent relative contribution to the reduction of the poverty gap among female-headed households, but by 2006, this had decreased by about 50 per cent to 12.4 per cent.

In terms of the impact of particular grant types on the depth of poverty, Table 38 again highlights the greater role of the Child Support Grant and the State Old Age Pension. The real impact of these two grants on household differences in poverty estimates, as demonstrated in the table, is in their respective contributions to the depth of poverty (and for female-headed households particularly). In 2006, the state pension, in relative terms, contributed 7.7 per cent of the reduction in the depth of poverty among male-headed households, but the contribution was much greater (17.9 per cent) among female-headed households. Similarly, the relative contribution of the Child Support Grant was only 2.9 per cent in male-headed households but ten per cent among female-headed households. These two grants, then, while not necessarily lifting poor female-headed households out of poverty, played a significant role in moving these households closer to the upper-bound poverty threshold.

The decomposition analysis presented in this section has therefore demonstrated that grant income has become relatively more important to the reduction of the extent and depth of poverty among all households. While not narrowing the differential in the extent (or depth) of poverty between male- and female-headed households, social grant income did become more important to the reduction of the depth of poverty, in particular, among female-headed households over the period. The analysis therefore suggests that, without social grant income, the difference in the extent and depth of poverty between male- and female-headed households would have widened even further.

**Table 38 Decomposition of the depth of poverty by social grant, 1997 and 2006**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share(%)	Relative Contribution (%)	Income share(%)	Relative Contribution (%)
<b>Male-headed households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	89.27	78.35	89.91	74.22
<b>State Old Age Pension</b>	2.35	8.54	2.15	7.68
<b>Disability Grant</b>	0.48	1.73	0.96	3.53
<b>Care Dependency Grant</b>	0.02	0.05	0.05	0.18
<b>Child Support Grant</b>	---	---	0.65	2.95
<b>Foster Care Grant</b>	0.01	0.04	0.05	0.19
<b>Other income</b>	7.88	11.30	6.23	11.25
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Female-headed households</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	70.82	50.95	74.48	52.52
<b>State Old Age Pension</b>	9.28	20.83	7.83	17.94
<b>Disability Grant</b>	1.25	2.73	2.58	6.15
<b>Care Dependency Grant</b>	0.05	0.10	0.14	0.30
<b>Child Support Grant</b>	---	---	3.63	9.99
<b>Foster Care Grant</b>	0.04	0.09	0.23	0.59
<b>Other income</b>	18.56	25.30	11.11	12.49
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

## 5. Concluding remarks

The evidence presented in this chapter has demonstrated that several household compositional changes in post-apartheid South Africa have coincided with an increase in the number and percentage of households that are headed by women. A poverty analysis at the household level suggests further that this increase in the percentage of female-headed households may be contributing, at least in part, to the feminisation of poverty identified in the previous chapter. In demonstrating this link, the chapter showed that the percentage of poor individuals and poor females, in particular, living in female-headed households increased significantly between 1997 and 2006. Poverty risks are higher in female-headed households since these households are, and

remain, *far* more likely to be poor than male-headed households in South Africa. Moreover, while the percentage of both male- and female-headed households below the selected poverty thresholds (i.e. R322 and R174 monthly per capita income) decreased between 1997 and 2006, the decrease was greater among male-headed households. The difference in the level of poverty in male- and female-headed households therefore *widened* (both relatively and absolutely) over the period. This widening of the poverty differential between these two household types is robust to both the selection of the poverty threshold (i.e. both the R174 and R322 poverty lines) and to adjustments for household size and composition.

The decomposition analysis highlighted further the role of earned and social grant income in male- and female-headed households. One of the key findings, for example, is that earned income accounted for a far smaller reduction in the extent and depth of poverty in female-headed households. At the same time, income derived from grants had a larger and growing role in the reduction of the poverty gap among female-headed households at both poverty lines. The real benefit of social grant income, from a gender equity perspective is, therefore, derived not necessarily from its (growing) contribution to lifting female-headed households above the poverty line, but in moving poor female-headed households closer to it. Therefore, in the absence of grant income (and the state pension and the Child Support Grant in particular), the poverty differential (in both the extent and depth of poverty) between female- and male- headed households would have been considerably greater.

This chapter has therefore demonstrated that female-headed households are an increasingly common household type and that these households remain far more likely to be poor than male-headed households. The next chapter builds on the analysis presented in this chapter by considering the demographic and labour market characteristics which might account for the differences in poverty risks between male- and female-headed households. In particular, the chapter examines why earned income accounted for a smaller contribution towards a reduction in the extent and depth of poverty in female-headed households. Following a descriptive analysis, the chapter then examines the main factors that explain the association between poverty and female headship in a multivariate model.

## **Chapter Eight- Why are Female-Headed Households More Vulnerable to Poverty? The Demographic and Labour Market Characteristics of Female- and Male-Headed Households**

### **1. Introduction**

The previous chapter has demonstrated that female-headed households are far more likely to be poor than male-headed households and that the poverty differential between these two household types in South Africa widened between 1997 and 2006. This chapter now explores some of the main differences between female- and male-headed households that could explain *why* female-headed households are much more vulnerable to income poverty (relative to male-headed households). The chapter also examines how changes in the characteristics of these two broad household types might explain why poverty rates have fallen by more among male-headed households.

To summarise from the review chapter, the higher risk of poverty among female-headed households is often associated with a ‘triple burden’ borne by female heads. These include: the head being a single earner, the earner being female and therefore facing labour market disadvantages, and time constraints due to commitments to managing the household and earning income (Fuwa 2000a: 128). Work in a number of different settings has suggested further that female household heads are more vulnerable to poverty because they often support more dependents than their male counterparts, especially in developing countries (Moghadam 2005). This chapter therefore identifies some of the key demographic and economic (e.g. labour market) characteristics that may make female-headed households more vulnerable to income poverty (relative to male-headed households) in post-apartheid South Africa.

The chapter is structured as follows. The key differences between female- and male-headed households that may account for the higher poverty risk among female-headed households are investigated in Section Two. In order to understand why poverty rates have fallen by more in male-headed households, Section Three considers how some of the key characteristics of female- and male-headed households have changed over the period. Section Four then identifies how the

main characteristics which differentiate female- and male-headed households are associated with a greater risk of poverty.

## **2. Demographic and labour market characteristics of female- and male-headed households in post-apartheid South Africa**

Many of the studies which have explored the greater poverty risks faced by female-headed households have highlighted the importance of disaggregating the findings by the marital status of the household head (cf. Kossoudji and Mueller 1983; Appleton 1996; Barros et al. 1997; Fuwa 2000b; Horrell and Krishnan 2007) and by the presence of the male partner of the head (cf. Kossoudji and Mueller 1983; Varley 1996; Fuwa 2000b). In South Africa, as in many other contexts, female headship is largely associated with the absence of a male partner since the vast majority (92.2 per cent in 2006)<sup>100</sup> of all female heads do not reside with a spouse or partner. Even among female heads who are married, only 25.8 per cent have a resident male partner in the same household (in contrast, 88.6 per cent of married male heads reside with their spouse or partner). Moreover, based on the marital status of male and female heads, female-headed households are a far more heterogeneous household type than male-headed households.<sup>101</sup> Controlling for the marital status of the household head therefore seems to be a particularly useful way of identifying some of the differences in vulnerability to poverty in the South African context, particularly among female-headed households.

Given the emphasis placed on the marital status of the household head in the international literature, the analysis presented in this chapter follows Appleton (1996), Klasen et al. (2010) and Fuwa (2000a) in classifying self-reported female-headed households as *de facto* female-headed, *de jure* female-headed, or headed by a married/co-residing female who lives with her partner

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<sup>100</sup> In contrast, 62.4 per cent of male heads resided with a spouse or partner in 2006.

<sup>101</sup> Most male heads (in 2006) are either married (70.5 per cent) or have never married (23.6 per cent). Female heads, on the other hand, are fairly evenly represented across the marital categories with the highest percentage having never married (37.4 per cent) and with 22.5 per cent married and 32.3 per cent widowed (own calculations from the 2006 GHS).

(referred to as a ‘co-resident female-headed household’ from this point onwards). According to this classification, a *de jure* female-headed household is one in which the head is not attached with a male partner (i.e. never married, widowed or divorced/separated) and a *de facto* female head is married but not living with her husband or partner (often assumed in the literature (see for example Klasen et al. 2010) to be the ‘acting head’ since the absent male partner may be considered the head of the household). These three categories (i.e. *de jure* headed, *de facto* headed and co-resident female-headed) are mutually exclusive and all female-headed households fall within one of the classifications.

There are, as shown in Table 39, some important differences across these three types of self-reported female-headed households in terms of their demographic profile, their distribution and in their vulnerability to poverty. The most common type of female-headed household, for example, is one in which a female is the *de jure* head (i.e. is not married or attached to a male partner). Roughly 78 per cent of all female-headed households were *de jure* female-headed in 2006 (not shown in table) and nearly a third (32.4 per cent) of all South Africans resided in this household type (in 2006). The vast majority of these individuals are reported as African (89.2 per cent), live below the poverty line (72.7 per cent) and are residing in a rural area (i.e. only 27.7 per cent reside in an urban area). In terms of poverty risks, however, the highest levels of poverty are found in *de facto* female-headed households. Less than 10 per cent (7.3 per cent) of South Africans live in this household type, but an astonishing 86.3 per cent are poor. These households consist mostly of Africans (96.3 per cent) and are predominantly located in rural areas (about 91 per cent).

Co-resident female-headed households are the least common household type of all the classifications presented in Table 39 (only 5.5 per cent of all female-headed household are of this type, and 2.3 per cent of South Africans live in a co-resident female-headed household). Poverty risks are relatively low (46 per cent of individuals living in these households are poor) among this kind of female-headed household and a far larger percentage of individuals from these households are based in urban areas (46.9 per cent). Not surprisingly, there is far more racial heterogeneity among co-resident female-headed households as seen in the fact that a substantial



percentage of individuals are White (18.9 per cent) or Coloured (19.4 per cent). Despite the relatively low risk of poverty among this household type, individuals in co-resident female-headed households are slightly, but not significantly, more likely to be poor than individuals in male-headed households.

**Table 39 Key characteristics associated with female- and male headship, 2006**

	<i>De facto</i> female- headed	<i>De jure</i> female- headed	Co-resident female- headed	Male-headed
<b>Percentage of individuals by household type</b>	7.31 (0.100)	32.35 (0.203)	2.34 (0.074)	57.99 (0.217)
<b>Race</b>				
African	96.32 (0.288)	89.18 (0.246)	57.91 (3.765)	72.78 (0.293)
Coloured	2.10 (0.167)	7.27 (0.192)	19.39 (3.118)	10.09 (0.172)
Indian	0.02 (0.014)	0.86 (0.076)	3.84 (1.417)	3.61 (0.129)
White	1.55 (0.239)	2.69 (0.150)	18.86 (3.526)	13.52 (0.251)
<b>Percentage living in urban areas by household type<sup>102</sup></b>	9.13 (0.539)	27.67 (0.397)	46.92 (3.592)	39.81 (0.329)
<b>Percentage of poor individuals by household type (measure III)</b>	86.29 (1.542)	72.73 (1.707)	46.04 (3.704)	43.39 (1.948)

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: Standard errors in brackets  
The data are weighted

On the whole, the descriptive statistics presented in Table 39 demonstrate that disaggregating female-headed households into the three categories identified in the literature highlights several important differences between these household types. Perhaps most importantly, the key difference between these three types of households is in the risk of poverty. In particular,

<sup>102</sup> There is no information on whether a household is located in an urban or rural area in the GHS 2006. However, it is possible to use stratum information on the 53 district council/metro areas to create a 'metro' dummy variable denoting residence in the Cape Town, Durban, East Rand, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth or Pretoria metropolitan areas.

individuals living in *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households are far more likely to be living in poverty than individuals from co-resident female-headed or male-headed households.

## 2.1 Characteristics of household heads

Some of the differences in poverty risks identified in Table 39 are likely due, at least in part, to differences in the human capital and labour market characteristics of the head of the household (see, for example, Chant 2009; Ozawa et al. 2011). One of the main differences between female- and male-headed households in South Africa is the age of the household head (Table 40). *De jure* female heads, on average, are significantly older than the heads of other household types. This is probably due to the fact that, since women often outlive men, many households become female-headed when the male breadwinner dies: 41.2 per cent of *de jure* female heads are widowed and a further 11.2 per cent are divorced or separated from their partner. The majority of male heads, in contrast, are either married (54.9 per cent) or co-habiting as husband and wife (14.9 per cent). While these differences would explain the greater average age of *de jure* female heads, it is also the case that *de jure* female heads are far more likely than male heads to have never married (47.6 per cent vs. 23.7 per cent, respectively).<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> An overall decline in marital rates among both male and female heads more generally is explained, not by an increase in divorce rates as in some developed countries, but rather by the increasing percentage of heads that have never married. The percentage of household heads that have never married increased significantly among both male-headed households (from 11.5 per cent to 23.7 per cent) and *de jure* female-headed households (from 33.4 per cent to 47.6 per cent) between 1997 and 2006 (own calculations).

**Table 40 Selected demographic and labour market characteristics of household heads, 2006**

	<i>De facto</i> female head	<i>De jure</i> female head	Co-resident female head	Male head
<b>Mean age</b>	43.95 (0.401)	49.31 (0.259)	44.26 (1.056)	43.84 (0.173)
<b>Head is working-aged</b>	87.47 (0.929)	68.57 (0.674)	83.09 (3.166)	88.75 (0.337)
<b>Marital status</b>				
Never married	NA	47.63 (0.753)	NA	23.66 (0.522)
Married	NA	NA	NA	54.94 (0.597)
Co-habiting	NA	NA	NA	14.94 (0.431)
Divorced/ separated	NA	11.16 (0.538)	NA	2.59 (0.218)
Widowed	NA	41.20 (0.721)	NA	3.87 (0.209)
<b>Highest level of education</b>				
No school	23.05 (1.235)	21.99 (0.579)	10.75 (1.708)	10.74 (0.307)
Primary	29.87 (1.347)	27.64 (0.639)	20.41 (2.268)	22.63 (0.464)
Secondary	29.56 (1.496)	28.94 (0.694)	31.45 (3.401)	31.36 (0.556)
Matric	9.43 (0.899)	13.15 (0.572)	21.38 (3.373)	22.30 (0.517)
Tertiary	7.41 (0.897)	7.74 (0.459)	15.66 (2.871)	12.29 (0.437)
<b>Employment</b>				
Non-searching unemployed	14.67 (1.003)	7.50 (0.384)	6.11 (1.175)	3.31 (0.193)
Searching unemployed	11.54 (1.089)	9.32 (0.438)	10.43 (1.826)	7.95 (0.329)
Inactive	42.29 (1.516)	44.55 (0.737)	32.51 (3.645)	20.56 (0.444)
Employed	31.04 (1.442)	38.24 (0.754)	50.92 (3.593)	67.77 (0.536)
<b>Inactive among working-age</b>	35.72 (1.603)	22.93 (0.726)	21.04 (3.350)	12.36 (0.387)

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: Standard errors in brackets

The data are weighted

Educational attainment and the employment status of the head are also characteristics that differentiate female heads from male heads. In particular, *de facto* and *de jure* female heads share a number of similarities with one another while co-resident female heads have educational and employment characteristics that more closely resemble male heads than other types of female heads. For example, in 2006, more than a fifth of both *de facto* and *de jure* heads had no schooling and only about seven per cent had some level of tertiary education.<sup>104</sup> Co-resident female heads, in contrast, are far less likely to have had no schooling (only 10.7 per cent) and are more likely to have completed matric (21.4 per cent) or attained some type of tertiary education (15.7 per cent). In terms of educational attainment, co-resident female heads may even have an advantage over male heads since a greater percentage (15.7 per cent) have some tertiary education (only 12.3 per cent of male heads have a tertiary education).

If, as highlighted in much of the literature, the employment status of the household head is a key determinant of vulnerability to poverty, then the descriptive statistics presented in the last five rows of Table 40 would suggest that all three types of female-headed households carry a greater risk of poverty (relative to male-headed households). Male household heads are far more likely to be employed (67.8 per cent) and far less likely to be strictly unemployed (7.9 per cent) or inactive (20.6 per cent) compared with female heads. There are, however, also some important differences across the three classifications of female headship. Compared with *de facto* and *de jure* heads, a far greater percentage (50.9 per cent) of co-resident female heads are employed. Co-resident female heads are also less likely to be economically inactive (32.5 per cent) while a significantly greater percentage of both *de facto* and *de jure* female heads are not active in the labour force (42.2 per cent and 44.6 per cent, respectively). Even controlling for the older age of these female heads (and *de jure* heads in particular), they are still more likely to be economically inactive. Among working-age heads, for example, all three types of female heads are significantly less likely to participate in the labour market (relative to male heads).

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<sup>104</sup> One difference between these two types of female heads, however, is that a greater percentage of *de jure* heads (13.2 per cent) than *de facto* heads (9.4 per cent) has attained matric.

There are, therefore, some important differences both between female and male household heads and within the different types of female heads. In particular, *de jure* heads, the most prevalent type of female head, tend to be older than other types of female heads and, on average, have had less education than both male heads and co-resident female heads. *De jure* heads are also far less likely to be employed than male heads and are more likely to be economically inactive (explained partly by the fact that many of these household heads are widowed and elderly) than any other type of household head.

## 2.2 Household demographic characteristics

In addition to the individual characteristics (e.g. human capital and labour market) of the household head, female- and male-headed households can be distinguished by a number of demographic characteristics. Table 41 demonstrates that, in particular, the membership composition of female-headed households is significantly different from male-headed households and that some of these differences may increase their risk of poverty.<sup>105</sup> *De jure* female-headed households, on average, contain significantly fewer working-age adults (2.08) than both co-resident female-headed households (2.57) and male-headed households (2.19).

Moreover, and as highlighted in Table 41, the ‘missing’ working-age adult in *de jure* female-headed households is often a male. *De jure* and *de facto* female-headed households contain only about half the number of working-age men, on average, as co-resident female-headed households and male-headed households. Despite the relative absence of working-age men, however, these two types of female-headed households tend to be larger than male-headed households and the data suggest that this is because they have a greater number and proportion of children (under the age of 16) and adults of a pensionable age (for *de jure* female-headed households only), as well as a greater number of working-age women (relative to male-headed households). An important

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<sup>105</sup> This finding is consistent with the work on female headship in developing countries (see for example Kossoudji & Mueller, 1983) and in South Africa (Sender, 2002; Dungumaro, 2008) which has suggested that the main disadvantage faced by female-headed households is the greater prevalence of ‘incomplete households’ or ‘missing males’.

caveat here, however, is that, due to the reach of the State Old Age Pension, the presence of elderly household members may not necessarily be associated with higher poverty risks. In other developing country contexts, the absence of working-age adults (and the presence of elderly members) in female-headed households has often been linked with a greater risk of poverty (cf. Appleton 1996; Moghadam 2005; Chant 2007b; Chant 2009), but the available evidence (see for example Woolard 2003), as well as the findings from the decomposition analysis in the previous chapter, suggests that receipt of the pension is an important factor mitigating the risk of household poverty in South Africa (and especially for female-headed households).

**Table 41 Selected demographic characteristics of female- and male-headed households, 2006**

	<i>De facto</i> female-headed	<i>De jure</i> female-headed	Co-resident female-headed	Male-headed
<b>Household size</b>	4.52 (0.072)	4.00 (0.036)	4.19 (0.149)	3.39 (0.025)
<b>Household composition</b>				
# working-age adults	2.17 (0.037)	2.08 (0.020)	2.57 (0.108)	2.19 (0.015)
# working-age men	0.63 (0.025)	0.67 (0.013)	1.24 (0.059)	1.30 (0.009)
# working-age women	1.54 (0.025)	1.41 (0.014)	1.32 (0.067)	0.88 (0.010)
# of pensionable adults	0.16 (0.012)	0.33 (0.007)	0.32 (0.059)	0.20 (0.006)
# children <11	1.46 (0.037)	1.08 (0.019)	0.92 (0.077)	0.70 (0.011)
# children (age 11-15, inclusive)	0.74 (0.026)	0.50 (0.011)	0.38 (0.040)	0.30 (0.007)
<b>Ratio of children (&lt;16) to total household size</b>	0.43 (0.007)	0.32 (0.004)	0.24 (0.016)	0.20 (0.003)
<b>Ratio of pensioners to total household size</b>	0.04 (0.005)	0.12 (0.003)	0.09 (0.026)	0.07 (0.002)

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are weighted  
Standard errors in brackets

The findings presented in Table 42 show that nearly half (48.9 per cent) of *de jure* female-headed households (and 54.4 per cent of *de facto* female-headed households) contain at least one

working-age female but no working-age males.<sup>106</sup> Perhaps one of the most important differences between female- and male-headed households is the percentage of households that contain children. As illustrated in Table 42, 74.1 per cent of *de facto* female-headed households support young children (under the age of 11) and 55.8 per cent have children between the ages of 11 and 16. Most (57.7 per cent) *de jure* female-headed households also contain young children and about 41.8 per cent have older children.<sup>107</sup> In contrast, only 41.3 per cent of male-headed households have a resident child under the age of 11 and the percentage of male-headed households with a child between the ages of 11 and 16 in residence is 26.4 per cent.

**Table 42 Household composition of female- and male-headed households, 2006**

<b>Percentage of households with:</b>	<b><i>De facto</i> female-headed</b>	<b><i>De jure</i> female-headed</b>	<b>Co-resident female-headed</b>	<b>Male-headed</b>
<b>No working-age adults</b>	2.81 (0.485)	7.43 (0.369)	5.93 (2.820)	4.39 (0.241)
<b>No adult men (&gt;17)</b>	63.06 (1.435)	60.79 (0.723)	4.18 <sup>108</sup> (1.469)	NA
<b>No working-age men</b>	57.19 (1.472)	56.29 (0.738)	14.27 (2.992)	6.93 (0.280)
<b>Female working-age adults (no working-age men)</b>	54.38 (1.490)	48.86 (0.751)	8.34 (1.498)	2.54 (0.149)
<b>Children under 11</b>	74.09 (1.338)	57.74 (0.733)	49.77 (3.546)	41.28 (0.580)
<b>Children age 11-16</b>	55.79 (1.513)	41.81 (0.729)	33.79 (2.749)	26.41 (0.485)

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are weighted

Categories are not mutually exclusive therefore columns do not add up to 100 per cent

<sup>106</sup> *De jure* and *de facto* female-headed households are, on the whole, more likely to have no working-age men (or adult men more generally) resident in the household- irrespective of the presence of working-age women in the household (row two of the table).

<sup>107</sup> Co-resident female-headed households support children to a lesser extent than the other two types of female-headed households, but are still significantly more likely to report both younger and older children than male-headed households.

<sup>108</sup> These are households in which the spouse/partner of the female head is less than 18 years of age or is listed on the household roster as being female.

*De facto* and *de jure* female-headed households support more children, contain fewer working-age men (and fewer adult men more broadly) and, therefore, are more likely to depend on income contributions from female householders (and pensioners). Despite the relative absence of working-age men in most female-headed households (since most female heads are either unmarried or not living with their partner), these households are larger. As a result, the ratio of non-working-age household members (e.g. children under the age of 16 and pensioners) to total household size in female-headed households also tends to be greater compared with male-headed households. In particular, the ratio of pensioners and children to the total number of household members is far greater in *de jure* female-headed households (relative to male-headed households). However, risk factors for poverty differ within the three classifications of female-headed households. In *de facto* female-headed households, for example, the ratio of pensioners to household size is actually lower (relative to all other household types) while the proportion of household members under the age of 16 is highest.

### **2.3 Labour market characteristics of female- and male-headed households**

Related to the demographic factors presented in the previous section, a number of labour market characteristics, at the household level, are likely to account for both the far higher poverty risks and the smaller impact of earned income on poverty reduction (identified in the decompositions) in female-headed households. To review from the international literature, much of the available work suggests that a higher level of poverty among female-headed households is often associated with fewer household members with employment (Kossoudji and Mueller 1983; Chant 2003a; Elmelech and Lu 2004), less access to male earnings (Chant 2003a; Moghadam 2005), and with the employment status of the household head (Chant 2003a). The first part of this section showed that all three types of female heads are far less likely to be employed than male heads. This subsection now examines aggregate differences in the number of employed members (and employed men, in particular), economic dependency ratios, and average earnings between female- and male-headed households.



Table 43 documents selected economic characteristics and, perhaps most importantly, demonstrates that a far higher percentage of both *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households do not contain any employed household members (61.9 per cent and 48.3 per cent, respectively). Roughly a third (33.6 per cent) of *de facto* female-headed households and 41 per cent of *de jure* female-headed households contain only one employed household member. This household member is often the household head as indicated by the descriptive statistics in the last set of data rows in the table. In contrast, co-resident female-headed households and male-headed households are far less likely to have no employed members and co-resident female-headed households are actually more likely to have more than one employed household member (40 per cent of these households). As would be expected, then, both *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households have a distinct disadvantage in terms of the average number of employed members (0.47 and 0.67, respectively). Both co-resident female-headed households and male-headed households, in contrast, include more than one employed member on average (1.24 and 1.10, respectively).

In addition, all three types of female-headed households rely, to a large degree, on the earnings of the head and other female household members. Even without considering the work contribution of the head, for example, the average number of male and female workers in *de jure* female-headed households is the same (0.14). However, responsibility for providing income to the household appears to be more vested in the earned and social grant income contributed by the household head in male-headed households. In these households, for example, 68 per cent of total household income is contributed by the head (this includes both earnings and social grants). Moreover, if the head is not included, male-headed households contain, on average, only 0.12 employed males since the head is the only employed household member in 40.6 per cent of these households. In contrast, the share of household income contributed by female heads is considerably lower (40.8 per cent and 58.8 per cent in *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households, respectively). In considering these types of labour market characteristics, the higher risk of poverty in *de facto* female-headed households seems to be due, in particular, to the lack of access to employed household members. *De facto* female heads have the lowest levels of employment among all female heads and, not counting the head, these households have the

lowest number of employed males and females (0.07 and 0.05, respectively) of all household types.

**Table 43 Selected labour market characteristics of female- and male-headed households, 2006**

	<i>De facto</i> female-headed	<i>De jure</i> female-headed	Co-resident female-headed	Male-headed
<b>Household income earners</b>				
No employed members	61.87 (1.481)	48.25 (0.748)	25.87 (3.514)	24.17 (0.490)
One employed member	33.59 (1.462)	40.96 (0.754)	34.29 (3.110)	48.06 (0.595)
More than one employed member	4.54 (0.584)	10.79 (0.473)	39.84 (3.516)	27.77 (0.535)
<b>Total number of employed</b>	0.47 (0.020)	0.67 (0.012)	1.24 (0.073)	1.10 (0.010)
<b>Number of employed (Excl. the head)</b>	0.13 (0.012)	0.28 (0.010)	0.71 (0.053)	0.42 (0.008)
# other employed males (Excl. the head)	0.07 (0.008)	0.14 (0.006)	0.58 (0.043)	0.12 (0.005)
# other employed females (Excl. the head)	0.05 (0.008)	0.14 (0.006)	0.13 (0.030)	0.30 (0.006)
<b>Ratio of workers to household size</b>	0.16 (0.007)	0.24 (0.005)	0.37 (0.027)	0.44 (0.005)
<b>Average monthly income per employed householder (2000 prices)</b>	1,538.99 (136.22)	1,667.13 (65.45)	2,917.78 (334.90)	2,890.17 (85.34)
<b>Income from head</b>				
Only worker	25.15 (1.351)	30.47 (0.730)	18.98 (2.712)	40.64 (0.594)
Head's share of household income (per cent)	40.78 (1.492)	58.81 (0.657)	42.50 (2.555)	68.02 (0.428)

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: Standard errors in brackets

The data are weighted

Another way of measuring access to earnings from employment at the household level is to estimate the ratio of employed members to total household size (i.e. the opposite of the economic dependency ratio since a higher ratio indicates a greater number of workers for each household

member).<sup>109</sup> Here again, there is no significant difference between co-resident female-headed households and male-headed households (0.37 and 0.44, respectively) while *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households fare considerably worse (0.16 and 0.24, respectively). Not only are these two household types more vulnerable in terms of the number of employed members, but workers in these households also earn less, on average, than workers in male-headed households (and in co-resident female-headed households). Employed members from *de facto* female-headed households, for example, earn, on average, R1,538.99 per month in constant 2000 prices.<sup>110</sup> The average worker in co-resident female-headed households, however, earns nearly twice that amount (R2,917.78) and there is no significant difference between average monthly earnings in these households and male-headed households (R2,890.17 in 2000 prices).

Since the literature on female headship and poverty highlights less access to male earnings as a key predictor of vulnerability to poverty for female-headed households, Table 44 now considers male earnings and (given the South African context) access to social grant income more closely. As the table clearly shows, the vast majority of both *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households do not have any employed male adults resident in the household (91 per cent and 87.8 per cent, respectively). Co-resident female-headed households are also more likely (relative to male-headed households) to have no employed males, but over half of these households (52 per cent) do have at least one employed male. Female employment in *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households is particularly important since a substantial percentage of these households (30.7 per cent and 39.6 per cent, respectively) only have access to female earnings (i.e. no male earnings). Moreover, the fact that these households have fewer employed members overall (and lower employment levels among the heads of these households) means that a significantly higher

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<sup>109</sup> Estimating the ratio of workers to total household size also provides an indication of how thinly spread earned income may be across household members.

<sup>110</sup> This estimate does not distinguish between full-time and part-time work. An employed member is defined as such if she/he engaged in at least one of the work activities detailed in Q2.1 a-g over the past seven days (even if for only an hour) or if she/he had been absent from work in the previous seven days but definitely had a job to which she/he could return.

percentage (relative to both co-resident female-headed households and male-headed households) rely completely on social grant income. *De facto* female-headed households have an additional layer of risk related to the fact that 20.2 per cent of these households report no income from either employment or social grants.<sup>111</sup>

**Table 44 Access to earned income among female- and male-headed households, 2006**

<b>Percentage of households with:</b>	<b><i>De facto</i> female-headed</b>	<b><i>De jure</i> female-headed</b>	<b>Co-resident female-headed</b>	<b>Male-headed</b>
<b>No employed men</b>	91.00 (0.874)	87.75 (0.493)	48.01 (3.557)	29.21 (0.463)
<b>At least one employed female, no employed males</b>	30.72 (1.396)	39.60 (0.751)	22.31 (2.616)	5.04 (0.227)
<b>No employed members, grant income only</b>	40.05 (1.441)	36.62 (0.700)	18.60 (2.920)	13.16 (0.345)
<b>No employed members and no grant income</b>	20.23 (1.343)	11.53 (0.474)	7.11 (2.635)	11.01 (0.393)

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Note: The data are weighted

Categories are not mutually exclusive therefore columns do not add up to 100 per cent

The descriptive statistics presented in this section therefore show how *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households, in particular, are likely to be disadvantaged in the labour market (relative to both co-resident female-headed households and male-headed households). These households have, on average, the lowest number of employed household members; are less likely to contain employed males; employed members in these households earn considerably less than in other household types; and they are far more likely to rely solely on social grant income (i.e. have no access to earned income from within the household). As a result, these two types of female-headed households rely, to a greater extent, on the earnings of their female household members and on social grant income.

<sup>111</sup> These households are the most likely beneficiaries of remittances and other private transfers from outside of the household since the heads of these households are married but do not have partners who are listed on the household roster.

### 3. Changes in household level characteristics between 1997 and 2006

While the descriptive statistics presented in the previous section have highlighted some of the key demographic and labour market disadvantages faced by female-headed households that may explain their higher risk of poverty (and the lower likelihood of having access to earned income), the analysis did not account for why poverty rates may have fallen by more among male-headed households during the period under review. Since this thesis is concerned, in particular, with poverty trends over time, this section briefly identifies some of the most important demographic and labour market *changes* that may explain why the difference in poverty levels between female- and male-headed households widened over the period.

Before looking at some of the changes in household characteristics, however, Table 45 considers the distribution of the population across household types and how this has changed over the period. The table shows that the increase in female headship over the period was driven largely by an increase in the percentage of individuals living in *de jure* female-headed households. In 1997, for example, 27.13 per cent of all South Africans lived in this type of household and, by 2006, this had increased to 32.4 per cent.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, not only do *de jure* female-headed households have the largest percentage of individuals of all types of female-headed households, but the increase (19.2 per cent) in the percentage of South Africans living in these households is the highest of all household types considered in the analysis. In fact, the percentage of individuals living in *de facto* female-headed households (and male-headed households) actually decreased significantly while the percentage living in co-resident female-headed households only increased marginally (and not significantly).

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<sup>112</sup> Recall from the previous section that the growth in *de jure* female-headed households was driven predominantly by an increase in the percentage of household heads who have never married.

**Table 45 Distribution of individuals by household type, 1997-2006<sup>113</sup>**

	1997	1999	2004	2006	Relative change, 1997-2006
<b><i>De facto</i> female-headed</b>	10.77 (0.084)	11.06 (0.108)	7.77 (0.103)	7.31 (0.100)	-3.21% <sup>††</sup>
<b><i>De jure</i> female-headed</b>	27.13 (0.127)	26.23 (0.150)	32.56 (0.185)	32.35 (0.203)	19.24% <sup>††</sup>
<b>Co-resident female-headed</b>	2.25 (0.042)	1.98 (0.047)	1.63 (0.052)	2.34 (0.074)	0.04%
<b>Male-headed</b>	59.86 (0.140)	60.44 (0.168)	57.98 (0.197)	57.99 (0.217)	-3.12% <sup>††</sup>
<b>Column total (%)</b>	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

† Denotes a significant change between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The percentages denote the percentage of individuals living in each respective household type

Household types are mutually exclusive (and exhaustive) and columns therefore add up to 100 per cent

The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

At the same time, the relative decrease in the extent of poverty was actually the lowest among *de jure* female-headed households (Table 46). Between 1997 and 2006, for example, the percentage of these households below the poverty line only decreased by 3.9 per cent (from 63.4 per cent to 60.9 per cent) while the relative decline among *de facto* female-headed households was 7.8 per cent (from 81.6 per cent to 75.2 per cent). The poverty headcount rate decreased by far more among co-resident female-headed households (17.9 per cent) and male-headed households (16.2 per cent).<sup>114</sup> *De jure* female-headed households were, therefore, the fastest growing household type over the decade and, at the same time, the difference in poverty rates between these households and male-headed households also widened considerably.

<sup>113</sup> The descriptive statistics presented in this table are describing the percentage of *individuals* by household type and are therefore not directly comparable with the statistics presented in Table 26 (which documented the number and percentage of *households* that are female-headed).

<sup>114</sup> The same trend can be observed for the depth of poverty. Among *de jure* female-headed households the depth of poverty decreased by 10.8 per cent, but among male-headed households, the poverty gap ratio declined by 23.8 per cent over the period.

**Table 46 Poverty risks by household type, 1997-2006 (measure III)**

	<b>P<sub>0</sub></b>		<b>P<sub>1</sub></b>	
	<b>1997</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b><i>De facto</i> female-headed</b>	81.59 (0.880)	75.19 (2.149)	0.51 (0.007)	0.48 (0.016)
<b><i>De jure</i> female-headed</b>	63.39 (0.843)	60.90 (1.981)	0.37 (0.006)	0.33 (0.011)
<b>Co-resident female-headed</b>	46.91 (2.326)	38.50 (2.883)	0.25 (0.014)	0.18 (0.015)
<b>Male-headed</b>	38.84 (0.663)	32.54 (1.541)	0.21 (0.004)	0.16 (0.008)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

Poverty estimates are calculated at the household level (measure III)

Since the rise in female headship over the period was driven largely by the increase in *de jure* female-headed households and since these households were increasingly more likely to be poor, relative to the other household types, the next two tables identify some of the characteristics (i.e. both demographic and labour market) that may account for the growing poverty differential between *de jure* female-headed households and male-headed households. Changes in the characteristics of *de facto* and co-resident female-headed households are not considered in this chapter, but Appendix G documents changes in all four household types.

Beginning with some of the compositional changes which may account for the growing poverty differential between female- and male-headed households, Table 47 shows that, in particular, *de jure* female-headed households were far more likely to contain working-age women than working-age men. Despite a decrease in the average number of working-age adults in both household types (in line with an overall decrease in household size over the period), female-headed households reported more than twice as many working-age women than working-age men in 1997 and 2006. Male-headed households, in contrast, saw a very marginal decline in the average number of working-age men and a significant decline in working-age women. The gender differences in household composition are also seen in the increase (from 51.6 per cent to 56.3 per cent) in the percentage of *de jure* female-headed households that had no working-age men resident in the household.

**Table 47 Changes in household composition, 1997-2006**

	<i>De jure</i> female-headed		Male-headed	
	1997	2006	1997	2006
<b>Household composition</b>				
# working-age men	0.78 (0.012)	0.67 (0.013)	1.39 (0.692)	1.30 (0.009)
# working-age women	1.54 (0.014)	1.41 (0.014)	1.22 (0.008)	0.88 (0.010)
# children <16	1.76 (0.021)	1.58 (0.023)	1.52 (0.013)	1.00 (0.015)
<b>Ratio of children (&lt;16) to total household size</b>	0.31 (0.003)	0.32 (0.004)	0.27 (0.002)	0.20 (0.003)
<b>Ratio of pensioners to total household size</b>	0.14 (0.004)	0.12 (0.003)	0.07 (0.002)	0.07 (0.002)
<b>Percentage of households with:</b>				
No working-age adults	8.79 (0.377)	7.43 (0.369)	3.53 (0.152)	4.39 (0.241)
No working-age men	51.60 (0.599)	56.29 (0.738)	6.12 (0.186)	6.93 (0.280)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS

Note: The data are weighted

Categories are not mutually exclusive therefore columns do not add up to 100 per cent

One of the more notable changes in household composition over the period can be seen in the number of children (less than 16 years of age) resident in the household. While both female- and male-headed households saw a decrease in the average number of children, the decrease was far greater in male-headed households (e.g. from 1.5 to 1.0 between 1997 and 2006). Moreover, the ratio of children to household size actually increased in *de jure* female-headed households and decreased in male-headed households. In other words, the proportion of household members who were under the age of 16 (and therefore below the minimum age for employment) grew in these households such that, *ceteris paribus*, income would need to be divided among a greater number of household members without employment.

The changing nature of household composition in female- and male-headed households has, therefore, largely been characterised by an increasing concentration of working-age women in *de jure* female-headed households and a decrease in the average number of working-age women in



male-headed households. Since there was relatively little change in the proportion of pensioners in both household types, the growing support for children in female-headed households is likely to have a significant impact on dependency ratios<sup>115</sup> in these households. In short, relative to male-headed households, *de jure* female-headed households are increasingly likely to depend on income from working-age women and this income is being spread over a growing proportion of household members who are too young to enter the labour market.

In light of these demographic changes it is not surprising that there have also been growing differences in access to earned income over the period (Table 48). Female-headed households, for example were increasingly more likely to report having no resident employed men (e.g. 87.8 per cent in 2006) while the percentage of male-headed households without access to male earnings actually declined slightly (from 31.4 per cent to 29.2 per cent between 1997 and 2006). At the same time, and coinciding with a significant increase in the employment rate of female heads, female-headed households saw a slight increase in the average number of female employed members and a decrease in the number of employed men. Male-headed households, in contrast, reported very little change in the average number of resident employed men alongside a notable decline in the number of employed female members. Put differently, the average number of employed household members in *de jure* female-headed households did not change significantly over the period (0.67 in both years), but the gender composition of the employed did change such that female-headed households have become more reliant on the earnings of the female head and other female household members. At the same time, male-headed households reported an overall decrease in the average number of employed members (from 1.16 to 1.10) which was driven by a drop in the number of employed women in the household (the average number of employed men was 0.8 in both years).

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<sup>115</sup> In broad terms, the dependency ratio measures the ratio of household members who are economically inactive to those who are economically active (i.e. of a working age and seeking employment).

**Table 48 Changes in labour market characteristics, 1997-2006**

	<i>De jure</i> female-headed		Male-headed	
	1997	2006	1997	2006
<b>Percentage of households with:</b>				
No employed men	85.65 (0.421)	87.75 (0.493)	31.39 (0.378)	29.21 (0.463)
No employed members, grant income only	27.71 (0.513)	36.62 (0.700)	11.44 (0.250)	13.16 (0.345)
No employed members and no grant income	23.80 (0.496)	11.53 (0.474)	13.51 (0.280)	11.01 (0.393)
<b>Head is employed</b>	33.09 (0.587)	38.24 (0.754)	66.95 (0.376)	67.77 (0.536)
<b>Number of employed (household)</b>	0.67 (0.010)	0.67 (0.012)	1.16 (0.007)	1.10 (0.010)
# Employed men	0.16 (0.005)	0.14 (0.006)	0.80 (0.005)	0.80 (0.007)
# Employed women	0.50 (0.008)	0.52 (0.010)	0.37 (0.005)	0.30 (0.006)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS

Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive therefore columns do not add up to 100 per cent

Standard errors in brackets

The data are weighted

Despite this increase in access to earned income from female household members (in *de jure* female-headed households), perhaps the most important change over the period is that social grant income has become an increasingly important source of income in *de jure* female-headed households. The percentage of these households that survived on grant income alone (i.e. had no access to earnings) increased significantly from 27.7 per cent in 1997 to 36.6 per cent in 2006. More importantly, there was a concurrent and significant drop in the percentage of *de jure* female-headed households that had access to neither earned income nor social grant income over the period. Therefore, during the decade under review, *de jure* female-headed households have come to survive, increasingly, on income from female earnings and social grants and less on earned income from male household members.

#### **4. Correlates of poverty**

Thus far, this thesis has contributed to the existing literature on headship and household poverty in four ways. First, it has demonstrated that the risk of poverty is far higher in female-headed

households than in male-headed households. Second, the poverty trend analysis has shown that, an overall decrease in the incidence of poverty (among both household types) notwithstanding, the difference in poverty rates between male- and female-headed households has widened in favour of male-headed households over a recent ten year period. Third, not all female-headed households are equally vulnerable to poverty. Poverty risks are highest in *de facto* female-headed households (which account for about 16 per cent of all female-headed households) but poverty rates have fallen by the least in *de jure* female-headed households (which are, by far, the most common type of household with a female head). Fourth, the descriptive statistics presented in the preceding section of this chapter have identified a number of demographic and labour market characteristics which may explain the greater vulnerability of female-headed households, on average, to income poverty in post-apartheid South Africa. These statistics have, in particular, demonstrated that important changes in membership composition and in access to earned income may explain the widening poverty differential between female- and male-headed households.

The remainder of the chapter now considers the link to income poverty by examining whether (and by how much) controlling for these observable differences (i.e. both demographic and labour market) between female- and male-headed households reduces the significantly greater risk of poverty in female-headed households. Once again, the three classifications of female headship (i.e. *de facto*, *de jure*, and co-resident) are used to explore the differing poverty risks within the broader category of ‘female-headed’.

#### **4.1 Model specification**

Prior to estimating the effect of key variables on the poverty differential between female- and male-headed households, a brief overview of some of the important specification decisions affecting the poverty model is discussed here. While there are no existing South African studies which have explicitly estimated the poverty differential between female- and male-headed households, the existing literature on earnings functions (Bhorat and Leibbrandt 1999) and on modelling the predictors of household consumption and poverty (cf. Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a; Booysen 2004; Hoogeveen and Özler 2006) in South Africa offers some guidance.

Moreover, there are a number of international studies (see for example Appleton 1996; Klasen et al. 2010; Ozawa et al. 2011) which have examined female headship and poverty in a multivariate context.

Given the history of legalised racial discrimination in South Africa, perhaps the first decision that has to be made in estimating the correlates of poverty is how to model race. In the recent poverty literature in South Africa, there appear to be several ways to deal with this. Hoogeveen and Özler (2006) include race as an explanatory variable and as a series of interaction terms with education dummies in their estimation of household consumption. In the earnings function literature, however, Bhorat and Leibbrandt (1999) include only Africans in their regressions since they are interested particularly in low wages.<sup>116</sup> In the regressions presented in this section, race is included as an explanatory variable and then correlates are estimated for the African sample separately and presented in Appendix H.

On the basis of the descriptive analysis presented in this chapter and on work from the international literature exploring the association between female headship and poverty (cf Appleton 1996; Fuwa 2000b; Klasen et al. 2010), a number of independent variables capturing household demographic, labour market and spatial characteristics are included in the models.<sup>117</sup> The way in which these variables are included in the model, however, is also a potentially important econometric issue. In the regressions presented in this section, the number of children and elderly members, for example, are included as proportions of total household size. The

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<sup>116</sup> Similarly, about 92 per cent of poor households (in 2006) in the sample are headed by an African. Restricting to Africans only or looking at racial groups separately assists in avoiding the endogeneity problem that may arise due to the relationship between South Africa's history of racial segregation and many of the other right-hand variables (see Leibbrandt and Woolard (2001a) for a more complete discussion).

<sup>117</sup> The existing South African literature, for example, emphasises the importance in controlling for urban and rural effects. In order to avoid endogeneity arising from the different relationship between education and labour market returns in urban and rural areas, the models in this section follow Leibbrandt and Woolard (2001a) in including an urban-rural dummy variable as well as controls for the nine provinces.

regressions therefore model household size and composition in line with other South African studies (cf. Leibbrandt and Woolard 2001a; Hoogeveen and Özler 2006) as well as with international work on headship and poverty (cf. Appleton 1996; Klasen et al. 2010).

To estimate the likelihood that an individual lives in a household in which monthly per capita income falls below the poverty line, a logit regression model is constructed, in which the natural logarithm of the odds ratio of being poor is estimated as:

$$Y_i = \ln\left(\frac{P_i}{1 - P_i}\right) = a_i F_i + b_i S_i + u_i$$

Where  $Y_i = 1$  if the average per capita household income is below the poverty line of R322 (in 2000 prices) for individual  $i$ ;  $F_i = 1$  if the household is headed by a female (and  $F_i = 0$  if by a male);  $S_i$  captures other observable characteristics of the household and  $u_i$  is the error term. In alternate specifications,  $F_i$  is further disaggregated into the three classifications of female headship. The explanatory variables include the age, level of education and employment status of the head (1 if employed, 0 otherwise), the proportion of household members who are children, the percentage who are of pensionable age, and the number of employed household members (apart from the head). The regression controls also for household size, population group, whether the household is in a metropolitan area, and for the province of residence.

## 4.2 The correlates of household poverty in South Africa

Table 49 presents the results from the logit estimations for living in a poor household using data from the 2006 GHS. The sample includes all individuals living in households in which a head is identified.<sup>118</sup> In the simple regression reported in the first column (I), the variable identifying whether an individual lives in a female- or a male-headed household is the only explanatory

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<sup>118</sup> The number of households (about 117/28,002) that report more than one head of household in the 2006 GHS is very small. These households have been dropped from the sample.

variable. The estimated coefficient (1.292) for female headship indicates the significantly larger poverty risk associated with living in a female-headed household (the coefficient is both positive and significant), without controlling for other household or individual characteristics. In other words, the log odds of being poor are about 1.3 times higher for individuals living in a female-headed household (relative to those in male-headed households).

In the second regression (II), female headship is further disaggregated into the classifications adopted throughout the chapter and male headship is (again) the reference category. The coefficients on the female headship variables confirm the findings from the poverty analysis and identify *de facto* female-headed households as having the highest poverty risks (more than twice the log odds of being poor- 2.106) followed by *de jure* female-headed households (1.247). In other words, the second regression demonstrates that *de facto* households are the most vulnerable to poverty but that all three types of female-headed households are significantly more likely to be poor than male-headed households. An adjusted Wald test confirms that *de facto* female-headed households are significantly more likely to be poor than *de jure* households ( $F= 332.00$ ,  $p= 0.000$ ) and that co-resident female-headed households are less likely to be poor than both *de facto* ( $F= 670.15$ ,  $p= 0.000$ ) and *de jure* households ( $F= 297.85$ ,  $p= 0.000$ ).

In the third regression (III)<sup>119</sup>, the model now includes some of the key characteristics of the household head (e.g. human capital variables such as the age of the head and the head's level of education and a dummy variable denoting whether the head is employed) as well as controls for urban/rural residence ('metro'), province and race.<sup>120</sup> After controlling for these variables, the

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<sup>119</sup> Models III, IV and V all include a set of provincial dummy controls and a set of variables capturing the highest level of education attained by the head that are not displayed in the table. The full model is presented in Appendix I.

<sup>120</sup> Recall from the review of the South African literature on female headship and poverty (e.g. May et al., 1998) that female-headed households are hypothesised to be more vulnerable to poverty because they are more likely to live in a rural area (controlled for in regression III with the 'metro' dummy variable); less likely to have working-age adults (controlled for with variables measuring the ratio of pensioners and children to total household size- regression V); and because women face persistent labour market disadvantages (hence the model (III) also controls for the employment status of the head as well as the human capital variables denoting the age and education of the head).

coefficient on *de jure* female headship is roughly halved (i.e. it drops to 0.665 but remains significant). However, while *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households are still more likely to be poor than male-headed households, the significance of the coefficient on co-resident female headship falls away in the third regression (and the coefficient drops to 0.019). The human capital variables (i.e. the education level of the head, in particular- see the full model in Appendix I) explain a large portion of the disadvantage associated with female headship, but the single largest correlate of poverty in the third regression is whether or not the head is employed (-1.578). The log odds are about one and a half times smaller for individuals living in a household with an employed head compared with those in households without an employed head (i.e. inactive or unemployed), regardless of the gender of the head. Therefore, controlling for the employment status of the head identifies the greater likelihood of female heads to be unemployed or economically inactive as one of the main reasons for the higher poverty risk faced by female-headed households. Finally, and as would be expected, (and in line with the findings from virtually all post-apartheid poverty studies) race is also a strong correlate of poverty status and, more specifically, Africans (1.270) are far more likely to be poor than the other population groups. The variables modeled in the third regression therefore demonstrate that a number of the key variables that are often identified in the gender and poverty literature (as well as in the South African poverty literature, more generally) explain the greater risk of poverty faced by individuals living in female-headed households.

While the first three regressions in Table 49 have shown that the risk of poverty is still significantly greater for individuals living in *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households (relative to male-headed households) even after controlling for human capital, spatial and demographic (i.e. race) variables, the next regression (IV) examines the additional effect of access to earned income from other household members (apart from the head). By controlling for the number of household members with employment, the model identifies both the significant negative effect of employed household members (-0.874) on the likelihood of living in poverty as well as how living with employed individuals affects the poverty differential between female- and male-headed households. In particular, the model suggests that, once again, the difference in poverty risks between female- and male-headed households decreases once the model controls

for the number of employed household members. The coefficients for *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households, while remaining significant and positive, are reduced even further (i.e. they drop to 0.632 and 1.136, respectively). Interestingly, the coefficient for co-resident female headship actually increases (to 0.209) and again becomes significant after controlling for employed members. This suggests that, after controlling for the other independent variables in the model, co-resident female-headed households have a relative advantage (compared with male-headed households) in terms of the employment status of their resident household members.

Finally, the last regression (V) in Table 49 considers how this earned income would be divided among household members by controlling for household composition. More specifically, the estimation now also controls for household size as well as the ratio of children and the elderly to total household size. Perhaps the main finding from this last step in the model is that, over and above all other factors, the proportion of householders who are children has the strongest positive association (1.050) with the risk of poverty.<sup>121</sup> Since female-headed households tend to be larger<sup>122</sup> and have a greater number and proportion of children, relative to male-headed households, it is therefore not surprising that the coefficients for *de jure* (0.574) and *de facto* (0.835) female headship decrease once again (yet remain positive and significant) after controlling for household composition.

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<sup>121</sup> The association between household composition and poverty, after controlling for the other independent variables, is slightly more pronounced among African households (Appendix H). The proportion of household members who are children (under the age of 16) is a stronger predictor of poverty among Africans while the percentage of elderly household members appears to offer more of a protective effect.

<sup>122</sup> As expected, the estimation demonstrates that, even after controlling for a number of other factors, individuals in larger households are significantly more likely to be poor.



Table 49 Logit estimations predicting poverty status, 2006

	I	II	III	IV	V
<b>Female-headed</b>	1.292*** (0.020)				
<i>De jure</i> FHH		1.247*** (0.021)	0.665*** (0.025)	0.632*** (0.025)	0.574*** (0.028)
<i>De facto</i> FHH		2.106*** (0.045)	1.270*** (.051)	1.136*** (0.051)	0.835*** (0.055)
<b>Co-resident FHH</b>		0.108* (0.065)	0.019 (0.085)	0.209** (0.092)	0.085 (0.114)
<b>Age of the head</b>			-0.025*** (0.001)	-0.019*** (0.001)	-0.020*** (0.001)
<b>Head is employed</b>			-1.578*** (0.025)	-1.618*** (0.026)	-1.947*** (0.030)
<b>Metro</b>			-0.567*** (0.030)	-0.554*** (0.031)	-0.457*** (0.033)
<b>African</b>			1.270*** (0.073)	1.223*** (0.077)	0.516*** (0.082)
<b>Indian</b>			-0.116 (0.126)	0.048 (0.127)	-0.470*** (0.127)
<b>Coloured</b>			0.567*** (0.081)	0.743*** (0.083)	-0.041 (0.090)
<b>Number of employed</b>				-0.874*** (0.018)	-1.442*** (0.023)
<b>Household size</b>					0.367*** (0.008)
<b>Ratio of children</b>					1.050*** (.068)
<b>Ratio of pensioners</b>					-2.017*** (0.143)
<b>Constant</b>	-0.266*** (0.012)	-0.266*** (0.012)	2.110*** (0.106)	2.208*** (0.111)	1.193*** (0.118)
<b>F stat</b>	4213.71	1622.25	367.74	378.53	333.65
<b>Prob &gt; F</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>N</b>	104730	104730	104592	104573	104573

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are weighted. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* Significant at the 99.9 per cent confidence level.

\*\* Significant at the 95 per cent confidence level. \* Significant at the 90 per cent confidence level. The omitted categories are: male-headed, head has no schooling, head is not employed, non-metro and White. Models III, IV and V also include a set of variables measuring the highest level of education attained by the head.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>123</sup> The level of education attained by the head has the expected outcome- i.e. that each additional year of education has a stronger negative correlation with poverty than the previous level. The coefficients for education are also all significant at the 99.9 per cent level of confidence (see Appendix I).

In contrast, the main factor mitigating the risk of poverty is the proportion of householders who are elderly (i.e. eligible for the state pension). In other words, households that include relatively more pensioners are significantly less likely to experience poverty (after controlling for the other explanatory variables in the model). This finding underscores the likely importance of the State Old Age Pension in reducing the extent of poverty, particularly since the model also controls for the employment status of the head. Moreover, as female-headed households are actually more likely to include a greater proportion of elderly members (and receive a greater number of state pensions), the negative and significant coefficient (-2.017) highlights that, once again, social grant income (i.e. the state pension) is likely to be an important source of income in poor households and in female-headed households in particular.

Most importantly, the multivariate model presented in this section has demonstrated that the household-level demographic and economic characteristics identified throughout this chapter account for a substantial portion of the poverty differential between female- and male-headed households. In the full model (V), for example, the proportion of household members who are children is the largest predictor of poverty. Since, as shown earlier in this chapter, the ratio of children to total household size is far higher in *de jure* female-headed households (relative to male-headed households), the multivariate analysis highlights the dependency of children as one of the most important factors accounting for poverty differences between female- and male-headed households. In terms of the factors which mitigate the risk of living in poverty, the employment status of the head and the number of employed members in the household can be clearly identified as two of the main protectors against household poverty. Once again, however, there is an obvious disadvantage for female-headed households since female heads are far less likely to be employed and female-headed households have significantly fewer employed members, on average, compared with male-headed households.

Two key findings from the multivariate analysis presented in this section, therefore, are as follows. First, the regressions have identified that, even controlling for a range of characteristics, female headship retains a significant positive association with poverty. The regressions in Table

49, however, have not controlled for all of the observable and unobservable characteristics which differ across household type. The model, for example, has not controlled for the difference in earnings between women and men. Therefore, one possible explanation for the remaining positive association between female headship and the risk of poverty is that female-headed households are more likely to depend on earnings from female household members and women, on average, earn less than men. Nonetheless, a tentative conclusion from the regressions in Table 49 is that female headship is a useful, albeit relatively blunt, marker for ‘gender’ differences in household poverty. Second, the regressions have identified a number of demographic and labour market characteristics which explain the differences in poverty risks between male-headed households and the different types of female-headed households. In other words, the models presented in Table 49 have shown that individuals living in all three types of female-headed households are significantly more likely to be poor than those living in male-headed households. However, once the regressions control for the characteristics of the household head and the demographic and labour market factors which differentiate female- and male-headed households, the individuals in *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households face a higher risk of poverty while those in co-resident female-headed households are not significantly more likely to be poor than individuals living in male-headed households.

An important caveat, however, is that, while this chapter has highlighted the heterogeneity of poverty risks within the broader classification of ‘female-headed’ households (i.e. both by disaggregating female headship into three classifications and by estimating the predictors of poverty), poverty risks also vary considerably *within* male-headed households. In particular, and as shown in earlier work (Posel and Rogan 2009), the risk of poverty is far higher in male-headed households in which there are no employed members than in male-headed households with at least one employed member. On the whole, however, the risk of poverty is still far greater in female-headed households (even after controlling for these types of characteristics) and the fact remains that the vast majority of male-headed households have characteristics which make them far *less* vulnerable to poverty than female-headed households.

## 5. Concluding remarks

This chapter has presented a descriptive and multivariate analysis identifying some of the reasons why female-headed households, on average, are more likely to be poor than male-headed households. Female-headed households, for example, tend to be larger and contain, on average, a smaller number of working-age adults (and working-age men in particular). Female-headed households also contain a larger number of children and elderly (i.e. of a pensionable age) household members compared with male-headed households. Concurrently, a significantly larger percentage of female household heads support children without a male partner or spouse resident in the household (i.e. *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households).

The evidence presented in this chapter has also demonstrated that female-headed households, on average, are disadvantaged in the labour market relative to male-headed households. Female-headed households contain fewer employed members overall and a smaller (and decreasing) number of employed men. In fact, the vast majority (between 85.7 per cent and 87.8 per cent during the period under review) of *de jure* female-headed households do not have an employed male resident in the household. As a result, the ratio of household members with employment to total household size is significantly smaller among female-headed households (compared to male-headed households). Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that income from social grants became increasingly important, particularly in female-headed households, over the period.

There are, however, some differences within the broad classification of ‘female-headed’ which highlight both the types of household compositional changes that are occurring in South Africa as well as the heterogeneity of female-headed households. By looking at specific types of households with a female head (e.g. *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households), the chapter identified the increasing prevalence of households headed by a woman who has never married as one of the key determinants of the growth in female headship. In other words, the increasing percentage of households that are female-headed is largely explained by the growth in *de jure* female headship. Concomitantly, and in line with the findings from the international literature, it would appear that the decrease in marital rates is one of the key trends underpinning the growth

in this household type. Household compositional changes over the period have, therefore, been characterised largely by the increase in households headed by a woman who has never married, are less likely to contain resident adult men and are increasingly likely to support children (relative to other household types). Moreover, there are, as documented in both the descriptive and multivariate analysis, some important differences in the risk of poverty between the three types of female-headed households identified in the chapter. *De jure* female-headed households, while not as vulnerable to poverty as *de facto* female-headed households, are the most common classification of female-headed household, the fastest growing household type (of those considered thus far), and the risk of poverty has not fallen by as much in this type of household (relative to the other types).

The logit regressions demonstrated further that, over and above the effects of selected household demographic and labour market characteristics on poverty, a significant independent effect of the gender of the household head remains. Even after controlling for a range of observable household demographic and labour market characteristics of the head and of the household, *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households are significantly more likely to be poor than male-headed households. Distinguishing household types according to the gender of the head therefore constitutes one way of exploring the implications of gender differences in access to resources. Even though there are both males and females living in female-headed households (and in male-headed households), an analysis using female headship can identify the kinds of factors which expose females to greater poverty risks than males. The presence of children in the household and the smaller number of employed members, in particular, appear to present a greater risk of poverty in female-headed households even after controlling for other relevant household characteristics.

The gender of the household head is nevertheless a relatively blunt instrument. Female- and male-headed households are not homogenous groupings and the last section of this chapter showed that, in particular, some types of female-headed households are significantly more vulnerable to poverty than others (i.e. those without employed members and those with children in residence). Given this heterogeneity, and because self-reported headship is often fiercely

contested in the literature, the final empirical chapter of this thesis investigates alternative ways of classifying households so as to capture the nature and implications of gender differences in access to resources. In particular, the chapter considers the association between the risk of poverty and several potentially useful alternative definitions of 'headship'.

## Chapter Nine- Alternative Definitions of Headship and Vulnerability to Poverty

### 1. Introduction

Despite the significantly higher risk of poverty in *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households identified in the previous chapter, critics might still argue that female headship is not necessarily a relevant category with which to examine gendered poverty risks. In fact, the heterogeneity of female-headed households (and, to a lesser extent, male-headed households as well) with respect to vulnerability to poverty, as highlighted in the previous chapter, is one of the main reasons that headship is often questioned in the gender and poverty literature. In light of this heterogeneity, the merit of a headship based poverty analysis, for some researchers, would only be justified if the household head can be clearly identified as the person who assumes some level of responsibility for household resources or is a key provider of income.

In the household surveys analysed in this thesis, however, headship is self-reported by respondents and no criteria to identify headship are specified in the survey instrument. The fieldworker's manual for both the OHSs and the GHSs states that the respondent should be allowed to decide who the head is but that, as a general guideline, 'the head of household can either be male or female, and is the person who assumes responsibility for the household'. Recall that in Chapter Seven it was noted that, in the 2006 GHS, 73 per cent of households (that reported some level of income) recorded that the head was the household member that contributed the highest (or joint highest) level of income. Therefore headship was *not* associated with being the primary breadwinner in 27 per cent of the households from the GHS in 2006. If headship is only a symbolic position (e.g. the oldest household member) in these households or if it is not reported consistently (as is possible when such wide definitions of headship are provided to fieldworkers), then the link between female headship and gender differences in access to resources and in decision-making would be rendered less meaningful (Bruce and Dwyer 1988; Rosenhouse 1989; Young 1993; Varley 1996).

In light of this remaining uncertainty surrounding self-reported headship, this final empirical chapter now briefly considers several alternative ways of classifying households as a means to explore gender differences in poverty. The chapter is structured as follows. The following section introduces several alternative definitions of household headship that are often explored in the literature and examines how these definitions are associated with self-reported headship in the 2006 GHS. In Section Three, the association between these alternative definitions of headship and vulnerability to poverty is considered. This last section also considers how changes in the risk of income poverty over time differ among alternative classifications of female headship.

## **2. Alternative definitions of headship**

Since self-reported headship is somewhat loosely defined in the OHSs and the GHSs (and in most households surveys in South Africa), this section is concerned with examining whether there are better ways of classifying households so as to discern the poverty implications of gender differences in access to resources and on the demands for these resources. One way of reclassifying households, as discussed in Chapter Three, is to construct several different alternative definitions of household headship, rather than relying on self-reported measures. Imposing a definition of headship on households is also a way of holding the meaning of headship ‘constant’ across households. Four such classifications of (female) headship, as proposed by Fuwa (2000b), are considered in this section and these include: an economic definition, a demographic classification and two hybrid designations (*viz.* ‘core’ headship and ‘combined’ headship).

In terms of the economic definition, the OHSs and GHSs allow for a classification of headship that is often described in the literature as the ‘cash head’. This is the person in the household who contributes the highest level of income- either from social grants or from wages/self-employment.<sup>124</sup> With respect to the demographic classification, a household would be identified

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<sup>124</sup> The main limitation of this approach in the OHSs and GHSs is, once again, the relatively high percentage of households that do not report any income from these sources. Not all households have information on individual access to earned or social grant income. Recall from Chapter Five that 14.4 per cent of households in the 2006 GHS



as female-headed if it contains at least one adult woman living in a household and no adult men (over the age of 17). Core female-headed households are then those in which there are no adult men *and* a female is the highest income provider. Finally, combined female-headed households would contain no adult males *or* have a female as the highest earner.

These definitions can also be used to define male-headed households but, as Fuwa (2000a) notes, there is an element of asymmetry in alternative definitions of male headship since self-reported male-headed households (i.e. the most common type of household in South Africa) often include both male and female adults. Male headship is therefore defined relative to female-headed households for all the definitions which include a demographic component. So if, for example, a household has no adult men present, then it would be classified as a female-headed household. Households with only adult men (i.e. no adult women) or both male and female adults would therefore be identified as male-headed.

Table 50 presents (unweighted) estimates of female and male headship according to these four alternative definitions of headship. For ease of comparison, the table also includes self-reported female- and male-headed households. The table demonstrates that there are a number of differences across the four classifications of headship. For example, of all households in the 2006 GHS for which a clear primary earner can be identified, 44 per cent would be classified as female-headed according to both the cash and combined headship classifications.<sup>125</sup> In contrast,

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reported no earnings from employment or social grants. In the poverty analysis, this problem was addressed by imputing total household income with household expenditure data. In the analysis presented here, this is not possible since the highest earner of income in the household cannot be identified from information on total household expenditure. The classification of 'cash head' therefore applies only to those households that report income from earnings or grants (i.e. excluding 14.4 per cent of households in 2006).

<sup>125</sup> Of all households in the sample (28,002), 19,241 can be identified as having a primary earner. Households that were not able to be classified by the gender of the cash head include: those households that report no income from earnings or grants (4,031); households in which there is more than one cash head (2,224)- often because there are no employed members and there is more than one householder claiming a grant; and households in which the highest

the demographic and core headship classifications identify a considerably smaller percentage of female-headed households (25.1 per cent and 22.8 per cent, respectively).

**Table 50 Distribution of alternatively defined household types, 2006**

	<b>Self-reported headship</b>	<b>Cash headship</b>	<b>Demographic headship</b>	<b>Core headship</b>	<b>Combined headship</b>
<b>Male-headed</b>					
<b>Number</b>	15,962	10,766	20,961	14,851	10,753
<b>Percentage</b>	57.04	55.95	74.86	77.18	55.89
<b>Female-headed</b>					
<b>Number</b>	12,020	8,475	7,041	4,390	8,488
<b>Percentage</b>	42.96	44.05	25.14	22.82	44.11
<b>Total</b>	27,982	19,241	28,002	19,241	19,241

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are not weighted

The data in the table therefore suggest that the extent of self-identified female headship appears similar to female cash and combined headship. In 2006, for example, conventional headship would have underestimated the prevalence of households in which a female is the main economic provider by about only 2.5 per cent (or by about one percentage point). Similarly, if female headship is defined as the absence of adult males *or* the economic contribution of female household members (i.e. combined female-headed households), then self-reported headship would also slightly underestimate the percentage of households with a female head. In contrast, when the demographic definition of female headship is applied (i.e. in the demographic and core classifications), then female headship is vastly underestimated (e.g. by about 17 percentage points or 41.5 percent according to the pure demographic definition). Self-identified female headship therefore includes a strong ‘economic’ component and is not only associated with the absence of an adult male.

In Table 51, the data are now weighted and trends in female headship between 1997 and 2006 are identified. The table suggests, first and foremost, that the percentage of households headed by a female increases by considerably more (compared with the broad category of self-reported

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level of individual income is from a Child Support Grant assigned to a household member under the age of 16 (2,358).

female-headed households), in relative terms, between 1997 and 2006 according to the demographic definitions of headship (e.g. 12.8 per cent and 27.5 per cent, respectively, compared to 6.6 per cent). In other words, the increasing percentage of households that contain women living without adult men has meant that the percentage of demographic and core female-headed households has increased by more than almost all other types of female-headed households (with the exception of *de jure* female-headed households). The relative increase in female cash headship, in contrast, is very similar to the growth in self-reported female headship (6.3 percent and 6.6 per cent, respectively). In addition, the percentage of households in which there were no adult males *or* in which a female was the highest earner (combined head) saw a relative increase of 6.4 per cent.

**Table 51 Percentage of female-headed households by alternative definitions of headship, 1997 and 2006**

	OHS 1997	GHS 2006	Relative change 1997-2006
<b>Self-reported headship</b>	35.17 (0.294)	37.48 (0.418)	6.57%
<i>De jure</i>	24.33 (0.261)	29.39 (0.386)	20.80%
<i>De facto</i>	8.93 (0.163)	6.14 (0.182)	-31.24%
<b>Co-resident</b>	1.91 (0.082)	2.05 (0.143)	7.33%
<b>Cash head</b>	36.20 (0.364)	38.48 (0.506)	6.30%
<b>Demographic head</b>	19.34 (0.241)	21.81 (0.348)	12.77%
<b>Core head</b>	14.90 (0.261)	18.99 (0.398)	27.45%
<b>Combined head</b>	36.23 (0.364)	38.55 (0.507)	6.40%

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

Notes: The data are weighted  
Standard errors in brackets

On the whole then, the data presented in Table 50 and Table 51 suggest that female headship is comprised of both demographic and economic elements, but that there is a particularly strong economic dimension to self-reported headship. Looking more closely at economic headship then, Table 52 now identifies how the cash head (i.e. the highest earner/receiver of income in the

household) is related to the self-reported head. Among all cash heads, the majority (74 per cent) are also the self-reported household head in the 2006 GHS. When the cash head is not identified as the household head, he or she is most often the spouse of the head (11.8 per cent) or the biological child of the head (8.3 per cent). The relationship between the cash head and the self-reported head, however, varies in several interesting ways between male- and female-headed households. Among all cash heads residing in female-headed households (conventionally defined), for example, most (72.8 per cent) are also identified as the self-reported head. Since female heads are often older women (i.e. pensioners) living without a spouse or partner, it is therefore not surprising that a fairly large percentage of cash heads (15.1 per cent) living in female-headed households are the son or daughter of the conventional household head. A further 1.7 per cent of cash heads in female-headed households are the grandchild of the head. In contrast, when the cash head is not the self-identified head in male-headed households, she/he is most often the spouse of the head (15.4 per cent) or the child of the head (4.8 per cent). Therefore, not only is the association between economic contribution and headship different in female- and male-headed households, but the relationship between the head and the household member that contributes the highest level of income is also significantly different.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> This finding again underscores the differences in household composition between female- and male-headed households in post-apartheid South Africa. In particular, the table demonstrates that, in female-headed households, the head is less often the highest earner of income because these heads are often older and are supported by younger adults (often females) in the household. Moreover, female-headed households are far more likely to receive contributions (remittances) from outside of the household and these sources of income are not captured in the 2006 GHS. It might be expected, for example, that absent spouses or other relatives living outside (and not captured in the household roster) of the household might be the highest contributors of income in some of these female-headed households.

**Table 52 Relationship of self-reported head to the cash head, 2006**

<b>Cash head</b>	<b>All households</b>	<b>FHHs</b>	<b>MHHs</b>
<b>Head</b>	73.97 (0.411)	72.80 (0.674)	75.15 (0.512)
<b>Spouse</b>	11.80 (0.314)	3.94 (0.342)	15.35 (0.432)
<b>Son/daughter</b>	8.27 (0.241)	15.10 (0.535)	4.83 (0.232)
<b>Sibling</b>	2.03 (0.129)	2.70 (0.238)	1.64 (0.148)
<b>Parent</b>	0.55 (0.058)	0.71 (0.104)	0.46 (0.069)
<b>Grandchild</b>	0.69 (0.065)	1.65 (0.177)	0.21 (0.041)
<b>Other relative</b>	1.92 (0.122)	2.47 (0.214)	1.65 (0.149)

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are weighted  
Standard errors in brackets

The data presented in this section have therefore demonstrated that, regardless of the definition of the household head, female headship has increased significantly during the period under review. In other words, the percentage of households in which a female is the highest earner, in which there are no adult males, or in which a female is the highest earner *and/or* there are no adult males has increased significantly. Cash headship, in particular, seems to have a particularly strong association with self-reported headship and the last table in this section showed that approximately 74 per cent of cash heads were also identified as the self-reported head in the 2006 GHS. The data also show, however, that the conventional approach to allocating headship is likely to underestimate (albeit, very slightly) the number and proportion of households in which a female is the main income provider. The economic and combined definitions of headship therefore may provide a better means of identifying how gender differences in resource access, and in the demands on these resources, affect poverty risks. The next section therefore considers the association between income poverty and alternative headship classifications.

### **3. Poverty and alternative definitions of headship**

The analysis in this section first identifies the difference in poverty rates according to the alternative classifications of headship and then considers changes over time in order to assess whether the trends in poverty headcount rates estimated in Chapter Seven are robust to alternative ways of classifying households. Table 53 again examines poverty (headcount) rates at the household level and by the gender of the household head, but this time considers several definitions of headship.

The first set of data rows in the table repeats, for ease of comparison, the household poverty estimates (based on income measure III) presented in Chapter Seven (i.e. based on self-reported headship). On the whole, the table suggests that poverty headcount rates are far higher in female-headed households than in male-headed households irrespective of how headship is defined. According to the economic classification, for example, the poverty headcount rate for female-headed households is more than double the rate for male-headed households (e.g. 52 per cent compared with 23 per cent in 2006). In contrast, the smallest poverty differential (between female- and male-headed households) is between self-reported male-headed households (32.5 per cent in 2006) and co-resident female-headed households (38.5 per cent in 2006). The table also shows, however, that there is considerable variation in the risk of poverty across the different classifications of female headship.

Table 53 Household poverty rates by several alternate definitions of headship, 1997-2006 (measure III)

Headcount (P <sub>0</sub> )					
	OHS 1997	OHS 1999	GHS 2004	GHS 2006	Relative change 1997-2006
<b>Self-reported heads</b>					
<b>Male-headed</b>	38.84 (0.663)	41.69 (0.660)	37.24 (0.739)	32.54 (1.541)	-16.22%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	66.68 (0.772)	67.24 (0.789)	66.88 (0.794)	61.98 (1.882)	-7.05%††
<b>De jure female-headed</b>	63.39 (0.843)	63.96 (0.892)	65.18 (0.852)	60.90 (1.981)	-3.93%
<b>De facto female-headed</b>	81.59 (0.880)	81.11 (0.979)	79.63 (1.283)	75.19 (2.149)	-7.84%†
<b>Co-resident female-headed</b>	46.91 (2.326)	47.53 (2.736)	46.57 (3.271)	38.50 (2.883)	-17.93%
<b>Cash heads</b>					
<b>Male-headed</b>	30.19 (0.662)	29.02 (0.691)	26.47 (0.759)	22.94 (1.327)	-24.01%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	56.10 (0.883)	57.50 (0.890)	58.22 (0.891)	52.03 (2.118)	-7.25%
<b>Demographic heads</b>					
<b>Male-headed</b>	44.70 (0.648)	47.85 (0.653)	44.50 (0.738)	39.07 (1.690)	-12.60%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	65.01 (1.037)	62.25 (1.024)	62.49 (1.022)	59.81 (2.214)	-8.00%††
<b>Core heads</b>					
<b>Male-headed</b>	37.12 (0.649)	38.17 (0.690)	36.72 (0.777)	31.20 (1.488)	-15.95%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	53.56 (1.290)	50.01 (1.208)	50.46 (1.206)	46.67 (2.352)	-12.86%†
<b>Combined heads</b>					
<b>Male-headed</b>	30.18 (0.662)	28.97 (0.691)	26.46 (0.759)	22.88 (1.302)	-24.19%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	56.10 (0.883)	57.54 (0.889)	58.23 (0.891)	52.09 (2.115)	-7.15%

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the poverty headcount between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

The lowest risk of poverty associated with female headship (apart from co-resident female headship) is in core female-headed households where the poverty headcount rate was only 46.7 per cent. The greatest risk of poverty, in contrast, is found in *de facto* female-headed households (75.2 per cent in 2006) and demographic female-headed households (60 per cent in 2006). The risk of poverty (among alternatively defined female-headed households) therefore ranges from 46.7 per cent to 60 per cent in 2006. Among male-headed households, there is also a high degree of variability as poverty risks range from 22.9 per cent to 40 per cent. Of all the household types considered in this chapter, the households that are the least likely to be poor are those in which the main income earner is a male (i.e. only 22.9 per cent of cash and combined male-headed households are poor).

In terms of changes over time, the decrease in poverty headcount rates did not occur evenly across female- and male-headed households. The smallest relative declines in the poverty headcount, for example, were among female-headed households. The poverty headcount rate only decreased by 3.9 per cent between 1997 and 2006 among *de jure* female-headed households. The drop in poverty rates was considerably higher among female-headed households classified according to the cash and combined headship definitions (the headcount rate decreased by about seven per cent in these households). In contrast, the extent of poverty decreased by about 13 per cent in core female-headed households and by 18 per cent in co-resident female-headed households (although the change was not significant). While there was also variability in the poverty trends among male-headed households, the risk of poverty, on the whole, decreased by considerably more in male-headed households (according to all of the alternative definitions). In households in which a male is the highest earner (i.e. cash headship), for example, the poverty headcount rate decreased by about 24 per cent between 1997 and 2006.

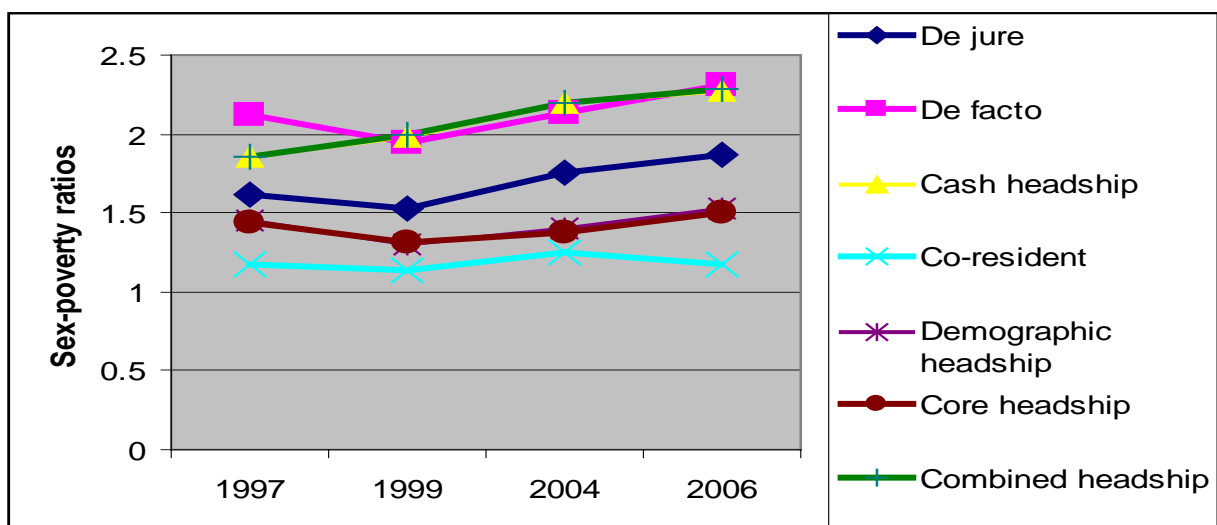
The difference in poverty rates between female- and male- headed households therefore widened significantly between 1997 and 2006 across all possible definitions of headship. Within the self-reported headship category, for example, poverty rates decreased among all types of female-headed households (i.e. among both *de jure* and *de facto* headed) but the fall in poverty levels was relatively and absolutely smaller compared with male-headed households. If the household



head is defined as the person who brings in the highest level of income to the household (the cash head), then the difference in poverty rates between female- and male- headed households widens even more. In Figure 5 this widening differential in poverty risks (identified in Table 53) can be seen more clearly by, once again, estimating poverty ratios.

Perhaps most significantly, the figure highlights that, regardless of how headship is defined, poverty differences widened between 1997 and 2006 (and particularly between 1999 and 2006). Moreover, if headship is allocated to the individual who provides the largest amount of income to the household (i.e. cash headship as depicted by the yellow line) then the sex-poverty ratio increases consistently at each point of the period under review. The figure also suggests that the sex-poverty ratios based on cash headship, combined headship (the broadest classification) and *de facto* female headship (the poorest sub-group of self-reported female headship) are relatively similar (i.e. female-headed households were more than twice as likely to be poor than male-headed households by 2006). Even the poverty differential between male-headed households and co-resident female-headed households (the light blue line) did not change appreciably over the period.

**Figure 5 Sex-poverty ratios according to alternative definitions of headship, 2006 (measure III)**



Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

This section has therefore demonstrated that, regardless of how the head of the household is defined, poverty differences based on the gender of the household head widened between 1997 and 2006. Moreover, the poverty analysis presented in the section suggests that if an economic definition of headship is applied to the data, then the difference in poverty rates between female- and male-headed households widened by the largest amount over the period. In other words, households identified as female-headed under the cash and combined headship definitions saw a steady increase in their risk of poverty relative to male-headed households during the period under review.

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

The analysis presented in this chapter has demonstrated that the (self-reported) headship based poverty analysis presented in Chapter Seven is robust to alternative economic and demographic definitions of the household head. While there are legitimate concerns with using self-reported female headship as a category with which to identify gendered differences in access to resources, this chapter has shown that female headship has increased across the board and irrespective of how headship is defined. In other words, the proportion of households in which a female is the main earner, in which there are adult females but no adult males, or in which a self-identified female head is not married (*de jure* female-headed) increased significantly between 1997 and 2006. In addition, these alternative definitions of headship have, once again, highlighted the compositional changes (as identified throughout the thesis) which have meant that women are increasingly living in households without men in post-apartheid South Africa. By looking at the association between different types of female headship and the risk of poverty, the analysis in this chapter has shown that poverty differences have widened between all types of female- and male-headed households and that household compositional changes played an important part in these trends.

This chapter has therefore demonstrated that, even though self-reported headship is a relatively blunt instrument for analysing differences in household poverty risks, there is evidence to suggest that headship is often assigned to a key income provider. While the data used in this thesis do not allow a more nuanced view of decision-making responsibilities within households, the alternative

definitions of headship constructed in this chapter provide some insight into the role of the household head. In particular, these definitions have demonstrated that households in which a female is the highest income earner are far more likely to be poor and have not fared as well, between 1997 and 2006, as households in which a male is the primary earner. Moreover, because poverty trends and the association between poverty and economic headship are very similar to self-reported headship, the findings in this chapter provide further evidence that conventional headship analyses can be used to examine the implications of gendered access to resources in the post-apartheid period. In other words, a growing proportion of individuals and poor individuals (both male and female) lived in female-headed households over the period and these individuals were more likely to be poor, at least in part, due to gendered inequality in access to income.

## Chapter Ten- Conclusion

The findings presented in this thesis have demonstrated, first and foremost, that there has been a feminisation of the extent, depth and severity of income poverty during a recent ten year period in South Africa. While the data have also shown that, in line with the post-apartheid poverty literature, poverty rates have *fallen* between the mid- 1990s and the mid- 2000s, these decreases have been greater for males and male-headed households such that the gender difference in poverty rates has actually *widened* at the same time. This finding of a widening of the gender poverty differential is, moreover, not sensitive to the selection of alternate poverty lines or to adjustments for household size and composition.

In using income and expenditure data from the OHSs and the GHSs to estimate poverty trends, the finding of an overall decrease in the poverty headcount rate between 1997 and 2006 (following an increase between 1997 and 1999) is closely in line with the existing income poverty literature from the period. Moreover, the magnitude of the poverty decrease as well as the actual estimates of the extent of poverty are similar to those presented in other work and are, as noted in Chapter Four, particularly close to estimates published by Ardington and colleagues (2006). As such, the poverty trends identified in this thesis complement the existing poverty literature by adding to the consensus that the poverty headcount rate has likely decreased after 2000 and that social grant income played an important role in this decline. In addition, since the selected period of review (i.e. 1997 to 2006) represents a ten year interval in which a number of key poverty studies have been conducted, this thesis adds to the literature by exploring further the gendered nature of poverty trends with a source of data which, to date, has been relatively underutilised in measuring income poverty. The main contribution of the thesis is, therefore, the finding that the overall decline in the percentage of individuals (and households) living below the poverty threshold (as comprehensively documented for the period) obscures the greater decline for male and male-headed households relative to females and female-headed households. Poverty trends, in other words, have been gendered in the post-apartheid period and, somewhat counter-intuitively, particularly in the 2000s when the social grant system was being expanded.

Since the under-reporting of income in the official sources of data (i.e. those from Statistics South Africa) available in the post-apartheid period is well documented in the poverty literature and because the household surveys used to estimate gendered poverty trends in this thesis do not capture information on all sources of income, one concern with the claim of a widening gender poverty gap is that the exclusion of income sources that are more important to females (and female-headed households) may lead to a downward bias in estimates of income in households in which females reside. The receipt of remittances, for example, is a source of income that is likely to be more important in female-headed households and is not consistently captured in the OHSs and the GHSs. The sensitivity analysis described in Chapter Six, however, presented evidence which suggests that, even when other sources of income (including remittances) can be included in the poverty analysis, there are no significant differences from the estimates of poverty used in the trend analysis. In other words, the consideration of other sources of income would not necessarily lead to different conclusions about the gendered nature of income poverty.

There are a number of reasons *why* the poverty differential between males and females may have widened (in favour of males) during the post-apartheid period. In particular, growing rates of female unemployment, the increasing concentration of women in low paid (and informal) jobs and the decline in marital rates (and the coinciding decrease in access to male income) are some of the key trends from the period which may have made females, on average, relatively more vulnerable to poverty than males. This expectation is largely consistent with the international literature (summarised in Chapter Two) which attributes the growing gender poverty gap, in some developed countries, to persistent labour market disadvantages for women coupled with an increase in single parenthood. In particular, one of the recurring themes in the developed country literature is the increase in single motherhood in the wake of rising divorce rates and the observation that labour market opportunities for women and social assistance programmes have not kept pace with this changing household structure (i.e. single parenthood/motherhood).

One of the key *a priori* questions to be addressed in this thesis, therefore, was whether the increase in female employment and the expansion of the social grant system in the post-apartheid period have been enough to counteract the increase in female *unemployment* (and the increasing

concentration of women in low paid employment) and the coinciding rise in the percentage of women who are not living with male partners (once again, largely associated with declining marital rates). The role of social assistance programmes, in particular, in mitigating the gender poverty gap has, more recently, received a great deal of attention in the developed country literature. In this regard, South Africa stands apart from other developing or middle income countries due to the reach and generosity of its social grant programme. An important contribution of this thesis is, therefore, that it has investigated the impact of social transfer income on gender poverty differences within a developing or middle-income country context.

Disentangling the effects of income from earnings and social grants on the gender poverty gap was undertaken in two ways in this thesis. First, measures of pre- and post-transfer income were generated from the income and expenditure modules of the OHSs and the GHSs. The descriptive poverty analysis presented in Chapter Six compared these two estimates of income and showed that, as the sensitivity of the poverty measure increases (i.e. from  $P_0$  to  $P_2$ ), and as the poverty threshold is lowered (i.e. from R322 to R174), social grant income has a larger role in reducing female poverty relative to male poverty. In other words, the descriptive analysis has suggested that social grant income is relatively well targeted to individuals (and females, in particular) living farther below the poverty line and that, *ceteris paribus*, if individuals had survived on earnings from employment alone, the gender poverty gap would have widened even further between 1997 and 2006.

Second, a relatively new decomposition technique based on the Shapley value was used with the income and expenditure data from the OHSs and the GHSs. The decomposition analysis confirmed the findings from the pre- and post-transfer poverty comparisons by demonstrating that social grant income was relatively more important for the reduction of the extent and depth of female poverty (and even more important in reducing female extreme poverty). Because women tend to outlive men and because females are more likely to live in households with children, it is not surprising that the decomposition also identified the State Old Age Pension and the Child Support Grant as the two most important social transfers with respect to reducing female poverty. Therefore, without social grant income, and without these two grants in

particular, the gender difference in poverty would have widened even farther in favour of males. At the same time, the effect of *earned* income was greater for the reduction of male poverty throughout the period and, as such, the increase in female employment was not enough to narrow the gender poverty differential.

In retrospect, it is not necessarily surprising that the increase in female labour force participation has not been enough to narrow the gender poverty differential. The literature on female labour force participation in South Africa (cf. Casale and Posel 2002; Casale 2004), for example, has highlighted the fact that this increased participation in the post-apartheid period has not ‘bought’ women much since it has largely translated into an increase in female *unemployment* and low paid employment. Moreover, an additional explanation, as highlighted in Chapters Seven and Eight, for why the potential increase in earned income from the growth in female employment has not narrowed the gender poverty gap is because it coincided with several compositional changes in household structure which have meant that females, on average, are living with fewer working-age and employed men.

The thesis has shown, in several different ways, how household compositional changes have resulted in decreasing access to earned income (and male income in particular) for women. The decrease in access to earned income from male householders, in particular, served as one entry point to a focus on changes in household structure and, in line with the international literature, an analysis of trends in poverty rates among female- and male- headed households. At the beginning of Chapter Seven (which focused largely on poverty differences between female- and male-headed households) a brief overview of some of the key household changes over the period identified a growing percentage of women living without adult or working-age men. This particular trend, in turn, coincided with an increase in the percentage of households with a female head as well as a growing percentage of women (and a decreasing percentage of men) who are living in this household type. In light of this link between access to male income and female headship, and as a result of the labour market disadvantages faced by women (relative to men) the remainder of the chapter looked specifically at the changing poverty differential between female- and male-headed households.

One of the main findings from Chapter Seven is that the particularly large (and growing) difference in poverty rates between female- and male-headed households sets South Africa apart from most other countries or regions in which female-headed households are more vulnerable to poverty. The descriptive statistics highlighted that this particular household type was significantly and consistently more vulnerable to poverty. The comparison of pre- and post-transfer income revealed further that social grant income was an increasingly important income source for the reduction of poverty in female-headed households and particularly for the reduction of the depth of poverty in these households. Once again, and as with individual gender poverty estimates, the chapter demonstrated that, as the measure of poverty becomes more sensitive to households farther below the poverty line and as the poverty threshold is reduced, social grant income appears to play a greater role in the relief of (the extent and depth of) poverty in female-headed households.

The decomposition analysis of household poverty estimates by income source then demonstrated the even larger role that social grant income has had in reducing the extent and depth of poverty in female-headed households (compared with the impact on female poverty identified in Chapter Six). At the same time, the analysis showed that earned income was relatively more important for poverty reduction in male-headed households. Accordingly, if households had relied on earned income only (i.e. they did not receive social grants), the poverty differential between female- and male-headed households would also have been considerably greater. In addition, the decompositions showed that grant income, and the State Old Age Pension and the Child Support Grant, once again, were particularly well targeted to female-headed households below both the upper- and lower-bound poverty lines. This contribution of grant income was seen clearly, for example, in the relative contribution of grants to the reduction of the depth of poverty and the extent and depth of extreme poverty among female-headed households.

Another contribution of this thesis has been to identify some of the main reasons why female-headed households are more likely to be poor than male-headed households and why, even with the increase in female employment, earned income was not enough to narrow the household



poverty differential. The fact that females are increasingly living without access to male earnings was highlighted several times throughout the thesis. One way in which access to potential male earnings was examined in detail was to disaggregate female headship (as is often done in the key female headship studies in the international literature) into classifications which reflect the presence (or absence) of male partners (i.e. *de jure*, *de facto* and co-resident female-headed households). In using this classification, it was shown that a number of changes have coincided with the increase in the percentage of households headed by a female over the period. Most notably, a decreasing percentage of women were living with working-age men and this was largely driven by declining marital rates in South Africa (and the accompanying increase in *de jure* female-headed households). At the same time, women (and particularly those living in households with a *de jure* female head) were therefore less likely to live with employed men and became increasingly reliant on the earnings of female household members and social grant income.

The logit regressions estimating the likelihood of living in poverty confirmed these findings and demonstrated that, in particular, two of the main factors which account for the higher risk of poverty in female-headed households are less access to earned income and the greater (and increasing) responsibility for child care. While the greater likelihood of living with pensioners (and therefore receipt of the pension) was a mitigating factor for poverty risk, the greater vulnerability associated with lower levels of earned income and the larger number of dependents (children) explains much of the poverty differential between female- and male-headed households in South Africa. Moreover, the fact that female-headed households contain fewer employed members, that those members with employment earn less than workers in male-headed households, and that this income was shared by a greater number and proportion of household members who are too young to enter the labour market explains why earned income has not been as effective in reducing poverty in female-headed households. Even after controlling for the main differences (both demographic and labour market) between these household types, however, there is still a significantly greater risk of living in poverty associated with female headship. Therefore, while female headship is a relatively blunt instrument and while there is a large degree of heterogeneity with regard to the risk of poverty in both female- and male-headed households, the

logit model has suggested that female headship does identify a household type that is particularly vulnerable to poverty.

However, since headship is broadly defined in most household surveys (including in the OHSs and the GHSs used in this thesis) there has been a great deal of criticism surrounding the use of self-reported headship either as a proxy for ‘gender’ or to denote households that are supported primarily by women. The last chapter of the thesis addressed these concerns by examining several alternative definitions of headship and how they are associated with the risk of poverty. Perhaps the main finding from this final chapter was that, irrespective of how headship is defined, the increasing percentage of females living without males has coincided with an increase in female headship according to all of the classifications explored in the analysis. Moreover, poverty headcount rates are higher for female-headed households than for male-headed households regardless of how headship is defined (and this poverty differential increased across all classifications of headship).

Although the analysis of gender income poverty differences (and the poverty differential between female- and male-headed households) has highlighted the widening of gendered differences in access to resources in several different ways during a recent ten year period, it is important to briefly review some of the limitations of the approach used to identify these differences. As outlined in Chapter Five, a money-metric analysis of poverty is only one way of demonstrating changes in access to resources or well-being. In other words, income is only one component of well-being and income poverty therefore only measures a single aspect of poverty or deprivation. In addition, *gendered* differences in access to income are even more difficult to identify since gender is an individual characteristic and income is measured at the household level. As a result, the widening poverty differential identified in the empirical chapters of the thesis does not account for possible inequalities in the intra-household allocation of resources.

The unequal distribution of income *within* households, if gendered, could bias the findings relating to gender poverty differences in several ways. Most notably, if income is not distributed evenly among household members, it is possible that some women (or men) living in non-poor

households could still be 'poor' even though they live in households in which the per capita monthly income accrued by household members is above the poverty threshold (i.e. R322 in 2000 prices). As a result, the growing gender poverty differentials presented in Chapter Six would be understated. In addition, the growing gap in income poverty between males and females (and male- and female-headed households) does not say anything about how income is actually used. There is some evidence (Barros et al. 1997; Buvinic and Gupta 1997; Haddad 1999; Momsen 2002; Duflo 2003; Fantahun et al. 2007; Schatz 2007), for example, which suggests that when women have greater control over income (e.g. when they are the head of the household, the main decision-maker or the main provider) they are more likely to spend it on items such as food, health and education. The analysis presented in this thesis does not reflect the potential benefits of gendered differences in resource allocation on other household members.

These limitations notwithstanding, a money-metric approach to measuring changes in gendered access to resources has been useful in several important ways. First, the findings presented in this thesis contribute to a rich body of scholarship which documents changes in the poverty headcount rate in the early to mid-2000s and the role of the expanding social grant programme in reducing both the extent and depth of poverty. This thesis has, in turn, identified the decrease in income poverty as being gendered at the same time. Moreover, the money-metric approach to poverty measurement has been particularly useful in identifying the benefits of social grant income in reducing female poverty (and in actually narrowing the gender differential in the depth of extreme poverty). In other words, while other measures of poverty (e.g. multi-dimensional poverty indices such as the Human Development Index and measures of time poverty) have their advantages in highlighting gender inequalities, a conventional money-metric approach has been uniquely placed to measure the impacts of changes in access to earned income as well as the gendered effects of government's main poverty alleviation intervention, the social grant system.

Second, income poverty still attracts substantial interest in policy circles. The first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), for example, outlines South Africa's commitment to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the percentage of individual's whose income is less than US\$1/day (see for example Meth 2011; Tregenna 2011). One of the contributions of the poverty

analyses undertaken in this thesis is, therefore, the finding that the decrease in the incidence of poverty in the fastest growing household type in post-apartheid South Africa (i.e. *de jure* female-headed households) is lagging behind other households. As such, gender differences in *income* poverty provide one platform for highlighting how (gendered) inequality in access to resources impacts on broader development objectives.

In conclusion, and with respect to government's efforts to combat unemployment, inequality and poverty in the post-apartheid period, enthusiasm for the recent reduction in income poverty rates should be tempered by the realisation that this decline has been associated with a widening of the gender poverty gap. Perhaps one of the main concerns with this growth in the poverty differential is that it has occurred despite the growth in female employment and the expansion of the social grant system. One of the most likely explanations for this outcome (as highlighted throughout the thesis) is the accompanying household compositional changes that have meant that women, in particular, have substituted their traditional sources of income support (i.e. from male earnings) with their own earnings from low-paid employment and social grant income (see also Casale and Posel 2002). Moreover, and as Casale (2003: 216) has concluded, 'the welfare of these women's households is therefore likely to suffer, especially in the increasing proportion of households that are solely dependent on women's earnings'.

It might be argued, then, that the widening poverty differential (by gender and between female- and male-headed households) is one of the more tangible indicators of persistent labour market disadvantages for women, declining access to male earnings and the increasing responsibility that women undertake for providing for children. This last point, in particular, suggests that part of the explanation for the feminisation of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa is that it has occurred at the same time as what Chant (2006a) refers to as the 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation'. This thesis has therefore argued that, while social grant income (and particularly the State Old Age Pension and the Child Support Grant) has clearly been an important factor in mitigating the extent and depth of female poverty, it has not been enough to actually narrow the gender poverty differential. Thus, the often lauded decrease in income poverty rates in post-

apartheid South Africa has been characterised, at the same time, by a corresponding feminisation of poverty.

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## APPENDIX A

**Table 1A Poverty estimates for South Africa by age group, 1997 – 2006 (income measure III)**

<b>Headcount (P<sub>0</sub>)</b>				
	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>
<b>Children (under 16)</b>				
<b>All</b>	69.46 (0.626)	73.39* (0.644)	72.31 (0.729)	68.07 (1.884)
<b>Male</b>	69.13 (0.672)	73.63* (0.683)	72.28 (0.788)	67.94* (1.899)
<b>Female</b>	69.78 (0.657)	73.17* (0.702)	72.35 (0.801)	68.27 (1.955)
<b>Working-age adults</b>				
<b>All</b>	53.46 (0.648)	57.27* (0.666)	55.37 (0.733)	49.46* (1.973)
<b>Male</b>	49.60 (0.664)	53.22* (0.686)	50.12* (0.775)	43.47* (1.844)
<b>Female</b>	57.16 (0.669)	61.20* (0.702)	60.46 (0.756)	55.38 (2.086)
<b>Elderly (eligible for state pension)</b>				
<b>All</b>	57.08 (0.996)	63.55* (0.990)	60.88 (1.129)	51.41* (1.901)
<b>Male</b>	52.88 (1.235)	60.59* (1.355)	51.24* (1.609)	43.55* (2.245)
<b>Female</b>	58.91 (1.024)	64.89* (1.016)	64.95 (1.054)	55.07* (1.867)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95% level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

## APPENDIX B

**Table 1B Sex-poverty ratios, 1997-2006**

<b>Headcount (<math>P_0</math>)</b>				
	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>
<b>Earnings only (I)</b>				
<b>Sex-poverty ratio</b>	1.08	1.07	1.09	1.11
<b>Earnings + social grants (II)</b>				
<b>Sex-poverty ratio</b>	1.08	1.07	1.09	1.12
<b>Including household expenditure (III)</b>				
<b>Sex-poverty ratio</b>	1.08	1.07	1.11	1.14

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

Notes: The data are weighted

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

## APPENDIX C

**Table 1C Decomposition of the extreme poverty headcount by income source, 1997 and 2006**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share	Relative Contribution	Income Share	Relative Contribution
<b>All</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	86.10%	0.793	85.91%	0.729
<b>Social grant income</b>	5.83%	0.112	8.45%	0.203
<b>Other income</b>	8.07%	0.095	5.65%	0.069
<b>Total</b>	100%	1.000	100%	1.000
<b>Males</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	87.46%	0.808	87.48%	0.747
<b>Social grant income</b>	5.17%	0.104	7.12%	0.183
<b>Other income</b>	7.37%	0.088	5.40%	0.071
<b>Total</b>	100%	1.000	100%	1.000
<b>Females</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	84.63%	0.777	84.02%	0.709
<b>Social grant income</b>	6.55%	0.121	10.04%	0.223
<b>Other income</b>	8.83%	0.102	5.94%	0.067
<b>Total</b>	100%	1.000	100%	1.000

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms

R174 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

## APPENDIX D

**Table 1D Decomposition of the depth of extreme poverty by income source, 1997 and 2006**

Income Source	1997		2006	
	Income Share	Relative Contribution	Income Share	Relative Contribution
<b>All</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	86.10%	0.644	85.91%	0.592
<b>Social grant income</b>	5.83%	0.207	8.45%	0.322
<b>Other income</b>	8.07%	0.149	5.65%	0.086
<b>Total</b>	100%	1.000	100%	1.000
<b>Males</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	87.46%	0.667	87.48%	0.619
<b>Social grant income</b>	5.17%	0.194	7.12%	0.290
<b>Other income</b>	7.37%	0.138	5.40%	0.091
<b>Total</b>	100%	1.000	100%	1.000
<b>Females</b>				
<b>Earned income</b>	84.63%	0.622	84.02%	0.565
<b>Social grant income</b>	6.55%	0.218	10.04%	0.354
<b>Other income</b>	8.83%	0.160	5.94%	0.080
<b>Total</b>	100%	1.000	100%	1.000

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS using the DASP module developed by Araar and Duclos (2007)

Notes: The data are weighted

Income sources are expressed in real monthly per capita terms

R174 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

## APPENDIX E

Table 1E Adjusting for household size and composition, by household type, 1997 – 2006

Poverty Headcount (P <sub>0</sub> )				
	OHS 1997	OHS 1999	GHS 2004	GHS 2006
Measure III (per capita household income)				
<b>All households</b>	48.63 (0.652)	50.88* (0.643)	48.23* (0.718)	43.59* (1.813)
<b>Male-headed</b>	38.84 (0.663)	41.69* (0.660)	37.24* (0.739)	32.54* (1.541)
<b>Female-headed</b>	66.68 (0.773)	67.24* (0.789)	66.88 (0.794)	61.98* (1.882)
Measure III (per adult equivalent household income)				
<b>All households</b>	48.93 (0.650)	51.81* (0.641)	48.81* (0.717)	44.06* (1.750)
<b>Male-headed</b>	39.02 (0.664)	42.60* (0.671)	37.90* (0.746)	33.43* (1.524)
<b>Female-headed</b>	67.21 (0.761)	68.22 (0.777)	67.32 (0.781)	61.73* (1.787)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95% level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line/R417 per adult equivalent poverty line in 2000 prices



**Table 2E Adjusting for household size and composition, by household type, 1997 – 2006**

<b>Poverty Gap (P<sub>1</sub>)</b>				
	<b>OHS 1997</b>	<b>OHS 1999</b>	<b>GHS 2004</b>	<b>GHS 2006</b>
<b>Measure III (per capita household income)</b>				
<b>All households</b>	0.28 (0.004)	0.30* (0.004)	0.27* (0.005)	0.23* (0.010)
<b>Male-headed</b>	0.21 (0.004)	0.24* (0.004)	0.20* (0.004)	0.16* (0.008)
<b>Female-headed</b>	0.40 (0.005)	0.41* (0.004)	0.38* (0.006)	0.34* (0.012)
<b>Measure III (per adult equivalent household income)</b>				
<b>All households</b>	0.27 (0.004)	0.31* (0.004)	0.27* (0.004)	0.23* (0.010)
<b>Male-headed</b>	0.21 (0.004)	0.25* (0.004)	0.20* (0.004)	0.17* (0.008)
<b>Female-headed</b>	0.39 (0.005)	0.42* (0.006)	0.38* (0.005)	0.34* (0.011)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95% level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line/R417 per adult equivalent poverty line in 2000 prices

## APPENDIX F

**Table 1F Severity of poverty (P<sub>2</sub>) by the gender of the household head 1997-2006 (measure III)**

	OHS 1997	OHS 1999	GHS 2004	GHS 2006	Relative change 1997-2006
<b>All households</b>	0.19 (0.003)	0.22* (0.003)	0.18* (0.003)	0.15 (0.007)	-21.1%†
<b>Male-headed</b>	0.14 (0.003)	0.17* (0.003)	0.13* (0.003)	0.11 (0.006)	-21.4%†
<b>Female-headed</b>	0.28 (0.004)	0.30 (0.005)	0.27* (0.005)	0.23* (0.008)	-17.9%†

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 and 1999 OHSs and the 2004 and 2006 GHSs

\* Denotes a significant change in the poverty estimate from the previous year at the 95 per cent level of confidence

† Denotes a significant change in the severity of poverty between 1997 and 2006 at the 95 per cent level of confidence

†† Denotes a significant change in the severity of poverty between 1997 and 2006 at the 90 per cent level of confidence

Notes: The data are weighted

Standard errors in brackets

R322 per capita poverty line in 2000 prices

Household well-being is estimated as average per capita total household monthly income

## APPENDIX G

Table 1F Changes in household composition, 1997-2006

	<i>De facto</i> female-headed	<i>De jure</i> female-headed	Co-resident female-headed	Male-headed
1997				
<b>Household composition</b>				
# working-age men	0.67 (0.017)	0.78 (0.012)	1.35 (0.039)	1.39 (0.007)
# working-age women	1.63 (0.019)	1.54 (0.014)	1.57 (0.041)	1.22 (0.008)
# children <16	2.74 (0.036)	1.76 (0.021)	1.86 (0.069)	1.53 (0.013)
<b>Ratio of children to total household size</b>	0.48 (0.005)	0.31 (0.003)	0.31 (0.010)	0.27 (0.002)
<b>Ratio of pensioners to total household size</b>	0.05 (0.003)	0.14 (0.004)	0.06 (0.008)	0.07 (0.002)
<b>Percentage of households with:</b>				
No working-age adults	2.95 (0.341)	8.79 (0.377)	1.59 (0.626)	3.53 (0.152)
No working-age men	56.28 (0.936)	51.60 (0.599)	9.67 (1.305)	6.12 (0.186)
2006				
<b>Household composition</b>				
# working-age men	0.60 (0.025)	0.67 (0.013)	1.24 (0.059)	1.30 (0.009)
# working-age women	1.55 (0.025)	1.41 (0.014)	1.33 (0.068)	0.88 (0.010)
# children <16	2.22 (0.051)	1.58 (0.023)	1.29 (0.096)	1.00 (0.015)
<b>Ratio of children to total household size</b>	0.43 (0.007)	0.32 (0.004)	0.24 (0.016)	0.20 (0.003)
<b>Ratio of pensioners to total household size</b>	0.04 (0.005)	0.12 (0.003)	0.09 (0.026)	0.07 (0.002)
<b>Percentage of households with:</b>				
No working-age adults	2.81 (0.485)	7.43 (0.369)	5.93 (2.820)	4.39 (0.241)
No working-age men	57.19 (1.470)	56.29 (0.738)	14.27 (2.993)	6.93 (0.280)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS

Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive therefore columns do not add up to 100 per cent

Table 2F Changes in labour market characteristics, 1997-2006

	<i>De facto</i> female-headed	<i>De jure</i> female-headed	Co-resident female-headed	Male-headed
1997				
<b>Percentage of households with:</b>				
No employed men	92.79 (0.514)	85.65 (0.639)	42.08 (0.478)	31.39 (0.378)
No employed members, grant income only	17.62 (0.724)	27.71 (0.513)	11.81 (1.316)	11.44 (0.249)
No employed members and no grant income	54.75 (0.944)	23.80 (0.497)	12.90 (1.448)	13.51 (0.280)
<b>Head is employed</b>	18.93 (0.762)	33.09 (0.587)	41.66 (2.199)	66.95 (0.376)
<b>Number of employed (household)</b>	0.34 (0.012)	0.67 (0.010)	1.17 (0.036)	1.16 (0.007)
# other employed males	0.07 (0.005)	0.17 (0.005)	0.40 (0.026)	0.13 (0.003)
# other employed females	0.26 (0.010)	0.50 (0.008)	0.52 (0.026)	0.37 (0.005)
2006				
<b>Percentage of households with:</b>				
No employed men	91.00 (0.874)	87.75 (0.493)	48.01 (3.555)	29.21 (0.463)
No employed members, grant income only	40.05 (1.449)	36.62 (0.700)	18.60 (2.925)	13.16 (0.345)
No employed members and no grant income	20.23 (1.340)	11.53 (0.474)	7.11 (2.638)	11.01 (0.393)
<b>Head is employed</b>	31.07 (1.442)	38.24 (0.754)	50.92 (3.596)	67.77 (0.536)
<b>Number of employed (household)</b>	0.44 (0.019)	0.66 (0.012)	1.24 (0.074)	1.10 (0.010)
# other employed males	0.07 (0.008)	0.15 (0.007)	0.31 (0.036)	0.12 (0.005)
# other employed females	0.37 (0.016)	0.52 (0.010)	0.65 (0.047)	0.30 (0.006)

Source: Own calculations from the 1997 OHS and the 2006 GHS

Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive therefore columns do not add up to 100 per cent

## APPENDIX H

Table 1H Logit estimations predicting poverty status, African sample, 2006

	I	II	III	IV	V
<b>Headship:</b>					
Female-headed	1.182*** (0.022)				
<i>De jure</i> FHH		1.109*** (0.024)	0.774*** (0.028)	0.724*** (0.028)	0.643*** (0.031)
<i>De facto</i> FHH		1.901*** (0.049)	1.359*** (0.055)	1.226*** (0.056)	0.875*** (0.060)
Co-resident FHH		0.144* (0.074)	0.025 (0.085)	0.269*** (0.089)	0.109 (0.104)
Age of the head			-0.025*** (0.001)	-0.018*** (0.001)	-0.021*** (0.001)
<b>Head's level of education:</b>					
1 year of education			0.0281 (0.100)	-0.008 (0.114)	-0.110 (0.124)
2 years of education			0.219*** (0.081)	0.249*** (0.089)	0.304*** (0.085)
3 years of education			-0.051 (0.073)	-0.009 (0.078)	-0.077 (0.086)
4 years of education			-0.264*** (0.062)	-0.272*** (0.067)	-0.304*** (0.073)
5 years of education			-0.304*** (0.061)	-0.350*** (0.061)	-0.449*** (0.073)
6 years of education			-0.222*** (0.055)	-0.207*** (0.057)	-0.223*** (0.065)
7 years of education			-0.534*** (0.050)	-0.558*** (0.051)	-0.549*** (0.060)
8 years of education			-0.454*** (0.049)	-0.460*** (0.051)	-0.489*** (0.056)
9 years of education			-0.639*** (0.068)	-0.767*** (0.067)	-0.697*** (0.074)
10 years of education			-1.044*** (0.054)	-1.029*** (0.055)	-1.078*** (0.063)
11 years of education			-1.159*** (0.058)	-1.261*** (0.059)	-1.224*** (0.066)
12 years of education			-1.627*** (0.050)	-1.676*** (0.051)	-1.672*** (0.057)
13 years of education			-2.942*** (0.088)	-2.981*** (0.092)	-3.040*** (0.102)

<i>Table continued...</i>					
14 years of education			-2.786*** (0.171)	-2.643*** (0.183)	-2.285*** (0.202)
15 years of education			-3.565*** (0.156)	-3.661*** (0.166)	-3.735*** (0.162)
<b>Head is employed</b>			-1.581*** (0.027)	-1.623*** (0.028)	-1.980*** (0.034)
<b>Metro dummy</b>			-0.634*** (0.035)	-0.607*** (0.036)	-0.487*** (0.038)
<b>Province:</b>					
Western Cape			-0.504*** (0.083)	-0.155* (0.082)	-0.036 (0.090)
Eastern Cape			0.309*** (0.050)	0.388*** (0.051)	0.486*** (0.056)
Northern Cape			-0.351*** (0.071)	-0.224*** (0.075)	-0.038 (0.084)
Free State			-0.244*** (0.052)	-0.113** (0.054)	0.144** (0.059)
KwaZulu-Natal			-0.158*** (0.044)	-0.045 (0.044)	-0.104** (0.051)
Northwest			-0.389*** (0.052)	-0.313*** (0.054)	-0.117* (0.060)
Gauteng			-0.283*** (0.055)	-0.127** (0.056)	0.127** (0.061)
Mpumalanga			-0.259*** (0.052)	-0.093* (0.052)	-0.041 (0.060)
Limpopo			---	---	---
<b>Household variables:</b>					
Number of employed				-0.900*** (0.021)	-1.476*** (0.026)
Household size					0.357*** (0.009)
Ratio of children					1.275*** (0.074)
Ratio of pensioners					-2.654*** (0.130)
<b>Constant</b>	0.115*** (0.0139)	0.116*** (0.0139)	3.344*** (0.081)	3.347*** (0.083)	1.836*** (0.095)
<b>F stat</b>	2780.62	1049.98	307.09	326.38	293.43
<b>Prob &gt; F</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>N</b>	82652	82652	82620	82601	82601

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are weighted. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* Significant at the 99.9 per cent confidence level.

\*\* Significant at the 95 per cent confidence level. \* Significant at the 90 per cent confidence level

## APPENDIX I

**Table 11 Logit estimations predicting poverty status, 2006**

	I	II	III	IV	V
<b>Headship:</b>					
Female-headed	1.292*** (0.020)				
<i>De jure</i> FHH		1.247*** (0.021)	0.665*** (0.025)	0.632*** (0.025)	0.574*** (0.028)
<i>De facto</i> FHH		2.106*** (0.045)	1.270*** (0.051)	1.136*** (0.051)	0.835*** (0.055)
Co-resident FHH		0.108* (0.065)	0.019 (0.085)	0.209** (0.091)	0.084 (0.114)
Age of the head			-0.025*** (0.001)	-0.019*** (0.001)	-0.020*** (0.001)
<b>Head's level of education:</b>					
1 year of education			0.066 (0.093)	0.028 (0.105)	0.004 (0.113)
2 years of education			0.268*** (0.076)	0.263*** (0.082)	0.350*** (0.080)
3 years of education			-0.074 (0.067)	-0.034 (0.071)	-0.059 (0.079)
4 years of education			-0.229*** (0.058)	-0.250*** (0.062)	-0.213*** (0.067)
5 years of education			-0.267*** (0.057)	-0.324*** (0.058)	-0.350*** (0.068)
6 years of education			-0.252*** (0.050)	-0.256*** (0.052)	-0.232*** (0.059)
7 years of education			-0.540*** (0.047)	-0.569*** (0.048)	-0.491*** (0.055)
8 years of education			-0.494*** (0.044)	-0.517*** (0.046)	-0.471*** (0.050)
9 years of education			-0.663*** (0.060)	-0.794*** (0.059)	-0.619*** (0.064)
10 years of education			-1.030*** (0.0488)	-1.060*** (0.049)	-0.983*** (0.056)
11 years of education			-1.204*** (0.054)	-1.345*** (0.056)	-1.186*** (0.062)
12 years of education			-1.635*** (0.046)	-1.710*** (0.047)	-1.587*** (0.053)
13 years of education			-2.706*** (0.081)	-2.770*** (0.084)	-2.646*** (0.093)
14 years of education			-2.447*** (0.147)	-2.396*** (0.153)	-1.943*** (0.165)

<i>Table continued...</i>			
15 years of education	-3.475*** (0.145)	-3.591*** (0.151)	-3.599*** (0.158)
<b>Head is employed</b>	-1.578*** (0.025)	-1.618*** (0.026)	-1.947*** (0.030)
<b>Metro dummy</b>	-0.567*** (0.030)	-0.554*** (0.031)	-0.457*** (0.033)
<b>Province:</b>			
Western Cape	-0.564*** (0.063)	-0.220*** (0.063)	-0.020 (0.070)
Eastern Cape	0.230*** (0.046)	0.309*** (0.048)	0.392*** (0.052)
Northern Cape	-0.072 (0.058)	0.038 (0.059)	0.191*** (0.065)
Free State	-0.241*** (0.049)	-0.114** (0.051)	0.150*** (0.056)
KwaZulu-Natal	-0.178*** (0.043)	-0.082* (0.043)	-0.109** (0.049)
Northwest	-0.397*** (0.051)	-0.324*** (0.052)	-0.129** (0.060)
Gauteng	-0.285*** (0.052)	-0.119** (0.052)	0.160*** (0.057)
Mpumalanga	-0.265*** (0.050)	-0.117** (0.051)	-0.056 (0.057)
Limpopo	---	---	---
<b>Race:</b>			
African	1.270*** (0.073)	1.223*** (0.077)	0.516*** (0.082)
Indian	-0.116 (0.126)	0.048 (0.127)	-0.470*** (0.127)
Coloured	0.567*** (0.081)	0.743*** (0.083)	-0.040 (0.090)
White	---	---	---
<b>Household characteristics:</b>			
Number of employed		-0.874*** (0.018)	-1.442*** (0.023)
Household size			0.367*** (0.001)
Ratio of children			1.050*** (0.068)



<i>Table continued...</i>					
Ratio of pensioners					-2.017*** (0.143)
<b>Constant</b>	-0.266*** (0.0122)	-0.266*** (0.0122)	2.110*** (0.106)	2.208*** (0.111)	1.193*** (0.118)
<b>F stat</b>	4213.71	1622.25	367.74	378.53	333.65
<b>Prob &gt; F</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>N</b>	104730	104730	104592	104573	104573

Source: Own calculations from the 2006 GHS

Notes: The data are weighted. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* Significant at the 99.9 per cent confidence level.

\*\* Significant at the 95 per cent confidence level. \* Significant at the 90 per cent confidence level. The omitted categories are: male-headed, head has no schooling, head is not employed, non-metro, Limpopo and White.