

Understanding the Poverty-Reducing Livelihoods of Child Support Grant Caregivers
in Riebeek East, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

In 1994, racial domination in the form of apartheid ended in South Africa and the first post-apartheid government was elected through a non-racial and democratic franchise. The new government inherited an entrenched system of racial inequality as well as widespread poverty amongst the formerly oppressed population, and it sought to address these challenges through policies of redistribution based on a new progressive constitution which emphasised the realisation of socio-economic rights. At the same time, and despite its redistributive measures, the post-apartheid government has pursued a macro-economic strategy with pronounced neo-liberal dimensions. One of its critical redistributive measures focuses on social assistance to poor blacks, and this has entailed the construction and expansion of a massive social grant system including the child support grant which is received by millions of black South Africans on a monthly basis.

The objective of this thesis is to examine and understand the livelihoods of child support grant recipients (or caregivers) in the context of conditions of extreme vulnerability marked by poverty. It does so by focusing on the small town of Riebeeck East located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Though undoubtedly child support grant caregivers are victims of poverty, the thesis demonstrates that they are not without agency. They exist in structural conditions of vulnerability and poverty, but they nevertheless seek to manoeuvre and negotiate their way in and through their conditions of existence. This does not necessarily alleviate their poverty in any significant manner but it does show evidence of reflexivity, decision-making and responsibility in the pursuit of livelihood practices and outcomes. In making this argument, I draw upon the mega-theory of Margaret Archer (specifically, her morphogenetic approach) and the more middle-level perspective of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. Beyond contributing to the prevailing academic literature on the child support grant in South Africa, this thesis also hopefully makes a small contribution to controversies about structure and agency within sociology.

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------------|--|
| ASGISA | Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative |
| CASE | Community Agency for Social Enquiry |
| CSG | Child Support Grants |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DSD | Department of Social Development |
| GEAR | Growth Employment and Redistribution |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| OAP | Old Age Pension |
| SASSA | South African Social Security Agency |
| SMG | State Maintenance Grant |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children Education Fund |
| WPSW | White Paper on Social Welfare |

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Chapter One: Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

The non-racial nation-wide elections and the new constitution, in the years 1994 and 1996 respectively, ushered in a new democracy in South Africa. After a long period of inequality and repression during the Apartheid government's reign, the new constitution in particular brought with it the hope and promise of peace and equality and, for the oppressed poor, the opportunity to move out of poverty which stripped them of their human dignity for many years. Among the rights outlined and protected within the constitution is the right of all to access 'appropriate social assistance' from the state, notably where citizens are not in a position to be able to provide for themselves or their dependents. This brought about social assistance, which primarily was reserved for one population group (white people) historically, to all racial groups (now called population groups). Social assistance, for the purposes of this thesis, can be described as a type of income transfer given to those most needy by the state, taking the form of grants or monetary awards. At times it can be means-tested (implying that certain requirements must be met in order to be eligible) or it may be provided in more unconditional ways. The main focus of social assistance in South Africa is to provide a safety net for those most in need, which remains primarily the poor black population.

This thesis seeks to investigate the role that social assistance, and specifically the Child Support Grant (CSG), plays in the fight against poverty in South Africa, as the government continuously commits itself to alleviating and reducing poverty for the poorest and most vulnerable. The CSG is currently the most important form of social assistance offered by the state insofar as the number of beneficiaries is concerned. The primary purpose of the grant is to offer a supplement to poor people's household income and specifically to eligible caregivers so that they are able to meet the needs of the children under their care.

The thesis examines the linkages between the CSG and poverty through an empirical study of Riebeek East in the Eastern Cape Province. By focusing on one research site, the study is able to examine the social dynamics within recipient households. These dynamics are critical in making sense of the ways in which the grant money is used, as grant recipients and

other household members seek to navigate the complex socio-economic circumstances in which they find themselves.

The introductory chapter is divided into four main sections. It begins by highlighting the character of social grants in South Africa with specific emphasis on the CSG and – in so doing – it highlights the significance of the thesis. Secondly, I set out the key thesis objective (and subsidiary objectives) before, thirdly, discussing the research methodology underpinning the research for the thesis. Fourthly, the chapter provides a brief overview of the subsequent chapters in the thesis.

1.2 Context of the Study

South Africa had a social assistance programme that began prior to 1994, but it was racially-restricted. It has since developed further into a more comprehensive and consolidated programme as mandated by Section 27 of the new constitution, which guarantees the right to social assistance and requires the government to take reasonable measures to progressively realise this right for people in need. In line with this mandate, the CSG is currently South Africa's largest social assistance programme (Samson et al. 2008, Patel 2011, DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012). The principal objective of the grant is to ensure that caregivers of children living in conditions of often extreme poverty are able to access financial assistance in the form of a cash transfer to supplement, rather than replace, household income (CASE 2008, Delaney et al. 2008). The CSG comprises of a monthly cash transfer that is made available to primary caregivers – usually the biological mother of the child but also non-biological caregivers such as a grandmother, aunt or other older sibling. It is targeted through a means-test based on a pre-determined maximum level of income of the caregiver.

Under the Apartheid government, the prevailing social security system for children and their families involved the State Maintenance Grant (SMG). It was a means-tested grant accessible mainly to white women (and in some instances Coloured and Indian women) who qualified because they were regularly unable to receive financial support from their partners (i.e. father of child) (Rosa and Mpokotho 2004, Lund 2011). African women were excluded from receiving the grant, as the Bantustan system (supposedly involving access to land-based livelihoods) was seen by the state as subsidising African employment in the urban economy of 'white' South Africa (Makiwane 2010). Subsequently, there was a huge disparity along racial lines in terms of access to social security.

The legacies of Apartheid, current high levels of unemployment (under pronounced neo-liberal conditions which favours the so-called market), as well as the impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic on families, all contribute to post-Apartheid South Africa's current high levels of child poverty. Child poverty varies across and within the provinces, such that a study mapping living standards experienced by children (based on the 2001 national census data) found that nine of the ten municipalities with the highest rates of child deprivation are in rural Eastern Cape (Barnes, Wright, Noble and Dawes 2007). The African National Congress (ANC) government constantly claims that poverty eradication (or at least poverty alleviation) is one of its main policy goals and that the social security system (including the CSG) is critical in reducing poverty (Makino 2004). For example, in a manifesto addressed to voters in the 2004 general election, the ANC dedicated itself to halving poverty in South Africa by 2014 (Magasela 2005), a goal that has not been reached despite a constantly expanding grant system that is aligned with the government's new self-conception as a (Keynesian-style) developmental state (rather than a neo-liberal state).

The grant system in post-Apartheid South Africa includes five grants, of which the child support grant and the old age pension are the most prominent. In 1996, a new constitution came into effect which – in Section 27 – emphasised the state's responsibility in guaranteeing socio-economic rights for all citizens. These rights include access to food and water, health care services and shelter, as well as incorporating social security. The state is constitutionally-obliged to progressively realise these rights but it measures this progressive realisation against the resources available at the national budgetary level. Also in 1996, the Lund Committee on Child and Family Support was established and it sought to explore policy options affecting social security for children and their families in South Africa (Goldblatt 2005, Delaney, Ismail, Graham and Ramkisson 2008).

The Lund Committee's report recommended a new strategy to phase out the SMG over five years and to replace it with a child-linked grant (Lund Committee 1996). The report's principles for the implementation of the new CSG included: contributing to the costs of rearing children in very poor households; being linked to an objective measure of need, as determined through a means-test; the grant's focus, unlike the SMG, would be on the child and not on the family (thus ensuring that the grant 'followed' the child regardless of the identity of the caregiver); and working towards the relief of child poverty. The South Africa Social Security Agency (SASSA), which is a Section 3A public entity, was established as the main government institution responsible for paying the right grant to the right person at a

location which is most convenient to that person. The value of the grant as of April 2011 was R280 per child and it has since increased to R300 as of January 2014 (Republic of South Africa Services 2014). It has been fourteen years since the implementation of the CSG. Initially it was restricted to children seven years and below; in 2005 the maximum age limit was increased to fourteen years. It was recently extended to the age of 18 (Patel 2011, DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012).

Thus the central focus of this study is the CSG and poverty. It is important to note in this regard that the social grant system (including the CSG) in 2009 reached about 26.2 per cent of the population and it is now widely acknowledged in the academic literature to be the government's most successful poverty reduction programme, with potentially far-reaching developmental impacts (Neves et al. 2009, Delany et al. 2008, Patel and Triegaardt 2008, van der Berg et al. 2005, Samson et al. 2004, Woolard 2003, van der Berg and Bredenkamp 2002, Ardington and Lund 1995, Beal 1997, Chambers 1995).

The thesis will focus on both macro- and micro-levels of analysis, which will allow for a focus on both structure and agency. On the one hand, it is necessary to offer a broad overview of the emergence of the CSG as a social security programme of the post-Apartheid state, notably in the context of the political economy of South Africa and post-Apartheid restructuring involving both marketisation and redistribution simultaneously. On the other hand, establishing clear linkages between the CSG and poverty reduction requires micro-sociological work which is able to 'capture' the fluidity and nuances of household dynamics.

Theoretically, this thesis is underpinned by critical realism with specific reference to Margaret Archer's Morphogenetic theory together with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). Using Archer, I investigate the role of structure and agency in addressing poverty, including the various structures in place and how they enable or constrain the agents (beneficiaries) in their use of the grant. Concurrently, the SLF speaks to both levels of analysis (for instance, by placing 'the local' in 'the national' conceptually) though its strength lies in more micro-level household and community analyses. In addition, it is necessary to come to terms with the complexity of the notion of poverty, and the thesis explores therefore alternative understandings of poverty, such as those privileging income and expenditure, basic needs, social inclusion and human development indicators (May 1998, Moser 1998, Haarmann 2001, Johnson 1996).

There is considerable literature on the contemporary social grant system in South Africa, including the CSG. However, most academic studies are on the old age pension and

the research sites mainly fall outside the Eastern Cape. Spatially, there seems to be a predominance of studies done in KwaZulu-Natal. There is need hence for studies of the CSG in the Eastern Cape with specific reference to poverty reduction.

With specific regard to the CSG, there have been many examinations of the implementation and administration of the CSG as well as financial and other forms of accessibility to the grant (Goldblatt, Rosa and Hall 2006, Kola et al. 2000, Leatt 2004, Lloyd 2000, Rosa and Mpkotho 2004, Guthrie 2002). Many of these are in-depth field studies based on first-hand accounts from recipient-caregivers, detailing their experiences with the grant, and how it affects their lives and their relationships (Hunter and Adato 2007). At times, though, specific gaps in the literature have been identified. For example, Case, Hosegood and Lund (2005) indicate that there is insufficient evidence to explain why a significant group who are likely eligible for the CSG do not apply. Lund (2006) also notes that more vigorous research needs to be undertaken on the intra-household gendered decisions regarding the CSG; in a similar vein, Goldblatt (2006) highlights the need for research on the impact of the grant on intra-household relationships. She also points to the importance of further research on the social consequences of the grant more generally, and specifically research on the spending of the grant.

There remains considerable debate within the literature on South African grants (including the CSG) about the effect of grants on poverty at household level and it is hoped that this thesis, by drawing upon Archer and the SLF with reference to the case study of Riebeek East, will contribute to this literature by providing a fresh and nuanced understanding of the linkages between grants and poverty in contemporary South African society.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this thesis is to understand the livelihoods of child support grant caregivers within households in South Africa with specific reference to Riebeek East and in the context of vulnerability and poverty. Following from this main objective, subsidiary objectives include:

- a) To examine household structures and practices, including intra-household decision-making processes, which impact on the distribution of the grant money;
- b) To analyse the livelihood strategies of recipient households;

- c) To identify the income and expenditure patterns of the households, and the role of the CSG in these patterns;
- d) To explore relevant inter-household relations that may exist between recipient households and other recipient (or non-recipient) households, including extended family; and
- e) To examine varying household compositions to determine if the character of the grant-poverty relationship is contingent on household forms, and hence is open to variation.

1.4 Research Methods

In pursuing these objectives, the empirical focus of the thesis is Riebeeck East, a small town located about fifty kilometres north-west of Grahamstown. The research methodology underpinning the thesis is qualitative in nature (Neuman 1997, Terre Blanche and Durrheim 2006, Blaike 2004, Coolican 1994). For the thesis, this kind of methodology is crucial because it highlights human agency, experiences and practices, which are central to investigating the ways in which grants are ‘handled’ and ‘managed’ by recipients in addressing conditions of poverty through livelihood practices at household level.

The fieldwork was undertaken in Riebeeck East in May to June 2013. Riebeeck East was chosen as the research site for a number of reasons: it is in large part un-researched by sociologists and academics in cognate disciplines, including in relation to grants; its small size ensures that any fieldwork-based research will entail significant coverage of households; and it is easily accessible from the university based in Grahamstown. Access was initially facilitated through my supervisor, who has a plot in Riebeeck East, and this generated a level of trust with the recipients. Further, I assured the recipients in Riebeeck East that I was undertaking an academic study and that any evidence provided was for academic purposes only. This was important in case they felt that their grant circumstances were being unnecessarily probed and reported to the South Africa Social Security Agency with respect to for instance mismanagement of the grant. I remained sensitive to this throughout the fieldwork.

The research primarily involved the administration of structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews both conducted at household level with recipients of the grant. Because my knowledge of both Xhosa and Afrikaans, the two predominant languages spoken amongst grant recipients, is limited, I required the assistance of local interpreters in the field. Also, because of low levels of education and literacy amongst the grant-holders, the questionnaires could not be self-administered – the questionnaires had to be completed with my and the

interpreters' assistance. In the case of both the questionnaires and the interviews, these took place in the familiarity and comfort of the home of the recipient to inhibit any discomfort on their part in a more unfamiliar environment. This was also important because of the need for privacy and confidentiality, as some questions about the CSG money can be sensitive in the perspective of the grant recipients. The presence of the interpreters might at first sight appear to complicate this. But the interpreters were reasonably well-respected women in Riebeek East and the recipients were at ease with them (and by extension with me, even though I was a stranger to the grant-holders).

Both research techniques were formulated, designed and administered to ensure that the fieldwork would be capable of addressing the main and subsidiary objectives. I discuss the different research techniques used, below.

For purposes of both the questionnaires and interviews, I used non-random snowball sampling to identify recipients and those recipients in particular willing to engage with the study. In fact, few recipients refused to participate. Collins et al. (2007:193) describe snowballing as a non-probability sampling technique in which the research participants are carefully chosen on purpose to achieve certain predefined goals. This was particularly important because respondents had to be recipients of at least one CSG. The number of recipients included in the study was not pre-determined. Rather, I continued to engage in the fieldwork until such time as I realised that a saturation point was reached in terms of the evidence collected; in other words, at the time in which the evidence being gathered was not producing any new issues. Because I used non-random sampling, no unquestioned statistical claim can be made that the fieldwork evidence is representative of the Riebeek East community as a whole with respect to the child support grant. However, particularly given I reached a point of saturation, there is strong reason to believe that the fieldwork evidence provides illuminating insight into the Riebeek East community more broadly.

The structured questionnaire was chosen because of its ability to reach a large number of participants and in collecting standardised evidence on set themes (see Appendix 1 for the questionnaire used). Twenty questionnaires were administered. In creating the questionnaire, I had two broad categories of questions I sought to include: factual questions and questions about subjective experiences. The purpose of factual questions is to elicit general information regarding the background of the respondents (Nachmias and Nachmias 1992). It was particularly helpful in gathering basic quantitative evidence about the recipients and their households, including demographics, household composition, socio-economic conditions,

livelihood activities and grant expenditure. With this standard information, the responses across questionnaires could be measured and compared. Questions on subjective experiences were important to this study in so far as they sought to ascertain the role that the CSG had on the lives of the recipients and particularly with regard to their ability to break the cycle of poverty, if at all. The types of questions therefore involved respondents' beliefs, attitudes, feelings and opinions. With regard to attitudes, "they are general orientations that can induce a person to act or react in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli" (Nachmias and Nachmias 1992: 241). These and related themes were captured through close-ended questions, which are easy to ask and quick to answer therefore facilitating a more straightforward analysis. But the themes were also pursued in some instances by way of open-ended questions (which allowed respondents an opportunity to freely and spontaneously share their thoughts).

Overall, the questionnaires provided a solid basis for identifying and understanding the role of the CSG in the lives of the recipients (and households) and the impact of the grant money on their day-to-day livelihood activities. While creating the questionnaire, I was cognisant of ensuring the absence of pre-conceived biases in the various questions (or leading questions) which might detrimentally affect the fieldwork evidence. For this reason, all questions were worded in a neutral and impartial manner. This was achieved partly by using appropriate wording and taking into account the literacy levels of the respondents (Huysamen 1994) so that they could understand the questions easily; as well as by avoiding leading questions (Nachmias and Nachmias 1992) through which bias may arise. Thus, as a method of data collection, questionnaires proved to be a flexible tool that allowed for organised questions and an efficient method (Walliman 2009).

More qualitative kind of data, which relate to interpretive sociology, was collected through the use of in-depth interviews (Johnson and Christensen 2004). Interviews were conducted with the aid of a guideline thereby making them semi-structured (see Appendix 2 for the interview schedule). Interviews are critical in allowing the researcher access to respondents' experiences and their inner perceptions, attitudes and feelings with reference to their everyday reality. As a whole, the interviews – which were conducted subsequent to the questionnaires – pursued similar themes to the questionnaires but in more depth. They bolstered the questionnaire evidence and, simultaneously, provided a more nuanced and detailed accounts of the lives of grant recipients. Because of the detailed nature of the accounts provided by the grant holders during the interviews, it was necessary to tape-record

the interviews (with the permission of the interviewee) and later transcribe them. Twenty-three interviews were conducted, with a different set of respondents from the questionnaires.

For purposes of understanding the social grant system at a national level, I made use of not only existing secondary literature but also some primary documents (policy documents and statutory instruments) which speak specifically to social assistance and the grant system specifically. Additionally, during the fieldwork, I was able to observe the lives and livelihoods – admittedly at some social distance – of the recipients and their households and, at times, this allowed collaboration of certain evidence provided during the questionnaire and interview sessions.

There were a number of challenges in the field. As indicated, I was not familiar with the two main languages used by grant-holders in Riebeek East and hence needed the assistance of interpreters. All recipients were not able to converse adequately in English. At times, there was some un-clarity with the interpretations made by the interpreters and thus I had to be extremely careful and vigilant in ensuring that the correct information was being conveyed to and from the interpreters, who effectively mediated between me and the grant-holders. Gaining access to the research site, though initially facilitated by my supervisor, necessitated working through recognised community leaders. However, after setting up a meeting telephonically with one of the leaders (a ward councillor), he failed to show up citing various business commitments to which he had to attend. He also failed to warn me in advance to postpone or cancel the meeting. Nonetheless, access was granted telephonically.

However, interpreters whom the community leader had promised to provide became unavailable because of his physical absence. I therefore had to physically move around Riebeek East using various informal contacts to establish local residents of Riebeek East who would be able to offer their services as interpreters during the fieldwork. Eventually, two female assistants who worked at a local pre-primary school agreed to be interpreters. Both spoke English and the two local languages. Given their occupation during the week, this meant that the fieldwork could only be conducted during the weekends when they were available. In addition, the interpreters advised conducting the research over the weekends when residents of Riebeek East would be at home and not at work, as some of the grant-holders were engaging in paid work at least on a casual basis during the week. Thus the challenges of access and interpreters were successfully overcome.

Additionally, given that the research was conducted during the winter of May-June 2013, during a time of heavy rains, it was difficult at times to reach Riebeek East because

half of the distance involves travelling along a dirt road which is not maintained properly by the municipality. Once there, not all grant-holders selected through the snow-balling sampling were available – either because they were busy at the time of the visit or because they were not around.

Collected data was analysed thematically. The purpose of analysing data collected during sociological research is to facilitate understanding and explanation of the study site and to address the research (in this case, thesis) objectives (Blanche and Durrheim 2002). In processing the data that I collected, I went through various processes that overlapped each other including transcribing, coding and classification, and finally applying the theoretical paradigm to the findings in order to understand the evidence and come to conclusions that spoke directly to my thesis objectives.

Transcribing is the process of ensuring that all audio-recorded material is written down so that the researcher can make reference to it and easily go back and forth familiarising oneself with the data and using it for the purpose of coding and eventually generating explanations. Given that I used a translator for the in-depth interviews, it was necessary for the transcribing process to take place early on in the analysis stage (because some of the information was in Xhosa which I was unable to understand). Nonetheless, in facilitating the gathering of evidence about child grants, it was necessary for the respondents to be able to speak freely in their mother tongue.

Coding is the process of classifying responses collected from respondents into meaningful categories (Nachmias and Nachmias 1992, Blanche and Durrheim 2002). Once I had collected all the data from the field, I began to make sense of it all by familiarising myself with the data gathered and going through my notes (once transcribed). I constantly referred back to the theoretical framing for the study as this enabled me in some instances to more ably group data according to expected themes. As such, through theory-informed coding, I managed to examine and group the different responses from the respondents. I did however impose the theoretical framing on the evidence as I used it in a flexible manner. In this regard, I also used inductive coding, which is “a coding scheme designed on the basis of a representative sample of responses to questions” (Nachmias and Nachmias 1992:323). This coding method was particularly important for the open-ended questionnaires and data collected through the interviews.

Overall, coding allowed me to organise my evidence in a structured and more accessible manner. I was able to classify (and, when necessary, reclassify) my evidence in a

more explicit manner thematically. Additionally, I built ‘typologies’ and ‘taxonomies’ where I identified variations across respondents in the data collected and began to form subgroups within various categories of caregivers along different variables (Blanche and Durrheim 2002). On this basis, once the themes were firmly established, I made use of Archer’s morphogenetic approach along with the Sustainable Livelihood Framework to understand the evidence and therefore the lives of the caregivers in Riebeek East in their pursuit of livelihoods under conditions of extreme social vulnerability.

1.5 Thesis Outline

The following chapter (Chapter Two) sets out the theoretical framework for the thesis. This entails two theories, one mega-theory and one middle-level theory. The former theory involves the work of Margaret Archer (and specifically her morphogenetic approach) and the latter theory is the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, both of which in their own deal with the theme of structure and agency.

Chapter Three, like chapter two, is a contextual chapter. In this chapter, I discuss the political economy of contemporary South Africa in the context of two trends which mark South African state policy, namely, neo-liberalism and a more redistributive thrust which seeks to undo the legacy of apartheid. The social grant system in South Africa needs to be understood in this political economy context.

Chapter Four narrows the focus of the thesis discussion further by examining the social grant system in post-apartheid South Africa and, more specifically, the child support grant. I discuss the prevailing literature on the grant system and, in so doing, position my thesis focus and objective accordingly.

Chapter Five involves a presentation and discussion of the lives and livelihoods of the child support grant caregivers in Riebeek East in the Eastern Cape Province. I examine the household-based livelihood activities of the caregivers, the expenditure of the monthly child support grant by the caregivers, and seek to assess the contribution of the child grants as the basis for poverty-reducing livelihoods.

Chapter Six, as the concluding chapter, revisits the fieldwork evidence from Riebeek East in the light of the theoretical framing for the thesis, and shows how the theory contributes to a deeper understanding of the poverty-reducing livelihoods of the child grant caregivers in Riebeek East. On the basis, the entire thesis is brought together as a coherent body of academic work about child support grants in contemporary South Africa.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical framing for the thesis, which involves a mega-theory and a middle-level theory. The mega-theory is based on critical realism and specifically the work of sociologist Margaret Archer. Archer provides a particular understanding of the relationship between structure and agency but, quite significantly for this thesis, tends at times to privilege agency. Archer's work does not speak directly to the specific focus of the thesis, but it does frame the more middle-level theory used – the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework – and this latter theory facilitates an understanding of the lives and livelihoods of the child grant care givers in Riebeek East. I now examine these two theories in turn.

2.2 Critical Realism, Margaret Archer and the Morphogenetic Approach

Critical realism, as formulated by Roy Bhaskar, is a philosophy that acts as an 'under-labourer' to theory and research (Bhaskar 1989, Olvitt 2012) and guides the sociologist (and all scientists) in constructing and pursuing theory and research which is particularly cognisant of the ontological commitments of critical realism (Sayer 2000, Archer 1998). In this sense, critical realism is ontologically bold but guarded in its approach towards epistemology, as it seeks to "re-establish a realist view of being in the ontological domain whilst accepting the relativism of knowledge as socially and historically conditioned in the epistemological domain" (Mingers 2004: 384). Hence, though insisting that the social (and natural) world – ontologically – is constituted in a particular way (notably a stratified reality marked by casual powers and mechanisms), it does not dictate to the sociologist a particular theoretical stance or research methodology. However, Bhaskar undoubtedly developed critical realism through a sustained attack on prevailing epistemologies, ontologies and theories such as idealism, but notably those embedded in positivism and its claim that the reality consists exclusively of that which can be known or perceived through the senses (Harvey 2002, Benton and Craib 2001, Hodgson-Williams 2006; Patomaki and Wight 2000).

Unlike positivism, critical realism speaks ontologically about a complex stratified reality composed of the real, the actual and the empirical. The domain of the real, which

critical realism clearly highlights as critical to its ontological claims, includes whatever exists in the world regardless of our knowledge or experience of it (Benton and Craib 2001, Olvit 2012, Archer et al. 1999). It includes ‘underlying’ structures, mechanisms and powers which contribute to – in ways not necessarily understood in and through everyday practices – the generation of other layers of reality (Danermak et al. 2002, Sayer 2000, Fairclough 2001). Events that are actualised by these structures and mechanisms fall within the domain of the actual and those which we experience or observe in everyday life (the ontological focus of positivism) fall within the domain of the empirical (Benton and Craib 2001).

Consequently, critical realism proposes, and I would argue convincingly, that the world as such exists independently of our knowledge or sensory experience of it (Sayer 2000). Archer et al. (1998: 190), in speaking about critical realism with specific reference to the social world (normally called social realism), thus highlights “the quest for non-observable generative mechanisms whose powers exist unexercised or be exercised unrealised with variable outcomes due to the variety of intervening contingencies”. The prevalence of contingencies, involving a multiplicity of variables, arises in large part from the fact that human society is not in a state of enclosure but is an open and indeterminate system consisting of actors with consciousness, subjectivity and agency. As Donati (2011: 118) puts it, “society can be modified by people who hold a reservoir of potential abilities in social relations through causal (agency) and structural powers”. Hence, critical realism, and by extension social realism, raises complex questions about structure and agency.

There are different proponents of critical realism each with their own specific perspectives but the most influential social realist is the sociologist, Margaret Archer and her morphogenetic theory. In addressing questions around structure and agency, this theory provides the main theoretical anchor for this thesis. In this regard, Archer brings to the fore an analytical dualism through which she articulates her own particular version of the structure-agency debate within sociology. Briefly, she argues that structure and agency are irreducible ‘entities’ (irreducible to each other) with their own set of emergent properties and powers (Archer 1995). But, like Bhaskar, Archer argues that explaining social reality necessitates moving away from the level of actual or empirical events or phenomena to the generative mechanisms which are the root causes of such happenings.

One of the most critical debates within sociology has centred on structure and agency and their interrelationships (Carter and New 2004). Normally this interrelationship is seen as an intertwining process of mutual interaction, in which structure and agency are both seen

ultimately as ongoing products of each other (Archer 1982). No sociologist would deny the importance of both structure and agency, otherwise structuralism (individuals as mere cogs in a wheel) or voluntarism (individuals as free-floating entities) would prevail. All sociologists therefore seek to be sensitive to both, but – beyond this – there is considerable difference in framing the structure-agency relationship. Some sociologists therefore tend to highlight the importance of structure (leading to structuralist arguments) while others lean toward the significance of agency (resulting in voluntarist explanations).

In formulating her own position on structure and agency, Archer has at times addressed one of the more influential perspectives within sociology, namely, structuration theory as articulated by Anthony Giddens (1979). Archer would agree with Giddens's (1979:7) overall claim that “escape of human history from human intentions, and the return of the consequences of that escape as causal influences upon human action, is a chronic feature of social life”. This highlights the in-determinant character of the mutual conditioning of structure and agency as they interact in ways which are not easily recognisable and which have unintended consequences.

But, for Archer, structure and agency are irreducible to each other. They may be conditions of existence for each other, but their constitutive powers and properties are not reducible to each other. In this sense, they are not wholly determined by each other, as they both have an excess unexplainable in terms of the other. For example, structure may condition (or have casual powers with regard to) social life, but this does not alone account for human (and personal) capacity to delineate human concerns and pursue social projects and practices (Archer 2003). In a similar vein, agency may condition structures (or have casual powers with reference to structures) but structures in turn have subsequent structural effects on human concerns, projects and practices in a manner beyond the capacity of humans to regulate. Archer though, in her work, tends to prioritise agency in that only agents have the causal powers to bring about effective change, because they act.

In this context, Archer (1996) proposes that structure and agency can only be linked by examining the interaction between them over time. While they are intertwined in reality, they are analytically distinguishable. Each therefore possesses separate emergent properties capable of independent variation and of being out of sync with one another in time (Archer 1995). The notion of emergence is critical to Archer, because it means that structure and agency are analytically separable and further, in their everyday existence, they operate in effect at different times and the interplay between them takes place over a period of time

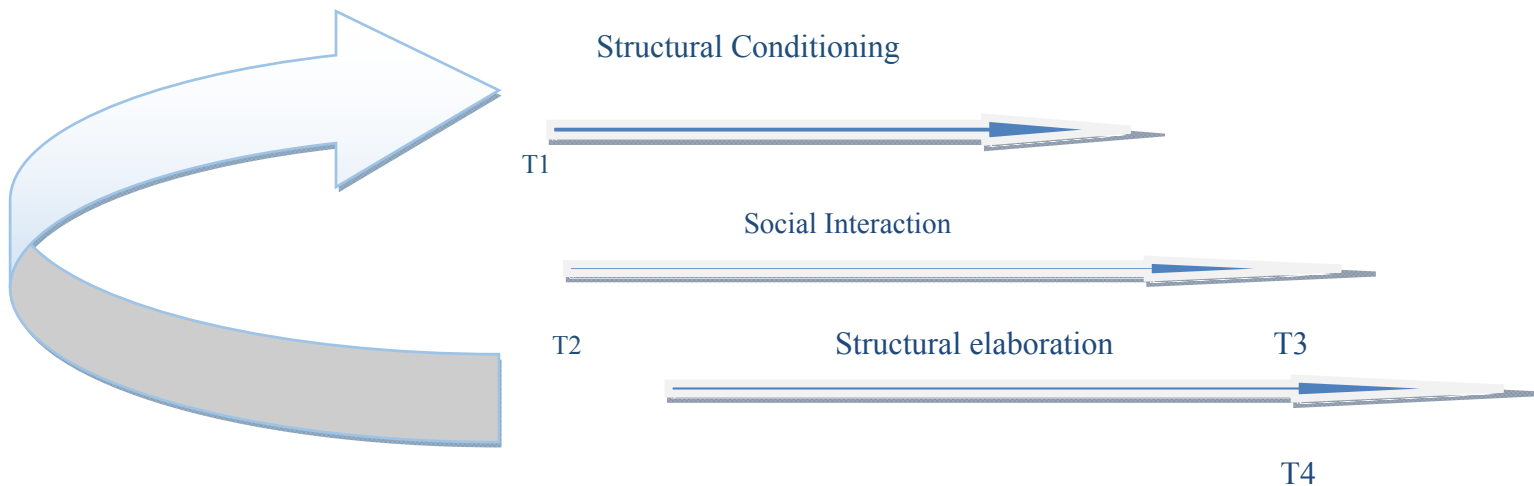
(Archer 2005). In implying the need for a kind of diachronic analysis, social structures set the context within which agents act and interrelate, but these same actions and interrelationships then set the basis for either reproducing or changing these prevailing structures (Danermark et al. 2002).

Analytical dualism, as Danermark et al. (2002:81) argue, “places the fundamental model of structure and agency into a time dimension” by recognising that structures enable and constrain social interaction while agents have the power to change or reproduce structures. Analytical dualism is, in the end, based on two premises, as implied already. Firstly, it depends on an ontological view of the social world as stratified such that emergent properties of structures and agents are irreducible to one another (which means they are analytically separable) (Quinn 2006). Secondly, given that structures and agents are temporally distinguishable, this can be used methodologically to examine the interplay between them over time including changes to them (Archer 2005). The process of studying the causal powers of structure and agency by highlighting temporality is referred to as the morphogenetic approach (Hoel 2010).

In proposing analytical dualism, Archer argues that it overcomes the problem of conflation in sociological argumentation about structure and agency. Insofar as it is claimed that people are the mere products of structures then they have no independent causal powers. This is ‘downwards conflation’ (Zeuner 2000) or outright structuralism. Conversely, ‘upwards conflation’ (or voluntarism) occurs when structures are conceptualised as the product pure and simple of the actions of agents and have no autonomous powers of their own (Hoel 2010). A third form of conflation (‘central conflation’) exists, and this Archer equates with Giddens’ structuration theory. This theory, at least according to Archer, invariably defines structure and agency in and through each other and thus in relation to each other; and, hence, Giddens fails to analytically distinguish between the two (Zeuner 2000).

For Archer, though structure and agency are necessary conditions of existence for each other, they are – to emphasise – irreducible to each other. On this basis, Archer develops her morphogenetic model of structure and agency involving a never-ending social cycle or sequence in which both structure and agency (as emergent) predate each other. As Archer argues: “The activity-dependence of structures is in no way compromised by the argument that a given structure was issued in by a particular [previous] generation as an unintended yet emergent consequence of their activities, whilst it then necessarily pre-existed their successors” (Archer 1995:72). In Figure 2.1, the morphogenetic sequence is set out:

Figure 2.1: The morphogenetic sequence



Source: Adapted from Archer (1995:76) in Hoel (2010:132).

Figure 2.1 shows the morphogenetic analysis of the structure-agency interplay starting at T1 with the context of structural conditioning, which exists (for analytical purposes) temporally prior to the occurrence of action and interaction by human agents. As such, the structural context (with its set of causal powers) has the potential to condition agency. The transitional phase (T2 to T3) marks the activation of agency whereby agents act within the conditioning context through social interaction. The agency (with its own set of casual powers) may preserve or transform the structures which initially conditioned the actions and interaction. The final stage of the sequence (T4) refers to this feedback effect on the existing structures. Morphogenesis, technically speaking, implies change or transformation, whereas preservation or reproduction is labelled as mophostasis. Each new cycle begins with the previous cycle's end result (structure) which is ultimately the unintended consequences of the agency of the previous cycle and conditions the new cycle. It is this ongoing structure-agency cycle, as immersed in actually-existing reality under spatially- and temporally- specific circumstances (the intervening contingencies of social life, as referred to earlier) which provides the basis for sociological analysis. In this way, Archer's morphogenetic approach provides the basis for a research methodology that works alongside and is animated by the critical realist social ontology.

Despite Archer's emphasis on both structure and agency, the latter seems to be often privileged in her analysis. This is because, for Archer, the interplay between structural and agential properties and powers takes place through a process of reflexivity or reflexive

mediation. Central to Archer's notion of reflexivity or reflexive deliberation are 'internal conversations', with these conversations taking place either consciously or unconsciously (Archer 2010). It is by means of internal conversations that agents, even before speaking and acting, formulate concerns, perspectives and projects which are then activated within an existing structural context. In turn, this context constrains or enables particular projects (and even conditions which projects are formulated and enacted) and the structural context is, as a result, reproduced or changed through these agential powers. Archer (2003) outlines this as follows, in a way which elaborates implicitly on Figure 2.1:

- "Stage 1: Structural and cultural properties objectively shape the situations that agents confront involuntarily and inter alia possess generative powers of constraint and enablement in relation to
- Stage 2: Subjects' own constellations of concerns, which emerge as subjectively defined by the three orders of reality: natural, practical and social
- Stage 3: Courses of action are produced through the reflexive deliberations of subjects who subjectively determine their practical projects in relation to their objective circumstances" (Archer 2003: 135).

In bringing to the fore the importance of agency, Archer's social realist perspective makes an analytical distinction between three dimensions or categories of agency: Persons, Agents and Actors, all of which she intentionally capitalises (Hoel 2010) in order to delineate them from the common usage of the term 'agency' in sociological discourse. The word 'Person' refers to people – as individuals – in their embodied human form which is inclusive of their physical bodies, human capacities, social consciousness and reflexive deliberation (Archer 2003). Internal conversations are embedded in the embodied form or Person. The term 'Agent' refers to the way in which 'persons' are inevitably positioned within prevailing social locations (as structurally-delimited) to which correspond material and ideational resources (or assets). This thus raises, at least indirectly, the interface between structure and agency (Hoel 2010). 'Actor', lastly, refers to the persons' positions (or locations) as existing invariably within a complex world of networks and interaction; and hence it refers to social roles emanating from this social interconnectedness. With reference to Actors (as role-performers), Archer (1995: 256) argues that "different agential life chances give differential access to parts of the array of roles available in society at any given time".

An Agent and an Actor, in terms of Archer's work, always involve a collectivity as all locations or positions in human society are shared by groupings of Persons and these are

embedded in a range of social structures including structures of inequality and stratification (Archer 1996). Groupings of Persons as collective Agents, and thus as Actors engaged in social interaction, have agential powers to propel themselves forward as manifested for instance through the articulation of shared interests which may take on an organisational form (such as a social movement). However, the ability of Agents to instigate structural change depends on their presence and ability to work as a collective, which regularly does not take place. Insofar as this collective voice and action is muted and Persons act alone, which often happens in social contexts where Persons are struggling simply to maintain their current well-being, then existing structures are simply maintained.

In this regard, Archer makes a further distinction between Primary and Corporate Agents. All Persons are Primary Agents as all Persons occupy positions or locations which they share with other Persons (but they remain unorganised despite their common location). But not all Persons are Corporate Agents. Corporate Agents recognise and articulate their common location and give meaning to it as social groups or organisations; they become capacitated in this way and undertake strategic action on this basis to pursue set goals. Corporate Agents, through their agential powers, have the potential to exert significant influence on existing structures, either to defend and thus maintain them, or to challenge and transform them. This of course impacts on Primary Agents who remain unable to alter their structural conditions of existence.

The emergence, or the non-emergence of Corporate Agents, arises in and through inner conversations and reflexivity, as Persons ponder the world around them, deliberate on possible courses of action (given the resources-at-hand) and act accordingly – either alone or as Corporate Agents (which take on a diverse range of forms). In doing so, Persons may simply enact the roles apparently assigned to them given their conditions of existence or life circumstances (effectively, playing the cards they were dealt) or they may re-think, re-visit, re-define and ultimately re-work the roles in trying to reassign themselves new or reconfigured roles. The prevalence of inner conversations, which likely vary between Persons, implies the possibility of variation in role outcomes. Different Persons, given their shared location, may have shared concerns but their particular reflexive deliberation leads to individual differences in projects and ultimately live-chances. As Archer (2000:318) states, “the world cannot dictate to us what to care about the most: at best, it can set the costs for failing to accommodate a given concern”.

Thus, to reiterate, structure and agency are irreducible to each other. I quote Archer one final time, to highlight once again her demand to separate structure and agency. The reasons she gives for this include: “(a) to identify the emergent structures (b) to differentiate their causal powers and the intervening influences of people [agency] (c) to explain any outcome at all which in an open system entails an [irreducible] interplay between the two” (Archer 2005: 70). Clearly, Archer’s work is within the realm of mega-theory and speaks to the very character and substance of the human condition. In raising key questions though about structure and agency, it has important implications for this thesis. It does not however speak to my substantive area of inquiry and thus, besides Archer, I use the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework as a more middle-level theory which is more directly related to my research area but which also – mostly implicitly – relevant to the structure-agency debate.

2.3 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment coined the term ‘sustainable livelihoods’ and this has subsequently evolved into an analytical framework (the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework – SLF) to understand the construction of livelihoods particularly in developing countries under conditions of poverty, marginalisation and systemic crisis – what the framework normally refers to as vulnerability (Farrington et al. 2004). Traditionally, the SLF was used to investigate rural livelihoods but it has been increasingly used with reference to urban working people (Jawah 2010, Murray, 2002, Rouse and Ali 2000). The unit of analysis is regularly the household with an emphasis on the diversification of (and simultaneous pursuit of) livelihood practices and strategies notably during times of stress and shock. Insofar as livelihoods are not sustainable, and the assertion and conclusion is that they regularly are not in any meaningful sense, structural explanations are then offered for this. Admittedly, in this context, the very use of ‘sustainable’ in naming the analytical perspective becomes somewhat problematic. However, flowing from the SLF is a strong programmatic tendency which aims to enhance the sustainability of urban and rural livelihoods (Farrington et al. 2002:84).

The livelihoods framework recognises the existence and importance of broad social structures including power relations in conditioning livelihood patterns (Hebinck 2007) but it does not treat households living in conditions of poverty as mere victims of these structures in some sort of determinist argument (Chambers and Conway 1992). It seeks rather to restore agency to these households by examining the ways in which they try to negotiate and

manoeuvre their way through their conditions of existence. By way of explanation, households handle or manage their poverty (as conditioned by relations of power and inequality) by the construction of livelihood strategies without necessarily (and regularly not) going beyond these conditions of existence (Hussein and Nelson 1997, Krantz 2001, DFID 2001). In this light, a livelihood is taken to mean

The capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future without undermining the natural resource base” (Chambers and Conway 1992: 6).

In the case of this thesis the social grant system in South Africa, as a livelihood dimension for child grant caregivers in Riebeek East under condition of vulnerability, is analysed from the vantage point of the SLF (and from the perspective of Archer’s more meta-theoretical morphogenesis approach). Later, in the conclusion to this chapter, I draw the connections between these two theoretical framings.

In spite of questions around the suitability of the term ‘sustainability’, the sustainability of livelihoods is normally considered fundamental for the SLF, particularly when it comes to addressing and understanding household resilience in the face of external shocks, which entails a degree of household capacity in handling such shocks. Often difficult dimensions of sustainability are spoken about, such as environmental, economic, social and institutional (Norton and Foster 2001, Krantz 2001), and the focus of this thesis is on economic and institutional sustainability. Economic sustainability is said to be attained when a given level of consumption, assets and savings – which of course is related to income generation and other livelihood sources – is successfully preserved over a reasonable period of time for particular households (Norton and Foster 2001). The monthly CSG grant in South Africa can be seen in this context. Institutional sustainability relates to the social context which condition household livelihoods, and hence it is realised when broader structures and processes currently in place have the capacity to perform their obligations over a period of time (Norton and Foster 2001). For this thesis, such sustainability broadly speaking relates to state obligation, commitment, capacity and delivery of poverty reduction policies and programmes, including social assistance. This institutional environment, though, either facilitates or undercuts the prospects of resilient livelihoods.

There is no one SLF as there is considerable diversity amongst authors at least in terms of what they highlight. Despite this diversity, there are certain commonalities or broad points of agreement (Scoones 1997, Schaffer 1996, Chambers 1997, Krantz 2001, Holloway 1993, Sen 1984, Jones 2002). A state of perpetual vulnerability, as indicated, is critical to the understanding of livelihoods, but so are household capacities and the marshalling of resources or assets by households in pursuing livelihoods (irrespective of the resilience of livelihood strategies undertaken). In making use of available resources and capabilities, and in the face of often-shifting vulnerability contexts, households pursue livelihood activities as forms of adaptation and they do so in an ongoing almost never-ending way. In this sense, the SLF treats households as rational agents without however having preset and fixed livelihood objectives. In fact, the livelihoods of households are too precarious and fluid to allow for this. The existence of assets (sometimes called resources or capitals) is central to the SLF in making sense of household capacities in constructing livelihoods broadly and enacting specific livelihood practices. These assets may be physical or social, tangible or intangible. Different writers categorise the resources differently, but I now outline the key resources (which I label as ‘capitals’) which are highlighted in the literature.

Natural capital refers to natural resources that are inclusive of soil, water and air as well as the broader natural environment from which the various resources flow (DFID Guidance Sheets 2001). While natural resources, also including land, crops and livestock, may be commonly found in rural areas, in urban areas they are not as easily accessible (Narayan 1997, Portes 1998) and their relevance for this study is minimal because the Riebeek East households do not engage for instance in urban agriculture.

Economic or financial capital is the monetary base for households and it includes primarily cash earned, remittances, credit, assets and savings generated through various means such as employment and informal economic activities (Farrington, Ramasut and Walker 2002). This becomes particularly significant for the thesis given the almost complete commodification and marketisation of life notably in urban spaces including Riebeek East, and considering that social grants are a form of economic capital. Some sort of cash income is fundamental for the basic necessities of urban life, including accommodation and related services (water, electricity and sanitation), access to health, education and transport (Satterwhite 2004). But it is not unusual for trade-offs to take place under tight financial constraints, whereby some kinds of expenditure are sacrificed while other expenditures are prioritised.

Human capital refers to human capacities based on education, skills, knowledge, capacity to labour and vitality of personal health, and this clearly has implications for accessing or using financial capital (for example, becoming employed) (Ashley and Carney 1999). Of course, failure to possess these capacities does not in itself determine the financial status of a household and, in turn, absence of financial capital shapes human capital (for instance, reduced income may lead to a decrease in food consumption through lessening the number of meals today). Further, the absence of human capital must itself be understood in terms of the broader prevailing structures of inequality and poverty.

Political capital highlights the position of households within the public sphere or realm, and their forms of engagement with this sphere or disengagement from it. This might entail involvement as active members in a political party or social movement, as well as the kind of relationships which may arise between local citizens and the local state – in the case of South Africa, municipalities. It leads to questions around the capacity of voice and the opportunities for giving voice given the prevailing political climate.

Finally, there is social capital, which Bourdieu (1985:248) defines as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships or mutual acquaintance or recognition”. Social capital relates to social relations that bond individuals together within a household or act as a bridge in bringing together households within a community through support and solidarity. In terms of inter-household relations, these may be informal and temporary arrangements which are constantly negotiated or they may take the form of associations which are more durable and dependable. In either case, they involve relationships of mutual support and may facilitate access to personal loans, food and accommodation particularly in times of pronounced emotional and financial stress (Moser 1998). However, there is no guarantee that social capital will exist, as tensions and conflicts often arise within and between households. Nevertheless, Meagher (2006:554) stresses its importance in arguing that “where states and markets are weak, social networks offer an informal mechanism of economic co-ordination capable of filling gaps in formal institutional provision and regulatory capacity.”

Together, these capitals form the basis for livelihood practices of households, according to the SLF. In the case of the urban poor, their livelihood practices may be marked more by the absence of these capitals (or resources) than by their presence. As well, in whatever form they do exist, they often combine in complex and shifting ways as households (and individuals within households) handle their conditions of existence (notably,

vulnerability) in a manner which seeks to maximise household resilience (Krantz 2001, Carney 2003, Bebbington 1999). In this respect, the ways in which Riebeek East households make use of the child support grant becomes important. Though not providing a feminist perspective in this thesis, it is of significance that child grant caregivers in South Africa tend to be women. Their gendered identity, particularly under conditions of patriarchy, does impact on their resource base (for instance, their access to education and employment) and it may influence the form and extent of their investment in social capital (Beardmor 2000) as well as their level of parental responsibility and child-caring role as manifested in the way they use and prioritise the child support grant money.

Like Archer's morphogenesis approach, the SLF tries to address questions of structure. In other words, it moves beyond a micro-level household-focused analysis which emphasises human agency to a more macro-level structural level (such as, in the case of this thesis focusing on Riebeek East households, the political economy of contemporary South Africa as covered in the following chapter). It thus recognises the importance of broader institutional structures, processes and power relationships. While these do not determine household livelihoods in any casual determinist sense, they set the broad conditions of existence of households in either facilitating the pursuit of viable household livelihood activities or constraining and undermining them (or perhaps doing both simultaneously) (Farrington et al. 1999). Important for this thesis, as covered in chapters three and four, are macro-economic restructuring in contemporary South Africa and post-Apartheid state policies and programmes around social assistance and social grants more specifically).

The SLF serves a twofold purpose for this study. First of all, it allows for a nuanced and descriptive understanding of the forms and levels of vulnerability that recipients of child support grants experience in Riebeek East; and, secondly, it provides a basis for analysing the livelihood practices of the recipients and the contribution of social grants to their livelihoods. This is made possible by studying the experiences, choices and agency of the child grant caregivers as they actively and rationally pursue their livelihood practices (Whitehead 2002, Keely 2001), including how they manage the child grant income stream. Livelihood outcomes are the accomplishments of the livelihood strategies that have been created and utilised by households, but these outcomes are also affected by the broader structural context. Identifying livelihood outcomes is of significance in examining the role of the grant as a form of cash input in household resilience (Kasere 2013, Beall and Kanji 1999).

Thus, in making use of the sustainable livelihoods framework, I seek to draw upon the strengths that this framework clearly offers. These strengths include the following, as Murray (2001:7) points out: its ability to understand the dynamics of livelihoods with a broader social context; its use of multi-scalar analysis including individuals, households and communities; and its capacity to investigate the relationships that emanate from different activities that constitute livelihoods strategies. However, the framework is not without its own shortcomings and one in particular needs to be recognised and taken into consideration, namely, the question of power.

In this respect, the framework fails to address power structures and relationships sufficiently (including at national and more particularly international levels) and the ways in which these seemingly distant relationships become embedded in 'the local' and thereby condition, marginalise and undercut household-based livelihoods (Krantz 2001, Harrison 1997). Even more local power structures entailing informal power relations at household and community levels fail to receive proper attention. Because of this, capitals or assets come across almost conceptualised as things that can simply be wielded at will rather than conceptualised in more relational terms. As well, fully without considering power, analyses of household agency are not properly rooted in structure (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). In my study of Riebeek East, I remain sensitive to this criticism.

A corollary of this critique relates specifically to patriarchy-based power in the light of the unit of analysis (Murray 2000; Whitehead 2002). Most SLF studies tend to treat the household in a disaggregated fashion and centre on household livelihood activities in the public realm (Mosse 1994, Krantz 2001). This means that the household unit is said to have agency, as if it is the household which thinks and acts: thus it becomes the decision-maker and engages in livelihood practices. While this unit of analysis is important and justifiable, it is also critical to unpack the household descriptively and analytically and to focus on individuals as units of analysis. This is absolutely necessarily in order to lay bare the gendered relations often constituting and animating households. Because, in the pursuit of household livelihoods, it may be for example that women carry a particularly heavy load while being excluded in some certain ways, including within household decision-making processes. This highlights the point I made earlier about the gendered character of the child support grant in South Africa.

2.4 Conclusion

In the chapter I have provided an overview of the two theories used for understanding the livelihoods of the caregivers in Riebeeck East. Archer's approach focuses on questions of structure and agency, and this is of significance in trying to make sense of the agency of the caregivers. Despite the fact that they are seemingly trapped in structures of inequality and poverty, they nevertheless (as will be shown later in the thesis) engage thoughtfully and reflexively in seeking to care for the children under their care. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework also raises the importance of agency though certainly not in a manner which is as theoretically and sociologically informed as Archer's work. But it does speak more explicitly to the substantive field of inquiry, namely, livelihoods and hence it is able to address the ways and means by which caregivers enact their agency. Thus, combined, the two theories provide a strong basis for pursuing the main objective of this thesis. In the following chapter I examine the broad social context which conditions the lives of caregivers in Riebeeck East by discussing the political economy of post-Apartheid South Africa.

Chapter Three: Political Economy of South Africa in the Light of Neoliberalism and Developmentalism

3.1 Introduction

So far I have provided the theoretical framing or context for the thesis. In this chapter, I provide further context for the study of social grants in South Africa by examining the political economy of post-Apartheid South Africa. The purpose is not to offer a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this political economy but to highlight one point in particular. This point relates to the broad trajectory of the political economy since 1994 and, in doing so, it raises questions around neoliberal restructuring and developmentalism in South Africa and the possible tension that might exist within South African government policy between these two processes. For this reason, this chapter starts off by unpacking neoliberalism and developmentalism. The South African state has regularly been labelled as a neoliberal state pure and simple, but the existence of the pervasive grant system (as seemingly a form of unproductive investment) and other redistributive measures (such as land reform) implies the need for a more refined understanding of South Africa's macro-economic restructuring since the end of Apartheid.

3.2 Neoliberalism and Developmentalism

The South African political economy, from 1994 onwards, needs to be located within broader debates and developments on a global scale about neo-liberalism and developmentalism. Apartheid ended in 1994, at a time in which neoliberal restructuring internationally was exceedingly prevalent. Undoubtedly, any post-Apartheid government would be shaped by this global political economy. At the same time, after years of intense struggle against a racially-inclusive state and the clear necessity to bring about historical redress given the massive racial inequalities which arose under Segregation and later Apartheid, there was every reason to believe that a post-1994 government would pursue a more developmental thrust in emphasising redistribution. I look at neo-liberalism and developmentalism in this context.

Neoliberalism is a term widely used to describe processes of economic deregulation, liberalisation of commodity markets and global market integration with a particular emphasis

on the supposedly creative and autonomous potential of free enterprise. Unlike the earlier Keynesian programmes in the 1950s and 1960s in advanced capitalist societies, government intervention in the economy is in large part understood as an unnecessary intrusion as it often or even necessarily leads to market distortions and failures. As such, government's role in the economy should simply be as a facilitator in stimulating the economy and setting the broad social conditions for the optimal functioning of the market-based economy. This would also entail providing public goods like infrastructure (roads and transport networks for example) but with a simultaneous stress on privatisation of parastatals. As well, social expenditure by the state should be minimised as it amounts to an unproductive investment which puts an inevitable strain on the national fiscus (Wade 1992, Wade 1996, Wade and Venoroso 1998).

Wade (1992) asserts that neoliberal policies, initially tested as far back as the 1970s (in Chile), became increasingly regarded by global multilateral institutions as the most effective means for lower income countries to reap the benefits of the global capitalist economy despite seemingly contradictory evidence emerging from the so-called Asian tigers led by interventionist developmental states. This was clearly articulated by the World Bank's shift towards a more pronounced neoliberal position, with the Berg Report on and about development in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank 1981), and this became expressed in the imposition of structural adjustment programmes throughout Africa and elsewhere. By the 1990s, the World Bank was offering a revised neoliberal model because of the harshness of earlier programmes: the market was still to reign supreme but the state was to play a more active role in ensuring a softer and more people-friendly version of structural adjustment. This was to take place alongside undercutting what were labelled as authoritarian states (notably in Africa) through processes of political reform and good governance (such as state accountability, political pluralism and the rule of law) and these processes were to serve as conditionalities for receiving and maintaining financial assistance from the multilateral organisations (Kiely 1998, World Bank 1991).

In this context, the World Bank soon presented neoliberalism with a so-called human face (Becker 2000). This approach was to combine social security safety nets, poverty, health, education, environment and gender considerations with conventionally neoliberal principles like property rights, trade liberalisation and privatisation (Peet 2002). Of course, the neoliberal principles would remain the bedrock of any restructuring processes, with social policy interventions being framed within (and subordinated to) these principles. It was at this time that Apartheid ended. Given the clear demise of state socialism (as exemplified by the

Soviet Union) in the late 1980s and the aggressive neoliberal discursive prescriptions of the global economic powers (Lester, Nel and Binns 2000), any new post-Apartheid government, as indicated earlier, would invariably find itself under some pressure to conform to the market-led restructuring. In fact, historical evidence shows that some neo-liberal restructuring had already taken place in the 1980s under the Apartheid government, showing that it was not immune to global forces – this was apparent, for instance, in the case of privatisation of commodity boards and deregulation of commodity markets within commercial agriculture.

In the end, neoliberalism is a class project or new form of imperialism which seeks to restructure the global economy to sustain old and bring about new forms of capital accumulation which increasingly cut across national borders and question the very existence of national sovereignty. National economic spaces become infiltrated, subdued and distorted by neoliberal global economic forces in a kind of indirect (or at a distance) colonialism which inhibits broad-based development throughout the capitalist peripheries. Of course, at the same time, corporate and state elites – as local proponents and propagators of neoliberalism – regularly benefit from neoliberal restructuring at national level. But working people (in both urban and rural areas) feel the wrath of neoliberalism through for instance the deregulation of urban labour markets and the cutting of state subsidies for rural producers (Gumede 2009).

With the end of Apartheid in 1994, and the growing prominence of neoliberalism globally from the 1980s, the possibility of the post-Apartheid state pursuing neoliberalism was quite strong. But it was not inevitable. Other possibilities existed, such as the developmental state which marked in some way the history of post-colonial Africa from the 1950s along with more contemporary examples beyond Africa.

There is considerable literature about the developmental state (Stubbs 2009), including literature which has celebrated and romanticised it, such as Johnson's (1982) early work on the so-called Japanese miracle. Johnson described fundamental characteristics of developmentalism and the developmental state, including the following: an efficient state administration staffed by professionally-trained bureaucrats but one which provided space for initiative and ingenuity; an organisational structure within the state with tight control over industrial policy and the use of state resources and finance for this purpose; and significant state intervention which stimulated the market but in manner which brought about broad-based development for working people (Johnson 1982:314). Such features, it is often argued, were prevalent amongst the Asian Tigers such that successful developmental states were

formed which led to exponential economic growth coupled with significant employment creation.

The pursuit of developmental states in post-colonial Africa, comparatively speaking, has been seen as far less successful, in large part because these post-colonial states lacked state capacity and resources to drive developmentalism through manufacturing-based industrialisation. This led Migdal (1988) for example to ask “why, while most newly independent Third World countries had weak states and strong societies, did the successful economies of East Asia, as most analysts agree, have strong states and weak societies?” (Migdal 1988:270). But it seems clear that the weak state/strong state dichotomy does not fully capture the reasons for differences in effectiveness, including in relation to industrial diversification. For instance, in the case of Asia, economic growth was largely based on American funding in implementing an import-substitution-industrialisation approach to economic development (Stubbs 2009).

Despite any differences in developmental states, one common feature which has come increasingly to the fore in designating them is authoritarianism: developmentalism, whether successful or not in terms of industrialisation, was rooted in state restructuring of a pronounced authoritarian kind (von Holdt 2010). Hence, even if the emerging post-Apartheid government in the early 1990s recognised the importance of a developmental state in stimulating economic growth, South Africa’s very history of racial authoritarianism would have raised doubts about pursuing such a path. For this reason, in trying to more effectively counter neoliberal restructuring, more recent literature speaks about the importance of establishing social democratic states in the global periphery (Wildenboer 2008).

In this context, there is considerable discussion about reframing the developmental state as a fundamentally democratic state, or pursuing democratic developmentalism (Edigheji 2005, Evans 2009, Pillay 2007, Sandbrook et al. 2007). This state has been described as a administratively-capable and competent (or ‘strong’) state that would act authoritatively vis-à-vis the national economy but with significant levels of credibility and legitimacy by following democratic principles and procedures (Edigheji 2005, Makiwane 2004).

Like the Asian countries, though, this would entail enhancing mass wage employment to drive industrialisation and pursuing a pronounced developmental welfare policy by using social policies to achieve broad-based economic development. Thus it would also involve a relatively high level of social investment to promote human capital development such as

through education, health care and child care services (Patel 2013). According to Midgley (2013) and Holliday (2000), these types of investments are associated with the alleviation of poverty and overall improvements in living standards amongst the general population. Again, a key difference would be the democratic basis of developmentalism. This would necessitate a basic-needs and rights-based approach founded on citizenship rights, principles of equality, the achievement of a basic minimum standard of living and a social justice orientation that prioritises the disadvantaged in the apportionment of resources (Edigheji 2007). Undoubtedly, this was an option that the first post-Apartheid government could have seriously considered, particularly given the democratic and development deficits inherited from the Apartheid era, and the fundamental need to address massive social inequalities. A significant redistributive social development agenda would seem to be a priority.

3.3 Pre-94 Brief History

South Africa's economic and industrial capitalist development was initiated by the 'discovery' of gold and diamonds in the late 19th century. With time, this led to the inflow of foreign capital, entrepreneurship and skills from other countries. Prior to the mid-1940s, industrial development was largely based on the mining industry and an industrial policy of import substitution was initiated following the Second World War. Local demand was largely satisfied by industrial production and foreign exchange was acquired through commodity exports. The South African economy grew significantly during the 1960s but, from the mid-1970s, it began to experience a series of crises and contradictions.

Capitalist development in South Africa though was highly racialised, leading to a form of racial capitalism (NIEP 1996, Terreblanche 2002, May 1998, Rodrick 2006, Hausmann and Rodrick 2003, Faulkner and Loewald 2008). This existed prior to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and was intensified under both the Segregation period (from 1910 to 1948) and the Apartheid period (from 1948 to 1994). Racial domination pervaded all spheres of South African life, not only economically and politically but also socially (so-called petty apartheid).

Without the right to vote in national elections, black Africans in particular were disenfranchised and the economy in large part served white interests. In and through the reserve system (later known as bantustans), rural African producers lost access to productive land and men in particular were forced to enter the white economy as farm-labourers on white commercial farms or as migrant labours on the mines. At the same time, during the

early Segregation period, the interests of poor whites were addressed through for instance the racial job colour bar and access to employment particularly in the state bureaucracy. Rural-urban migration was controlled through the influx control system and it was very difficult for black Africans to obtain permanent rights of residence in so-called white cities and towns. This did increasingly take place though from the 1950s as manufacturing capital based in urban areas sought a more stable African workforce which would include workers living with their families. From the 1960s the South African state sought to pursue grand apartheid through the bantustan system, with black Africans expected to achieve political self-determination through their own homeland governments.

The pre-1994 history of South Africa is just as much about struggles against racial domination as it is about the existence of racial domination. Mobilisation, struggles and protests took place with a radicalisation of the struggle against racial oppression taking place from the late 1940s with major strikes on the mines. This continued during the 1950s with the campaigns of the African National Congress and became particularly intense in the 1970s with regard to both workplace and community-based struggles. By the 1980s not only was the apartheid state facing an economic crisis but there was a looming political crisis because of the sheer intensity of mobilisation against it. This led to partial reform of the apartheid system from the late 1970s and its dismantling starting with the transition period in the early 1990s.

Oddly enough, the apartheid state could be seen as a strongly developmental state but one which was racially exclusive and fundamentally undemocratic. The state before 1994 strongly intervened in economy and society, and had very significant levels of state capacity and efficiency. Additionally, there was a strong social policy component to the state's trajectory though this focused on employment creation and social welfare for whites and an extremely residual and inequitable system for blacks (Bhorat and Westhuizen 2009, Poon 2009).

3.4 From RDP and NDP

During the struggle against Apartheid, it has been argued that the most important liberation movement (the African National Congress) failed to produce any major economic policy documents and that any such documents only began to emerge in the early 1990s (Natrass 1994: 344). The cornerstone of the ANC's future envisaged society remained the Freedom Charter, drafted and passed by the Congress of the People in 1955 as a strategic and tactical

statement of radical opposition to the Apartheid government, while also giving some inkling of a post-Apartheid economy under the ANC (van der Westhuizen 1994). It formed the foundation of where the ANC would take the country following the demise of Apartheid and, importantly, it resembled a Keynesian social democracy including for instance public ownership of the nation's wealth (such as land and minerals). If pursued to its logical conclusion, it would undoubtedly involve a critical emphasis on a strategy of redistribution in addressing inequality and poverty.

This is not to deny the existence of significant thinking about economic policies, as there exists a considerable documentary history which records debates within the ANC on economic principles (ANC 1985). Deriving in many ways from the Freedom Charter, the ANC – before the 1990s – had already drafted ‘Constitutional Guidelines’ to do away with the legacy of colonial conquest and white domination. But these guidelines also highlighted the goal of tackling and ending poverty which would mean “a rapid and irreversible redistribution of wealth and opening up facilities to all” (Peet 2002:68). The guidelines further stipulated the crucial role of the state in processes of socio-economic redistribution, such that the private sector would be subordinated to serving the material interests and social well-being of the entire population (rather than of corporate interests only) (ANC [1987] 1990:165). Ever since the first non-racial democratic election in 1994, the ANC government has sought to bring these social principles to the fore as epitomising the very soul of the liberation movement.

When the ANC came into power in 1994, it was committed to addressing inequality and poverty and, in doing so, improving the living conditions of black people in South Africa. As such, its initial macro-economic policy entailed a basic needs approach: the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), based, at least at first, on the principle of growth through redistribution. Economic growth was important, but this was seen as possible only through a comprehensive process of wealth redistribution. The South African state seemed to be positioning itself as a developmental state based on democratic procedures.

During the last days of Apartheid, including into the early 1990s, discussions were taking place between the main liberation movement (the ANC) and a multiplicity of key global and local actors, focusing on the future restructuring of economy and society under post-Apartheid conditions (Bond 1991, Patel 1993, Schrire 1992, Sunter 1987). These actors included the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as well as South African

business interests (Peet 2002:69). Simultaneously, within South Africa, two important think-tanks arose around monetary, financial and economic policy reformulation, which made recommendations of the incoming post-Apartheid government. These were the Economic Trends Group formed in 1986 in conjunction with the main trade union federation and the Macroeconomic Research Group founded in 1991 with the support of the official Canadian international aid agency. All of these varying and at times competing initiatives were to influence in some way and to some extent the ANC's adoption of economic policy after 1994 (Kentridge 1993, ANC 1991, Padayachee 1998, MERG 1993).

Out of all this emerged the Reconstruction and Development Programme which, by the time of the 1994 elections, had already been formulated and adopted by the ANC (Peet (2002, ILRIG 1999). The RDP stressed nation-building, reconstruction, development, redistribution and democracy. It seemed to be a Keynesian-type state initiative which went contrary to the neo-liberal juggernaut sweeping the world in the early 1990s, though neo-liberal restructuring – under the ongoing influence of multilateral financial organisations – was never far removed from ANC government thinking and indeed practice. In fact, the ANC soon began to deviate from the principles embedded in the initial RDP documentation. However, social assistance (and specifically a social grant system) appeared to be consistent with the overall RDP trajectory (Harris and Landerdale 2002).

Despite the disparity that possibly existed between achieving economic growth alongside redistribution as the basis for socio-economic development, the ANC argued that the two could be integrated without compromising each other. For instance, the RDP aimed at a five per cent annual economic growth rate with the creation, again annually, of between 300,000-500,000 jobs through state interventions in particularly the manufacturing sector and with significant foreign investment (Peet 2002:70), leading to South Africa becoming a net exporter of manufactured commodities. By 1994, and despite the strong Keynesian-type of influence, the ANC had already begun to place increasing emphasis on growth rather than redistribution, as it spoke increasingly about the need for “financial and monetary discipline”, the establishment of “an economic environment conducive to economic growth” and “trade and industry policies designed to foster greater outward orientation” (Government of the Republic of South Africa 1994: 21). Nonetheless, in the 1994 elections, the ANC was resolute in its commitment to tackling the historical and racial injustices of the past through massive programmes of redistribution. As a result, during the initial years of the post-Apartheid government, there was a strong emphasis on job creation for the poor through

public works programmes, the provision of low-income housing and associated infrastructure, land reform, and social security (Bond 1991).

By 1996, a more conservative macro-economic strategy – informed more explicitly by neo-liberal principles – was introduced, namely, the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) programme which, at least implicitly spoke about redistribution through growth (a trickle-down theory in effect) such that the latter was to be prioritised. It focused on “anti-inflationary policies, continued tight monetary policies, wage restraint and fiscal restraint” (Leibbrandt, van der Berg and Borat 2001:16). Consequently, the government became increasingly subordinated to the global structures of accumulation (and to the whim of the multilateral financial groups) by integrating the South African economy into the global economy in and through neo-liberal restructuring (Rumney 2005). This more conservative stance, even before 1996, was always present to some extent in the ANC’s economic policies and programmes and some would argue that it is fully consistent with the entrenchment of colonial property rights enshrined in the new South African constitution (Lehulere 1997), though the constitution also highlights the realisation of basic socio-economic rights. Key features of GEAR reminiscent of other mainstream neo-liberal packages elsewhere include market-led (albeit state-assisted) economic growth, liberalisation of international trade, fiscal restraint and inflation-targeting. However, certain redistributive programmes remain, as the ANC government seeks to placate a diverse range of interest groups in South Africa without necessarily pleasing any in full.

The government (Republic of South Africa 1996:2) described the more complete embracing of neo-liberalism as a necessity to “break current constraints and catapult the economy to the higher levels of growth, development and employment needed to provide a better life for all South Africans.” The fundamental goals of GEAR were to increase Gross Domestic Product growth (up to six percent annually) in order to facilitate job creation and simultaneously alleviate poverty. This would require policies that would, for example, improve non-gold exports, increase private and public investment, facilitate labour market flexibility, reduce fiscal deficits and maximise social delivery for the poor (Wildenboer 2008: 18). Some of the effects of GEAR, until the year 2000, are shown in Table 3.1 below. The table shows that many key objectives of GEAR were not met in the late 1990s though there was some success in terms of curbing the fiscal deficit and lowering inflation.

Table 3.1: Effects of GEAR

| | GEAR objectives: Average 1996-2000 | Actual Achievements: Average 1996 -2000 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| GDP Growth | 4.2% | 2.5% |
| Inflation | 8.2% | 6.7% |
| Employment | 2.9% | -0.3% |
| New jobs per year | 270 000 | -30 000 |
| Real export growth (% GDP) | 10.8% | 6.6% |

Source: (Wildenboer 2008)

Employment growth was particularly problematic and contentious (from the perspective of the trade union federations) with certain economic sub-sectors (such as textile, clothing and leather) experiencing negative growth in part because of the lowering of important tariffs. In fact, unions openly criticised GEAR from the start for being pro-business, and argued for example the following: the reduction of government expenditure as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product, and as well as the privatisation of parastatals, was impacting specifically on the provision of infrastructure and services for both the working and unemployed poor; and the promotion of flexible labour markets and the associated deregulation undermined the rights and security of working people (Peet 2002:75).

In terms of GEAR, the overall critique of the ANC government highlighted its voluntary acceptance and pursuit of a typical structural adjustment programme, as customarily recommended by the International Monetary Fund, when a more RDP-based national strategy would be better able to bring about democratic development. Despite the major trade union federation's own rejection of GEAR, it remained in a formal alliance with the ANC and thereby enhanced the latter's legitimacy. In examining RDP and GEAR, it is important not to overplay their differences. At the same time, GEAR should not necessarily be seen as constituting some kind of unadulterated neo-liberal regime as redistribution remain central to the ANC until the year 2000 and also far beyond (Laubscher 2010). This is important in understanding the ongoing presence, discussed in the following chapter, of a significant social grant system in contemporary South Africa

GEAR continued on into the post-2000 period, a period which was marked by ongoing poverty, inequality and unemployment, most of which was of marked disadvantage to the black population. Though the ANC continued to be the governing party, there was

increasing evidence, at least in urban areas, of rising social and political discontent amongst both trade unions and community-based organisations along with so-called service delivery protests. In 2006, the government replaced GEAR with the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) which in many ways was simply GEAR in new policy clothing: an emphasis on economic growth but growth which was supposed to be inclusive of working people.

ASGISA sought a mixed economy with the aim of making the state and private sector partners in bringing about maximum economic growth and subsequently broader development. This was to be done by removing obstacles and any form of hindrance towards the effective operation of commodity, and increasingly labour, markets (Rapley 1996). Like its predecessor, the principles governing this programme included fiscal discipline, privatisation, trade liberalisation and deregulation. A broad objective of ASGISA was to halve poverty and unemployment levels by 2014. This was to be done through a two-phase economic growth target of 4.5% between 2005 and 2009 followed by 6% between 2010 and 2014. The quantitative growth targets were to be augmented by qualitative measures in a manner that led to an increase in labour demand (and thus rising employment levels), a decrease in social inequalities, new businesses proliferating and the use of local raw materials for the manufacturing sector (Wildenboer 2008).

There was talk at the time, by government officials at any rate, of this macro-initiative involving the transition to a more developmental state in South Africa (Laubscher 2010). However, given state incapacities, any such transition (even if it was a serious intent) seemed very dubious. A more explicit articulation of the notion of a developmental state in the context of South Africa came six years later in the form of the National Development Plan (NDP) announced in late 2012. Again, though, the NDP does not appear to be a significant break with GEAR or a break at all. While there are laudable objectives around redistribution, such objectives have also been contained in previous macro-economic strategies.

It would seem then that the national political economy has been marked since 1994 by its own peculiar version of neo-liberalism. It is peculiar in the sense that redistribution strategies remain central to the state's programmes. In fact, on first sight, it seems that social assistance in post-Apartheid society (as evidenced in the initial White Paper) from the mid-1990s was understood on more developmental than neoliberal grounds. The White Paper thus envisaged a participatory approach to social development in which developmental welfare

acknowledges a partnership between state, market, civil society, communities, families and households in addressing social development challenges (Patel 2013).

So, in comparison to the implementation of neo-liberalism in advanced capitalist nations, the pursuit of social assistance in South Africa – the central focus of this thesis – has not been undercut and undermined. Social assistance remains as a central plank of ANC policy, though its significance in alleviating poverty is in doubt, as discussed in the following chapter. Whether or not this can be understood in any way as developmental or entailing the construction of a developmental state would be problematic though. As Bond (2008:9) argues, the developmental state in the South African context simply means “a combination of macroeconomic neoliberalism and unsustainable megaproject development, dressed up with rather tokenistic social welfare policy and rhetorical support for a more coherent industrial policy”. Further, a developmental state requires the establishment of an effective state bureaucracy, and the vast majority of state ministries and departments are deeply lacking in this regard (von Holdt, 2010). Even the democratic credentials of the South African state are subject to criticism, with growing claims about a trajectory of deepening state centralism which buffers the state from significant popular input.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide a broad sweep of the contemporary political economy of South Africa in the context of both a neoliberal trajectory and a developmental state thrust. Undoubtedly, the macro-economic strategy in South Africa today is primarily marked by neoliberalism but this should not be argued at the expense of failing to recognise significant policies and programmes of redistribution. Such a failure would prevent an understanding of the existence of the massive social grant system (including the child support grant), a system which broadly speaking goes contrary to neoliberal discourse and practices globally. Ultimately it could be argued that neoliberalism in a pure form does not exist and that South Africa has its own peculiar version of neoliberalism. An understanding of this peculiar form, which arose from the racialised past and the need to address this past, facilitates our examination of the child support grant system in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Social Grants in South Africa

4.1 Introduction

In chapter three, the political economy of South Africa was discussed. This is important because it sets out the fiscal and development policies and programmes of the government; and these ultimately determine the extent of social welfare and assistance in the light of the overall priorities of state spending (including in relation to human capital development). In this broad social and historical context, the current chapter discusses the evolution and development of social welfare with specific reference to social grants in South Africa, highlighting the significant changes which have taken place since the end of Apartheid in 1994. It also examines more specifically the child support grant and the prevailing academic literature on this grant.

When South Africa transitioned into a democracy in 1994, it inherited a fragmented social welfare system. The system while present was not comprehensive for the entire population but instead was mainly for white people (Haarman 2000, Liebenberg and Tilley 1998). Although the Apartheid government had begun to extend grants to other population groups, it was differentiated in terms of amount and scope along racial lines. As the new ANC government sought to address this historical legacy, the White Paper on Social Welfare in 1997 had the government committing itself to “an integrated and national comprehensive social security system” (White Paper for Social Welfare 1997:51) stating that “every South African should have a minimum income, sufficient to meet basic subsistence needs and should not live below minimum acceptable standards” (White Paper for Social Welfare 1997:49). To endorse such a goal, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa had already in 1996 entrenched the rights to social security and appropriate social assistance [s 27 (1)(c); (2)].

To date in post-Apartheid South Africa, social protection ranks high in most developmental policy objectives and particularly through the grant cash transfer system for those most in need. In fact, the social welfare system in contemporary South Africa is regarded as outstanding for the country’s status as a middle-income developing nation particularly when compared to other developing nations (Seekings 2002). Over a quarter of the South African population receives some form of grant and these are largely funded by

general taxes (Lekezwa 2011) making it quite exceptional in this respect. The current grants entail a non-contributory social welfare approach which means that recipients do not have to make financial contributions to the government in order to be eligible for the grant(s).

4.2 Pre-94 Social Welfare

In the early 1920s, during the period of Segregation in South Africa, primarily white civil society groups were involved in offering assistance for those most in need. In particular, churches offered the most reputable assistance towards poverty relief (Treigaardt 2005). However, it became evident that levels of poverty (including amongst whites even) were reaching unprecedented levels and as such required an institutional response. The Pienaar Commission (from 1926 to 1928) was tasked with the duty of examining and giving feedback on the role that the state could play in issuing out payments towards needy aged and disabled persons who could not fend for themselves nor had an alternative means of livelihood (Lekezwa 2011, Seekings 2006).

The Commission ascertained that the levels of poverty were a result of various factors inclusive of low educational qualifications, labour policies and government policies on language and culture (Fourie 2006). The focus for the government at the time was mainly to be on 'poor whites' who it was concluded were poor in some instances because they lacked property ownership; as well, the availability of a cheap and unskilled African labour force undercut the employment prospects of unskilled whites (Iliffe 1987). The initial resolution therefore was in the form of job reservation and public works programmes to empower poor whites. Where organisations or government departments implemented employment opportunities that favoured whites, they received rewards from the government for employing 'civilised labour' (Seekings 2007). The political agenda was biased along the lines of a racial hierarchy as all possible measures were being taken to cater for poor whites only.

Despite all measures adopted in order to reduce poverty amongst the white population, it was clear that solutions to resolve the problem had to extend beyond employment opportunities only. The Pienaar Commission had in fact concluded that the unemployment levels in the Coloured and white communities were only 4%, yet 10% of whites for instance were living in poverty (Iliffe 1987, Seekings 2007). On the basis of such evidence, the government then instituted a system of grants which would provide instant cash transfers thereby providing immediate relief as compared to the role that employment had over a long period of time (Seekings 2007, van der Merwe 1997). Old aged people (at least

amongst whites) who did not have alternative sources of income (such as from their own children) were regarded as ‘deserving poor’ and therefore were legible for the support (Lekezwa 2011, Deveroux 2007); likewise, the State Maintenance Grant (SMG) supported white mothers struggling to care for their children. Thereafter, the Carnegie Corporation in New York funded a study on white impoverishment leading to the establishment of the Department of Welfare in 1937 (van Eeden, Ryke and de Necker 2000, Triegaardt 2005). The objective was to deal with the nagging problem of ‘poor whites’.

Clearly, the inception of the South African welfare system was highly racialised and ignored poverty amongst other racial categories. Indeed, the African population was being increasingly marginalised and oppressed. This was already seen through the systematic process of land dispossession as institutionalised in the infamous Natives Land Act of 1913 and the formation of African reserves (Sevenhuijsen, Bozalek, Gows and Minnaar-McDonald 2003, Harrison, Todes and Watson 2008). In addition, African people were expected to pay poll and other taxes in the reserves thereby forcing workers to migrate to the mines as a source of cash. The 1923 Native Urban Areas Act was simultaneously promulgated with the purpose of confining most Africans to reserves and ensuring that residence in (white) towns was as temporary sojourners. As a result of all this, in both urban and rural areas, widespread poverty existed amongst African households (Seekings 2007, Lekezwa 2011). Yet, the focus of social assistance remained the white population. This is because welfare was originally seen as a form of remediation and redemption for ‘poor whites’ with undesirable backgrounds or social circumstances such as child abuse or drug dependence; other racial groupings, notably Africans, were presumably beyond redemption.

A few years later, the Smuts Government (of 1939-48) sought to institute some degree of social reform, albeit at a minimal level, and it appointed the Social Security Commission in 1943 (Deveroux 2007) for this purpose. This Commission recommended the extension of old age pension grants to all other racial groups leading to an amendment of the 1928 Old Age Pension Act. Other grants, such as the disability grant and the SMG, were also to be extended to Africans (Bromberger 1982). The payment of grants to other groups (notably Africans) was meant to be, and was, at a much lower rate than for whites, and this was attributed to the fact that Africans paid lower taxes and had a lower standard of living (van der Merwe 1997, Seekings 2007, Lekezwa 2011). As well, the number of Africans receiving such grants was restricted, meaning that the social assistance programmes remained quite racially exclusive. This reform era, backed in large part by urban-based manufacturing

capital, was tentative and uneven and, more importantly, it did not last long with the coming to power of the more conservative National Party in 1948 and the pursuit of Apartheid.

The Apartheid period was marked by the scaling back of social welfare benefits from racial groups that were not white. In practical terms, an overtly Afrikaner nationalist ideology further entrenched the system of racial discrimination and inequality, and this was affected through the deepening of racial differences along with a range of fronts including the provision of social assistance (Sevenhujsen et al. 2003). Racial hierarchy increasingly came to the fore in terms of the four official racial categories of whites, Africans, Coloureds and Indians. For example, in the 1950s, departments of Bantu Administration and Coloured Affairs emerged and, in 1961, the Department of Indian Affairs was established for the purpose of dealing with African, Coloured and Indian issues respectively (van der Berg 1989). In light of this more pronounced and vigorous system of racial discrimination and segregation, the homeland or Bantustan system (or grand Apartheid) was seen by the National Party government as the basis for attending to the welfare needs of the African population despite the latter's large presence in the so-called white cities and towns. Needless to say, in terms of social assistance, different systems under Apartheid entailed vast inequalities in provision.

Table 4.1 (below) provides an example of the racial differences with respect to social assistance from 1948 to 1975, by focusing specifically on old age pensions. By 1948, pensions had been extended to all racial groupings; however, as can be seen from the table, there were differential rates along race with whites receiving the highest pension. Additionally, different categories of African pensioners were created between city dwellers, town residents and rural inhabitants (van der Merwe 1997, Seekings 2007, Lekezwa 2011), with rural dwellers receiving the least on grounds that they were subsidised by rural agriculture in the reserves. In 1965, however, the differentiated payments for Africans were equalised because of the need to control urbanisation of Africans. It was believed that, if the amounts were equalised, there would be no encouragement for Africans to move to 'white' urban areas from the Bantustans (Sutner 1966) thereby undercutting the quest for grand Apartheid (Seekings 2007a). Such a perspective did not take cognisance of the fact that Africans felt compelled to seek employment outside the reserves (or homelands) because agricultural prospects were very dim (even for subsistence purposes) and entering the cash economy was necessary to pay taxes imposed on them in the reserves.

Table 4.1: Pension payment schedule in South Africa 1948-1975

| Category of Pensioner | Annual Payment | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------|------|------|
| | 1948 | 1958 | 1965 | 1975 |
| White | 72 pounds | 230 pounds | R322 | R723 |
| Coloured | 36 pounds | 83 pounds | R137 | R348 |
| Indian | 30 pounds | 83 pounds | R137 | R348 |
| City African dweller | 12 pounds | n/a | R31 | R105 |
| Town African dweller | 9 pounds | n/a | R31 | R105 |
| Rural Africa dweller | 6 pounds | n/a | R31 | R105 |

Source: Adapted from Deveroux (2007: 545).

Providing Africans with the lowest pension amount throughout this period, compared to the other ‘races’, was seen as providing an incentive to seek employment into the white economy whether in town, mines or commercial farms. In other words, significant pension payments for Africans would be a disincentive to enter the labour market, such that the principle of racial discrimination was fuelled by economic interests and needs. As well, discrimination with reference to social assistance was designed to maintain or ensure a higher standard of living for the white people who, after all, were supposedly accustomed to the comforts of civilisation and modernity. Equalising benefits, if this involved raising the benefits to the level of whites, additionally would put a massive strain on the national budget (van der Berg 1989). Over time, during Apartheid, the differentials in pension values increased or at least Africans increasingly lagged behind. Thus, the “South African Institute of Race Relations calculated that for the first 20 years of its universal application, from 1944 to 1963, the nominal value of the social pension increased by 200% for whites, 286% for coloureds, 221% for Indians and 97% for Africans” (Deveroux 2007: 545). Beyond the difference in the value of the grants on offer in terms of racial classification, the African population was also severely disadvantaged proportionally with regard to the number of grants approved and allocated.

In 1976, the Theron Commission was appointed to examine policy issues relating specifically to the Coloured population and it went on to recommend the administration of welfare services by one government department (Lekezwa 2011). This though was rejected by the Apartheid government. By 1983, as a process of reforming Apartheid began,

Coloureds and Indians were accommodated within a new constitutional dispensation known as the Tri-cameral Parliament in which they were allowed to manage their own welfare departments (van Eeden et al. 2000). Reform measures, in the midst of both economic and political crises, intensified throughout the 1980s and the government sought to equalise social assistance across the 'races' by raising the amounts provided to Africans, at least at a greater rate as compared to other racial categories. During the transition years, in the early 1990s, the Social Assistance Act of 1992 provided for the extension of all social security benefits to all South Africans regardless of race (Vorster, Rossouw and Muller 2008). By 1994, it had been equalised racially and the resulting strain placed on the national fiscus was made possible by implementation of means-testing for accessing grants (Deveroux 2007). This also entailed consolidating social assistance under one government department. The existence of multiple state administrations for social assistance for different racial groups was known to have caused a series of inefficiencies because the system was invariably highly fragmented in line with segregationist policy and significant duplication of effort took place.

In the case of social assistance benefits for children, the prevailing social security before 1994 involved the State Maintenance Grant (SMG). It was introduced in 1947 by the then Department of Social Welfare based on the Child Protection Act of 1913 which was also discriminatory as it provided initially for white child only and then eventually Coloured and Indian children (CASE 2000). It was a means-tested grant accessible mainly to white women (and to a lesser extent Coloured and Indian women) who qualified because they were unable to receive financial support from their partners (i.e. father of child) (Rosa and Mpokotho 2004, Haarmann 1998, Lund 2011). African women were excluded from receiving the grant, as the Bantustan system (supposedly involving access to land-based livelihoods) was seen by the state as subsidising African employment in the urban economy of 'white' South Africa (Makiwane 2010). Clearly, the programme was inadequate in its ability to target and address poverty in a substantial manner for the most vulnerable. In phasing out the SMG with the end of Apartheid, the value of the grant for children decreased considerably under the CSG compared to the SMG. The smaller value of CSG though could target more beneficiaries and consequently address the inequalities present in the SMG.

Against this historical landscape, the new South African constitutional democracy and government inherited a dysfunctional welfare system marked by racial inequality that required and continues to require constant social policy restructuring to address past wrongs whilst addressing current challenges.

4.3 Post-94 Social Welfare

How a country's welfare system evolves depends greatly on the historical conditions of the country including how it became and remains integrated into capitalism and the global economic system at large. In advanced capitalist societies, these are the processes which gave rise to an industrial working class that eventually led to more distributive social reforms (Deveroux 2007). The welfare states in Europe, though under attack for decades now because of neo-liberalism were considered to be the outcome of a class compromise between different forces in society (Patel 2013). In the case of South Africa, though the thesis does not seek to offer an explanation for the widening and deepening of the grant system since 1994, it is clear that the balance of class and racial forces played a significant part in this. However social grants remain contested (and debated) both in the academic literature and in the policy domain.

Scholarly research on grants in South Africa has addressed a range of themes. With regard to the central focus of this thesis, the academic literature has shown that social grants have certain positive impacts in reducing income-measured poverty (Patel 2013, Neves et al. 2009) though the role in overcoming social inequalities is not clearly established. The simultaneous significance of grants, and their inadequacies in tackling poverty, is perhaps most aptly shown by the claim from the National Planning Commission (2011) that 39.5% of South African households are still living below the then unofficial poverty line of R419 per month; furthermore, evidence suggests that poverty is increasing (Stats SA 2013). South Africa also remains one of the most unequal nations in the world with a gini-coefficient (that describes income distribution) of 0.68 in 1993 (Lekezwa 2011). However, by 2008 it had decreased to 0.59 (Leibbrandt et al. 2010, Van der Berg 1997). This is despite, and in part because, of the fact that – in the case of the CSG – over eleven million children receive cash transfers through their caregivers (Patel 2013, DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012), which entails a major social investment on the part of the ANC-led state (McEwen and Woolard 2012). Nonetheless, non-contributory cash grants, as forming part of the government's social assistance programme, have been of some significance in providing much needed protection to those who are extremely vulnerable. In the context, I provide an overview of the social grant system in post-Apartheid South Africa with particular emphasis on the CSG.

The *White Paper for Social Welfare* (WPSW) published in 1996 by the Ministry of Social Development, has been governing social welfare in South Africa for almost two decades now. It arose at the same time as thinking around a new constitution which was to

become based on inclusive, non-racial and non-sexist principles. Considering the deep history of inequality pervasive in the country, the equality clauses within the constitution were exceptional in so far as they allowed for the redress of past disadvantages including seventeen grounds on which discrimination was no longer permissible. These clauses, when embodied in policy and legislation, would have particular importance in ensuring a more expansive and non-racial social assistance programme including in relation to women and children through the child support grant. Thus, this entailed a shift in social welfare policy in now targeting vulnerable people who had been excluded during the pre-1994 welfare and social security systems (Triegaardt 2005). Simultaneously, it entailed moving away from a welfarist approach to a more developmentalist one in the sense that social assistance was not merely cushioning the blow of poverty but also (as part of a broader redistributive thrust) contributing to alleviating poverty and expanding the national economy. It could therefore assist in moving people out of poverty (Republic of South Africa 1997: 48).

In this regard, the WPSW was influenced by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), as introduced by the ANC. Though discussed in the previous chapter, it is important to reiterate key points from the RDP such as: improving living conditions through access to better social services including health care and education, and establishing a social security system and other safety nets to protect the poor, disabled, elderly and vulnerable groups (Wildenboer 2008). The RDP provided a framework for a transformed social welfare programme in South Africa based on the values of social justice, democracy, equity and development (Triegaardt 2005). The previous chapter also noted the ways in which the RDP was, at least in part, abandoned by the ANC and a more neo-liberal macro-economic strategy (starting with GEAR) emerged in the mid-1990s and became subsequently consolidated. With GEAR there was a shift from 'growth through redistribution' to 'redistribution through growth'. This entails a trickle-down theory of economic growth and development. Neo-liberalism has entailed further integrating the national economy into global capitalism rather than addressing directly basic social needs of the population (Midgley 2001). But, unlike in advanced capitalist nations where neo-liberalism entailed a frontal attack on social assistance, the social grant system in South Africa has expanded under neo-liberalism.

Government expenditure on social grants was R16 027 million (2.3% of GDP) in the year 1998 and it increased to R71 161 million (3.3% of GDP) in the year 2009 (National Treasury 2009: 90, van der Berg and Siebrits 2010: 6). This took place because of increases in the monthly value of grants but also because there was a widening in the reach of the social

grants. For example, the eligibility age for old age grants was reduced from 65 to 60 for males whilst the age for the CSG was increased from an initial 7 years to 14 years and now to the 18th birthday. In addition, as of April 2009, at least a quarter of the South African population received some form of state grant (van der Berg and Siebrits 2010:7). As indicated previously, the CSG has over eleven million beneficiaries, making it the largest grant in terms of numbers of beneficiaries (SASSA 2012/13). The 2010/11 budget provided for social assistance payments of R89 368 million; with 38.1% being allocated to social pensions, 34.5% to the CSG, 19.4% to the disability grants and 7.95 to other grants (National Treasury 2010:106). The higher percentage for pensions reflects the higher monthly grant value compared to the CSG. These numbers clearly indicate the growth of the social assistance programme and the efforts made by government towards the alleviation of poverty from 1994. Table 4.2 (below) shows the beneficiaries of social assistance grants from 1997 to 2013. Whilst the growth is extremely commendable for rights- and redistribution-based perspectives, its sustainability fiscally over the long term is worth considering if the government is going to successfully commit to alleviating poverty through cash transfers.

Table 4.2: Beneficiaries of social assistance grants (1997-2013)

| Grant | Number of Beneficiaries | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | 1997 | 2003 | 2009 | 2012/13 |
| Old Age | 1737 682 | 2022 207 | 2 414 183 | 2 873 197 |
| War veterans | 12 047 | 4 594 | 1 649 | 587 |
| Disability | 732 322 | 953 965 | 1 281 556 | 1 164 192 |
| Foster care | 41 865 | 138 763 | 483 687 | 532 159 |
| Care dependency | 2 895 | 58 140 | 107 134 | 120 268 |
| Child support grant ¹ | 362 631 | 2 630 826 | 8 825 824 | 11 341 988 |
| Total | 2 889 442 | 5 808 494 | 13 114 033 | 16 106 110 |

Sources: National Treasury (2001: 2007); South African Social Security Agency (2009); South African Social Security Agency Annual Report (2012/13).

¹ Given that the CSG began in 1998, the 1997 figure relates more to the state maintenance grant.

After 1994, social welfare expanded massively, as Table 4.2 shows, and it became increasingly inclusive of the African population in line with constitutional prerogatives. To date, social assistance provides a safety net for the most vulnerable through the monthly cash transfers, reaching over 16 million people (National Treasury 2013: 81). These include care dependency grants, disability grants, old age grants or pensions and the child support grant. The monthly amounts for all the available grants, as of 2013, are shown in Table 4.3 (below). The South African Social Security Agency was created to administer the entire grant system, all the way from processing applications for the various grants to ensuring the dispersing of the grant funds which are accessed on a monthly basis.

Table 4.3: Monthly social grant values 2012/13

| Rand | 2012/13 |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Old age grant | 1200 |
| Old age grant, over 75s | 1220 |
| War veterans grant | 1220 |
| Disability grant | 1200 |
| Foster care grant | 770 |
| Care dependency grant | 1200 |
| Child support grant | 280 |

Source: National Treasury 2013.

4.3.1 Impact of grants on poverty

This section examines the current academic literature insofar as it tries to come to terms with the effects of the social grant system on poverty reduction in contemporary South Africa, particularly as a basis for supplementation of poor households' income. The literature is not conclusive in this regard, at least with respect to whether or not grants serve merely a short-term goal of reducing poverty or play a more developmental role that enables the poor to break out of the cycle of poverty. This is significant because, twenty years into the new South Africa, there are huge concerns in public policy debate pertaining to the extent to which the country has met its targets with reference to poverty alleviation and inequality reduction. Whilst government grant cash transfers have increased dramatically since the end of Apartheid, the question still remains about the role of social assistance in tackling widespread and pervasive poverty.

Poverty, as indicated earlier, is understood and measured in different ways. While income is a common indicator of poverty levels, it is limited in its ability to take into consideration the many complexities that make poverty multi-dimensional beyond merely level. Claims about social grants and poverty in South Africa must therefore capture the numerous deficiencies and incapacities experienced by a person or house (Sen 1976, World Bank 2000, Bhorat, Woolard and Leibbrandt 2000). In this way, any examination of poverty must be inclusive of the absolute or comparative absence of available resources including housing, water and sanitation, education and health. May (1998: 4) thus defines poverty as “the inability to attain a minimal standard of living, measured in terms of basic consumption or the income required to satisfy” the minimum standard. It has been further noted that, within the South African context, conceptualising and measuring poverty has been made more difficult at times when there is no clear indication of a poverty line (Taylor 2002, Dieden and Gustafsson 2003). Regardless of any official poverty line, research has shown that women, particularly single-headed female households and those located in rural areas, are most prone to poverty (Triegdaart 2005, Dieden and Gustafsson 2003).

Post-transition poverty trend research reveals that the ANC-led government, while increasing social grants payments to a wider grouping of beneficiaries, was unable to bring about a reduction in poverty during the 1990s (Stats SA 2002). Indeed, there was an increase in poverty based on data sets for 1995 and 2000 in which household incomes had dropped in real terms (Van der Berg, Louw and Yu 2008). Other studies conducted in the following few years on poverty indicated that this trend likely continued (Leibbrandt et al. 2006, Meth and Dias 2004). However, some studies speak about a decline in poverty from 2000 with specific reference to the years 2002-2004 which could be attributed to the substantial expansion of the social grant system (Van der Berg et al. 2006). At the same time, there is not necessarily an unambiguous correlation, let alone causal relationship, between social grants and poverty because broader macro-economic conditions in South Africa clearly impinge on changes in levels of poverty even in the presence of an expanding social grant system. Thus, as the previously sought to show, it is important to understand the role of grants as part of broader ANC government strategies and programmes in bringing about growth, development and redistribution (Van der Berg and Siebrits 2010). Social grants, and their relevance to poverty, cannot be understood independent of broader economic restructuring in post-Apartheid South Africa.

With regard to provincial variations in rates of poverty, a government study in the year 2008 (Stats SA 2008) reveals considerable unevenness in the distribution of poverty: the highest ranking is the Eastern Cape (in which my research site is located), with 71% followed by the Free State with 63% and North West with 62%. On the other end of the scale, Gauteng had a figure of 17% and the Western Cape had 28% of its population recorded living in poverty. It is also the case that poverty is marked by significant racial inequalities. An early study thus showed that poverty is concentrated mostly among black Africans at 61%, with 38.5% of Coloureds being poor, 5% amongst Indians and 1% amongst whites (Gutura 2000). The same study noted that three of every five children live in poor households and are subject to problematic living conditions (Gutura 2000).

Evidence shows that poor households in receipt of some form of grant depend significantly on grant income as they often have no regular and stable formal employment considering the high levels of unemployment in South Africa (Leibbrandt et al. 2010). A study in 2008 (Van Der Berg and Siebrits 2010) divided South African households into ten wealth categories ranging from the lowest earning households to the highest earning households and demonstrated the utmost reliance of the lower earning households on social grants. More specifically, the income shares of social grants for the four poorest categories of households ranged from 48.3% to 72.7% of total household earnings (van der berg and Siebrits 2010:20). It was demonstrated also that the child grant, old age grant and disability grant together led to wealth redistribution within the country in that the share of the total national income amongst the poorest households increased due to their access to social grants (though this share remained limited). In addition research on the direct effect of social grants on households who obtained grants, as compared to a situation where they did not receive any form of grant, suggests that social grants dramatically raised the incomes of exceptionally poor and vulnerable households (Woolard 2003, Armstrong and Burger 2009, Lekezwa 2008).

Table 4.4 (below) encapsulates the research analysis conducted from Statistics South Africa's *Income and Expenditure Survey 2005* by Armstrong and Burger (2009). Three experimental poverty lines were used by Statistics South Africa as indicated in the table: R2 532, R3 864 and R 7 116 as per annual per capita incomes. The results show that, at the poverty line of R2 532, the headcount ratio excluding grant income was 45.5% and when the grant income was included it reduced to 31.6%, which represents a change of 13.9% points. Where the poverty line was taken to be R3 864, the headcount ratio without grant income was

55.0% which reduced to 47.3% when social grants' income was included. Finally, when the poverty line was pegged at R7 116, the head count ratio was 67.6% and with social grants income it reduced to 65.3%. Thus, this evidence clearly shows that, where social grants are aimed at the most vulnerable and poorest households, the impact they have is more pronounced as compared to those households with a higher income. Overall, then, it becomes clear the effects of social grants on households are considerable.

Table 4.4: Effects of social grants on poverty

| Poverty rate (at annual poverty lines) | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | R2 532 | R3 864 | R7 116 |
| Headcount ratio excluding grant income | 45.5 | 55.0 | 67.6 |
| Headcount ratio inclusive of grant income | 31.6 | 47.3 | 65.3 |
| Absolute change | 13.9 | 7.7 | 2.3 |
| Percentage change | 30.5 | 14.0 | 3.4 |

Source: Armstrong and Burger (2009: 14).

Cash transfers targeted at the most vulnerable are necessary for the reduction of poverty and do seemingly reduce poverty. But their potential effect is mediated at household level by the ways in which the grant income is used by recipients and their households. It is for this reason that, in my study of CSGs in Riebeeck East, I bring to the fore the importance of household expenditure and decisions within households about grant expenditure. The grant system is meant to contribute to the emergence of more sustainable livelihoods through channelling the grant income in productive ways. Thus, recipients are expected to invest in income-generating activities (such as informal trading), the acquisition of assets or longer-term investments such as education, besides purchasing more everyday basic commodities for consumption (Devereux 2002, van der Berg and Siebrits 2010). Insofar as grant money is not used for these purposes, and may be squandered or wasted, then the grant system's contribution to poverty reduction would be subject to questioning. It can be difficult to ascertain usage of grant money when other sources of household income exist and where complex relations and networks govern households and decision making on the grant received.

But studies conducted on spending patterns of grant recipients indicate that most recipients spend a large proportion of grant money on food (Du Toit and Neves 2009, De

Koker, De Waal and Voster 2006). Other research reveals that households who receive grants spend most of their grant money on basics including food, fuel, education, housing and other household necessities (Samson et al. 2004). Claims exist (more in the public domain than in the scholarly literature) that the grants are leading to a dependency syndrome amongst recipients and discouraging work and labour market participation (Neves et al. 2009). In other words, grant recipients conceive themselves as victims who simply wish to maintain reliance on state largesse. This portrayal of grant recipients (as without agency) seems dubious given the crucial avenues, as noted above, along which recipients spend their grant money.

4.4 Child Support Grants

The CSG is a non-conditional means-tested cash transfer targeted at children under the age of 18 who reside in poor households. It was introduced in April 1998 to replace the state maintenance grant and is paid to caregivers of children (which are inclusive of parents but not limited to parents only). Its purpose is to follow the child who lives in poverty and provide them with support (Treigdaart 2005). ‘Following the child’ implies that a child’s household structure or current parent or caregiver, and changes to these, was not meant to be an obstacle in the child accessing the grant on an uninterrupted fashion. Prior to 1998, non-income and low income earners who were also single parents were entitled to the SMG (Udjo 2009).

The Taylor Commission (2002) notes that, while the SMG was initially racially biased towards whites only, even after the equalisation of the grant system there was still a low intake particularly from rural black communities. In fact, the SMG was not particularly inclusive in that it never properly catered for Africans particularly those who lived in the Bantustans (Lund 2011, Makiwane 2010). It was developed by the pre-1994 governments to assist white, Coloured and Indian families who were poor and it provided a parent and child allowance of R410 and R135 per month respectively (Goldblatt 2005, Zain 2000). Considering the value of the monthly SMG, it would be very difficult for any new child grant under post-Apartheid conditions to fully incorporate poor African households at the same value, as this would put enormous strain on the national budget despite the ANC government’s commitment to expanding the grant system.

In 1996, the Lund Committee, which was appointed to investigate the fiscal sustainability of the SMG as well as the possible systems and mechanisms that could be undertaken to cater for poor families and give them support, recommended that it be phased

out and replaced by the CSG (Udjo 2009, Lund 2008). This led to a reduction of the grant money (which started off at R100 per month) for caregivers of children under seven years of age. In this respect, one of the key purposes of the CSG was targeting impoverished young children on a broad and inclusive basis as a poverty alleviation strategy and not necessarily as a poverty prevention method (Triegaardt 2005). It was believed that reducing the value of the monthly child grant would lead to an increase in grant beneficiaries as well as ensure fiscal sustainability. Not only was the grant size reduced greatly, but many women and single parents lost out on an opportunity of support from the state, as children over the age of seven years would not be catered for under the new system.

This position by the government quite possibly was influenced by its macro-economic policies underpinned increasingly by neo-liberalism, as there was pressure upon the ANC to limit ‘unproductive’ spending. Furthermore, the new system emerged out of a country deeply divided along racial fault-lines and therefore its non-racial inclusiveness was a move towards undercutting racialised social equalities – though it should be noted that many deserving Coloured and white women, who themselves were considered as previously disadvantaged individuals in terms of government discourse, bore the consequences of the changes (Voster and Rossouw 1997). Some authors, though admitted the non-racial importance of this, nevertheless express concern about the ways in which this disadvantaged women (irrespective of ‘race’) caring for children, and often in the absence of husbands or partners (Goldblatt 2005). In addition, with the removal of the SMG, its previous recipients no longer had access to developmental programmes attached to the SMG. After the introduction of the CSG, the SMG was phased out over a three-year period ending in April 2001 (Triegdaart 2005).

Upon inception of the CSG, recipients were expected to pass a means-test in order to be eligible for grant uptake. This means-test was based on household income, initially R800 per month and below for families in rural areas and R1 100 for families in urban areas (McEwan, Kannemeyer and Woolard 2009). In addition, recipients had to produce tangible proof to verify the household income received (Delaney et al. 2008). A further conditionality was placed on caregivers who were not biological parents of the children. They had to provide evidence indicating the processes undertaken in trying to secure funds from the respective biological parents and the outcome thereof (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012). Undoubtedly, such stringent requirements (particularly for the most poor and vulnerable who possibly had limited education qualifications as well as finances for ensuring eligibility) was

extremely cumbersome and affected uptake of grants in the first year. In 1999, the means-test was adjusted in order to facilitate an increase in the number of recipients (Delaney et al. 2008).

The CSG intake administrative process has gone through massive changes and improvements since its inception in 1998. At first, the administrative systems in place were not fully functional and efficient leading to a slow uptake of the grant (Lund 2011, Rosa and Mpokotho 2004). Some of the barriers that were experienced and that are still experienced (though less so) were delays by caregivers in acquiring their own identity documents and the registration of a child's birth (Makiwane 2010). These identity documents are needed by SASSA upon application for a grant. Access to the CSG is also sometimes linked to a household's capacity to receive sufficient knowledge of the CSG from various sources including SASSA (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012). In April 2003 the grant was extended to include children under 14 years of age in. And eligibility, in terms of the means-test, was changed from requiring proof of overall household income to requiring proof of earnings of and from the relevant caregiver (and, if relevant, spouse).

From the year 1999 to 2008, the monetary value of the means-test remained unchanged and this placed further obstacles in the uptake rate (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2008), as the rate of inflation was not given due consideration to the detriment of possible recipients. The Department of Social Development (DSD) eventually commissioned a study to advise on these matters, leading to the change of the means-test threshold to become ten times the value of the grant (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2008). In 2010, the CSG amount was pegged at R210 per month while income thresholds were valued at R1 000 for rural households and R800 for urban households (Delaney et. al 2008, DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2008: 2; McEwan et al. 2009). To date, the grant amount is valued at just over R300 per month and the annual threshold for single caregivers is pegged at R33 600 per year and R67 000 per year where there is a married couple (SASSA 2013). All children up to the age of eighteen, if they meet the other eligibility requirements, are entitled to a grant. In part because of this increase in age eligibility, there has been a notable increase in the beneficiaries of child support grants from 5.7 million in 2004/05 to about 11.4 million in 2012/13 (National Treasury 2013: 84).

In order to encourage caregivers to be responsible in caring for their children with respect to for instance expenditure, and to assist in coming out of the poverty trap, certain developmental requirements were placed on recipients. Initially, these included becoming

involved in ‘developmental activities’ as organised by provincial governments as well as ensuring immunisation of children (Delaney et al. 2008). However, these conditions proved to be onerous because the most vulnerable and poor households were normally in rural or remote areas with limited access to health centres (for purposes of immunisation) and, further, the existence of development activities by established by local municipalities were few and far between in these rural spaces. These conditionalities have since been removed and less stringent requirements now prevail that are not meant to act as barriers. It is still envisaged that developmental initiatives should be made more readily available locally, not as eligibility requirements but as the basis for facilitating greater opportunities to escape the poverty trap through self-sufficiency.

Some of the key objectives of the CSG have been described to include the following: supplementing costs of raising children, providing a degree of equity in taxation, relieving child poverty, enabling parents to care for children independently of the labour market, supporting low income wages, and decreasing demands for minimum wage increases while also increasing the willingness of caregivers to find employment and supporting those who are unemployed (Triegaardt 2005: 252). Officially, however, the CSG has had four immediate objectives, which are: (i) ensure greater access for poor children to an integrated and sustainable security system in the country; (ii) provide a child grant on an equitable basis to those in need regardless of cultural or racial background, (iii) prevent children from entering into statutory care where it can be avoided, and (iv) keeping children out of detention centres and off the streets (Lloyd 2000:50).

Despite problems with accessing the CSG, and the limited value of the monthly grant, the scholarly literature on the CSG claims that the grant does make a notable contribution to these objectives. In this respect, it is argued that the grant has been well targeted in focusing on children most in need, particularly in rural areas (former homelands) which had led for example to improvements in child nutrition and school attendance (Leibbrandt et al. 2010, Samson et al. 2004). It was indeed shown that poorer households are more likely to try to access (and to receive) the grant possibly because of the particularly important role it plays in forming the basis for household income. Four years into the CSG system, a study was conducted in rural KwaZulu-Natal of over 8 000 households, of which an improvement of 8.1 percentage points was documented for children enrolling in schools as compared to those from households who did not receive the grant (Case et al. 2005). Other studies continue to confirm this, and speak more broadly about the importance of the CSG with respect to early

childhood development around educational outcomes, nutrition and health (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012). Thus, there have been important developmental impacts noticed with regard to health care and nutrition (Case, Hosegood and Lund 2005) as well as higher school enrolment (Hall 2011).

A major criticism of the CSG relates to its low monthly value, though I have indicated the rationale behind this from the perspective of the ANC government. Despite the laudable intentions of the government, and the positive claims regarding effectiveness as made in the academic literature, there are many nagging doubts about the grant's capacity to address poverty and its inadequacy in even meeting the basic needs of the child (Manicom 2003, Guthrie 2002, Goldblatt 2005, Rosa and Mpokotho 2004). Further, and ironically, the grant is expected to allow households of the grant child to access (in fact, purchase) social services that would normally be provided for by the state (such as school fees, water and electricity) at least at heavily subsidised rates for the poor. And even before these basic services, the caregiver must – first and foremost – presumably consider the nutritional wellbeing of the child such that accessing services likely place a huge strain on an already-compromised household income basket.

According to Hall and Wright (2010), with respect to this question of the effects of the CSG on food needs, there has been a marked reduction in the headcount poverty rates for children and in child hunger. However, again to reiterate, given that the monthly value of the CSG is small (even when compared to other grants), the impact on poverty rates can only be proportional to the set amount received. Though limited, the CGS system entails a major social investment on the part of the ANC state (McEwen and Woolard 2012) and, from a neo-liberal perspective, an unproductive one. But the child support grant (like the grant system broadly) increases the size of the home market by enhancing spending power and stimulates the national economy because it is based on redistributive principles which puts money in the hands of the power who are most likely to purchase basic commodities produced within the local economy (Neves et. al 2009). The Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Project Officer, Josse Koch, notes the role that the grants have on the economy, stating that “[f]or every rand you pay out in social grants, you gain three rands in the local economy” (quoted in Palitza 2010:2).

The CSG's intended role in overall human development for children (such as nutrition, education and health) from poor households is fundamental to the acknowledgment of a multi-dimensional nature of poverty which reduces poverty simply to income

deficiencies (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012). Indeed, the extension of the age limit from 7 to 18 years, coupled with modifications to the income threshold to factor in inflation and improve equity in the CSG system, signifies the ANC government's continuous commitment to the alleviation of poverty and redistribution of welfare resources within the country. Consequently, this has reduced the historical legacy of inequality – including along gender lines, as the most caregivers (and recipients of the CSG) are in fact women, many of whom care for the grant child or children independently of the father of the child or children. This may simply reinforce the stereotyped roles of women as care-givers and nurturers but, at the same time, it does give them capacity which they would not otherwise have, particularly when the father of the child refuses to take responsibility. The grant allows these women, no matter how inadequately, to manage their vulnerability context and deal with shocks or stresses that they may face for instance when a child becomes sick and needs medical treatment.

Whilst there have been positive impacts of the CSG, this has not prevented widespread beliefs and opinions particularly in the public sphere about grants being abused by recipients or teenage girls becoming pregnant in order to access the grant. While grant money may not always be spent in the most productive ways, there is no evidence to suggest that a grant valued at less than R 4,000 per year would encourage pregnancy. With regard to teenage pregnancies, a recent study conducted by Makiwane and Udjo (2010) shows that there was an increase in teenage pregnancies prior to the initial inception of the CSG but this does not entail the existence of a causal relationship. It may be possible though that (mothers of) unplanned pregnancies take consolation in the presence of a buffer to support them and their unplanned child – in this sense, the CSG becomes a condition of existence and not a casual affect. If anything, instead of creating dependency and encouraging recipients to leave work, the existing evidence suggests that grant uptake often leads to recipients seeking to pursue income-generating activities if not formal employment (Surrender et al. 2010, Posel et al. 2006, Ardington et al. 2007).

4.5 Conclusion

Despite neo-liberal restructuring in post-Apartheid South Africa, the government has formulated and consistently pursued developmental social welfare as an ostensibly progressive concept underpinning social assistance and the grant system, including the CSG (Goldbatt 2005). The effectiveness of the grants in addressing poverty has been the subject of

considerable debate within the academic literature and, though there are no definitive conclusions, it seems clear that the grants do have an ameliorating effect. This chapter therefore has shown that evidence does exist that social grants play a role in subsidising the income of the most vulnerable households in South African society and, perhaps at times, they are the only source of household income. It seems then that the receipt of any of the social grants is correlated in some way with a multiplication of benefits for the beneficiaries, acting as a kind of social protection measure to at least cope with unexpected shocks albeit not facilitating any long-term reduction of poverty at household level.

Chapter Five: Child Support Grants in Riebeek East

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study of CSG recipients in Riebeek East, particularly pertaining to their pursuit of livelihood construction. In doing so, the chapter is divided into three main sections. First of all, I provide a short description of Riebeek East as well as a detailed profile of the CSG caregivers studied for this thesis. Secondly, I examine the livelihoods of the caregivers by focusing on income and expenditure, including the CSG and other possible sources of household, and the ways in which the grant is used for purposes of household consumption. Thirdly, I offer an overall understanding of the significance of the child support grant for poverty reduction amongst the caregivers in Riebeek East. Though the results may be mixed, it is clear that the CSG does not play a genuine poverty reduction role for the CSG recipients and that chronic poverty prevails.

5.2 Riebeek East and Grant Caregiver Profiles

Originally formed in the 1800s in the so-called frontier territory in the conflict between colonising white settlers moving in from the west and local Xhosa-speaking people situated to the east, Riebeek East is situated 45 kilometres northwest of Grahamstown in the Makana Municipality district of the Eastern Cape. It is surrounded by private game farms and commercial farms engaged in mainly livestock (cattle and sheep). Despite being a small town with a population of a couple of thousand people, Riebeek East remains classified as agricultural land (though township residents do not have access to land for farming purposes). There is no industry or commercial enterprises of any significance and most full-time employment – which is exceedingly limited – is either with government institutions (such as the municipality, school and police) or as gardeners or domestic workers with private households. There is a pre-school of young children, a school that offers primary education and a small clinic.

The local township consists of approximately 80 households. Residents live primarily in small state-built brick houses, there are a few spaza shops and taverns; but residents must travel to Grahamstown even for the most basic of food commodities. Most township residents

try to engage in informal work activities and casual labour as a source of income. Any visitor, in seeing and experiencing Riebeek East for the first time, would likely conclude that social grants play a significant role in the lives of local residents. In fact, it is the kind of space which grants seek to target given the precariousness and vulnerability of livelihoods there. In this regard, because there are no banks or even an ATM in Riebeek, those residents who receive any form of social grant must, at significant expense, travel by kombi to Grahamstown monthly to receive their grant money.

In seeking to address the main and subsidiary thesis objectives, the study in Riebeek East involved engaging with local child support grant-holders – 43 care-givers were included in the fieldwork and, based on their experiences, I sought to understand the relationship between child support grants and levels of poverty amongst child-grant recipients living in Riebeek East. Individual details of each grant care-giver are provided in Table 5.1 (below), including age, marital status, employment status, number of grant children cared for and whether the caregiver is the biological mother or not (both in the same column) and identity of the head of the household in which the caregiver resides (which might provide an indication of intra-household relationships and decision-making responsibilities around the child grant in a particular household). It should be emphasised at the start that all 43 grant-holders are Africans (or in some case Coloureds), though I did not seek to distinguish between Africans and Coloureds. Additionally, all recipients are female. This is consistent with the overall picture of child support grant care givers in South Africa as a whole, in that the vast majority of grant holders nationally are African females (CASE 2008, Leibrandt et al. 2010). There is a small white community in Riebeek East (about thirty families), living within the former white residential area, and according to my understanding no white households receive child support grants (in fact, there are few children in these households). Riebeek East then exemplifies the ongoing material inequalities which exist in post-Apartheid South Africa along racial lines.

Table 5.1: Profile of Study Participants

| Name | Age | Marital Status | Full time employment/ part time employment unemployed | Biological mother/ non-biological mother (No. of children) | Head of Household |
|-------------|------------|-----------------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| Thulisa | 43 | Widowed | Full time employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological mother |
| Yanda | 27 | Married | Full time employment | Biological mother (3) | Biological father |
| Emeka | 48 | Married | Full time employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological father |
| Nomfundo | 27 | Married | Full time employment | Biological mother (3) | Biological father |
| Doreen | 29 | Single | unemployed | Biological mother(2) | Biological mother |
| Fundiswa | 35 | Single | unemployed | Biological mother (2) | Boyfriend |
| Nokuzola | 39 | Married | Full time employment | Biological mother (2) | Biological father |
| Nandipha | 23 | Single | unemployed | Biological mother (3) | Biological mother |
| Luyanda | 24 | Single | unemployed | Biological mother (1) | Grandfather |
| Gomotso | 22 | Married | unemployed | Biological mother (2) | Grandfather |
| Mandisa | 43 | Married | unemployed | Biological mother (1) | Biological father |
| Noluthando | 36 | single | unemployed | Biological mother (2) | Grandmother |
| Thumeka | 24 | single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological uncle |
| Florence | 80 | Married | Unemployed (pensioner) | Biological grandmother (2) | Biological grandfather |
| Mavis | 36 | single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (2) | Boyfriend |
| Florence | 37 | Widowed | Temporary employment | Biological mother (3) | Biological mother |
| Evelina | 55 | Married | Temporary employment | Biological mother (3) | Biological father |
| Nomfundo | 37 | single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Boyfriend |
| Nomsa | 57 | Widowed | unemployed | Biological grandmother (2) | Biological grandmother |
| Nobinge | 42 | single | unemployed | Biological mother (1) | Biological uncle |
| Nobelungu | 24 | single | unemployed | Biological mother (1) | Biological mother |
| Lihle | 39 | Married | Temporary employment | Biological mother (2) | Biological father |
| Nomalungisa | 30 | Single | Unemployed | Biological mother (2) | Biological grandfather |
| Linda | 43 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological grandfather |

| | | | | | |
|------------|----|---------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Zukiswa | 34 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological mother |
| Nowase | 57 | Married | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological father |
| Nonqaba | 65 | Widowed | Unemployed (pensioner) | Biological grandmother (1) | Biological grandmother |
| Belinda | 19 | Single | Unemployed (student) | Biological mother (1) | Biological grandmother |
| Nozuko | 30 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (2) | Biological mother |
| Monica | 34 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological mother |
| Thandiwe | 29 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological grandparents |
| Andiswa | 26 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological mother |
| Nonzwakazi | 24 | Single | Unemployed | Biological mother (1) | Biological mother |
| Linda | 43 | Married | Full time employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological mother |
| Nobuzwe | 40 | Widowed | Unemployed | Biological mother (3) | Biological mother |
| Joyce | 50 | Married | Temporary employment | Biological mother (2) | Biological father |
| Sera | 52 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological mother |
| Stella | 45 | Married | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological father |
| MaMtshwe | 83 | Widowed | Unemployed (pensioner) | Biological grandmother (1) | Biological grandmother |
| Jennifer | 25 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (1) | Biological mother |
| Shanice | 47 | Married | Temporary employment | Biological mother (2) | Biological father |
| Thembakazi | 25 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological aunt (2) | Biological uncle |
| Thandeka | 43 | Single | Temporary employment | Biological mother (2) | Biological father |

All the recipients were above the age of 18, with the youngest being 19 and the oldest 83 years of age (Figure 5.1). The age grouping with the highest number of mothers (19%) was the 21 to 25 grouping. This was followed by each of the following age categories (all

with 16%): 26 to 30 years, 36 to 40 years, 41 to 45 years and over 50 years. The over-50 category surprisingly had a large number of caregivers, which would be inclusive of grandparents who are responsible for their grandchildren where the child’s mothers are absent or have since passed away. But the evidence shows that women of all age groupings are caregivers and therefore reliant on the CSG for the survival of their children and possibly the entire household.

Figure 5.1: Age of Respondents

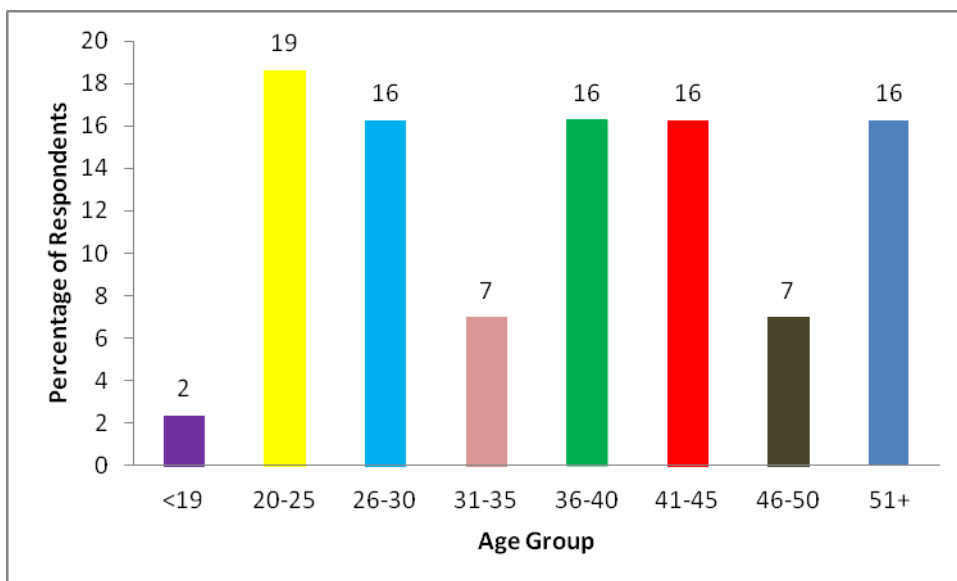
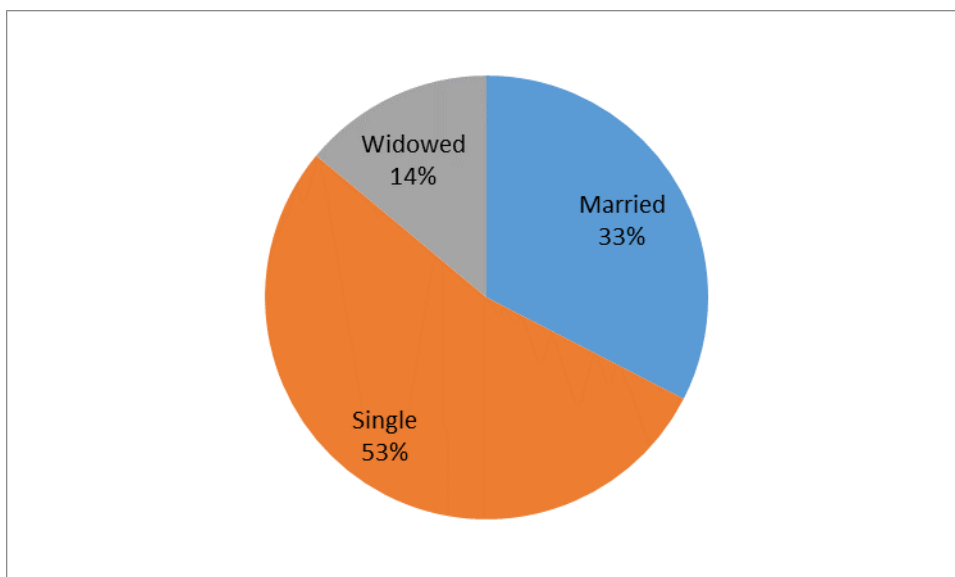


Figure 5.2 below shows the marital status of respondents that participated in this study. A large number of the respondents were married mothers (33%). This proved to be beneficial for them because the recipients had someone else (the father) to help with child rearing as well as possibly providing additional household income beyond the grant. Unfortunately, 14% of the respondents were widowed and there is some evidence that the AIDS pandemic was responsible for the deaths of some of the husbands/fathers. Most of the women, however, were single (53%) with the father often disclaiming any responsibility for the upkeep of the child or children. This of course is reflective of the conditions in a patriarchal society where women, particularly single mothers, bear the brunt or burden of child rearing in what may be called ‘broken families’. It seems though that, at least in Riebeek East, the single-mother headed household has become the norm albeit not necessarily the ideal norm. For these mothers, the CSG is particularly important in potentially assisting their plight and navigating the difficult socio-economic circumstances in which they

find themselves. This situation also speaks to the gendered nature of poverty while additionally highlighting the absence of alternative income streams for female caregivers in communities such as Riebeek East which are marked by underdevelopment and chronic poverty. As well, it may reflect the problematic character of the decision made by the ANC-led government in phasing out the SMG and introducing the new and more inclusive CSG. This seemed to focus on prioritising the non-racial dimension of the child grant, by ensuring that poor African households would be able to access the grant. But it failed to address the more gendered element, namely, that women (as traditional care-givers) would suffer the consequences of the vastly reduced monthly grant amount as compared to the SMG.

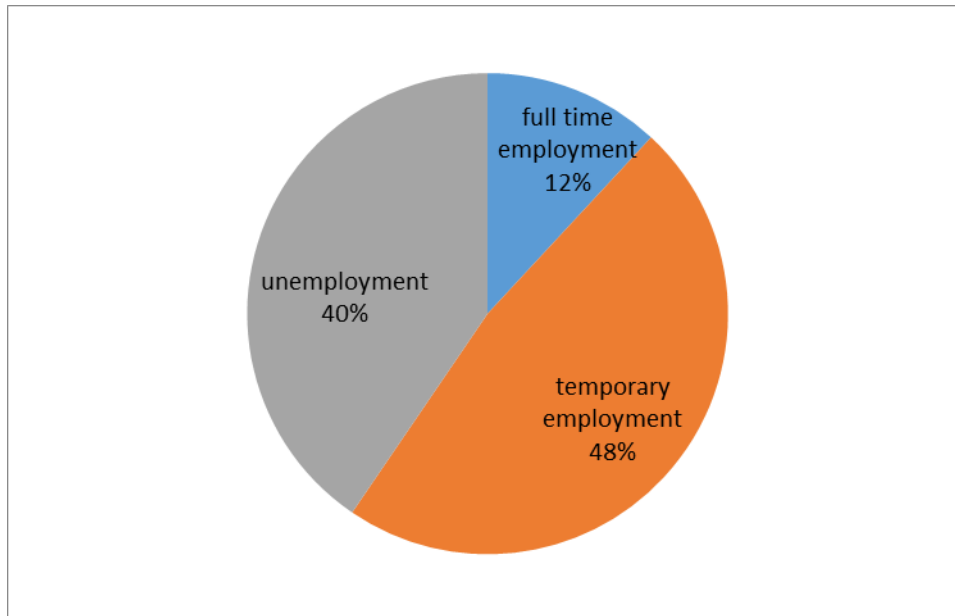
Figure 5.2: Marital status of respondents



The employment status of the caregivers in Riebeek East (Figure 5.3) is reflective of the nature of the local economy. Nearly half (48%) indicated that they obtain only temporary employment (such as community work programmes initiated by the state) throughout any particular calendar year such that they do not have a guaranteed source of income to supplement the CSG. Any additional income generated is erratic and subject to significant fluctuation over time hence it does not give these mothers a sense of financial security. Additionally, 40% spoke about being unemployed without even temporary employment, which clearly places considerable strain on them in terms of pursuing livelihoods. Unless these women live with others who are gainfully employed (either temporarily or on a more permanent basis), then they rely exclusively on the child grant or grants. It could be argued

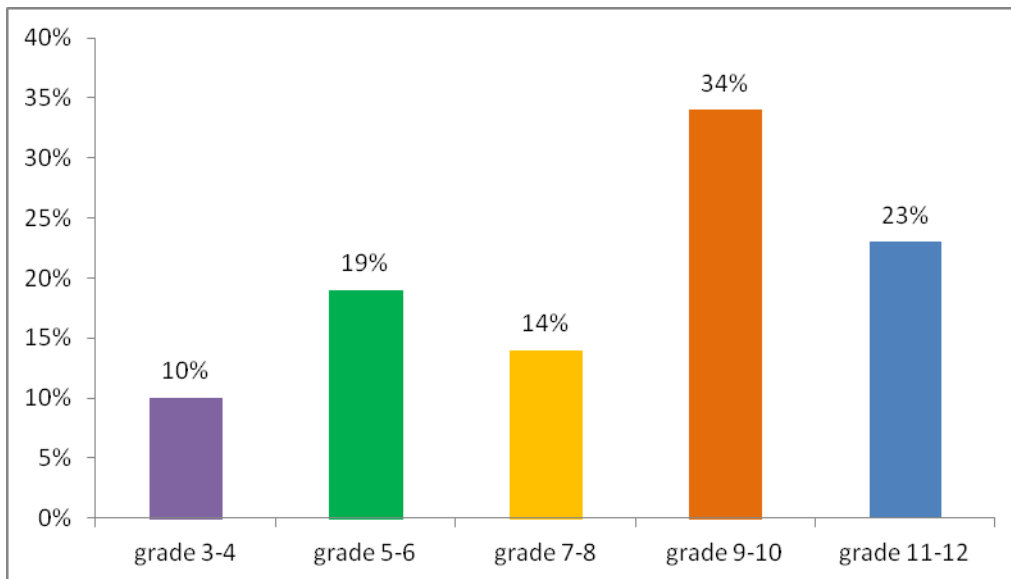
that in fact unemployment amongst these caregivers stands at 88% (inclusive of those with only casual employment), even for those who may be discouraged work seekers. Full-time employment is extremely low at 12%. Again, these figures highlight the sheer significance of the CSG for livelihoods amongst care-givers. Without any such grant, particularly for single-mother household heads, the effects could be catastrophic.

Figure 5.3: Employment status of respondents



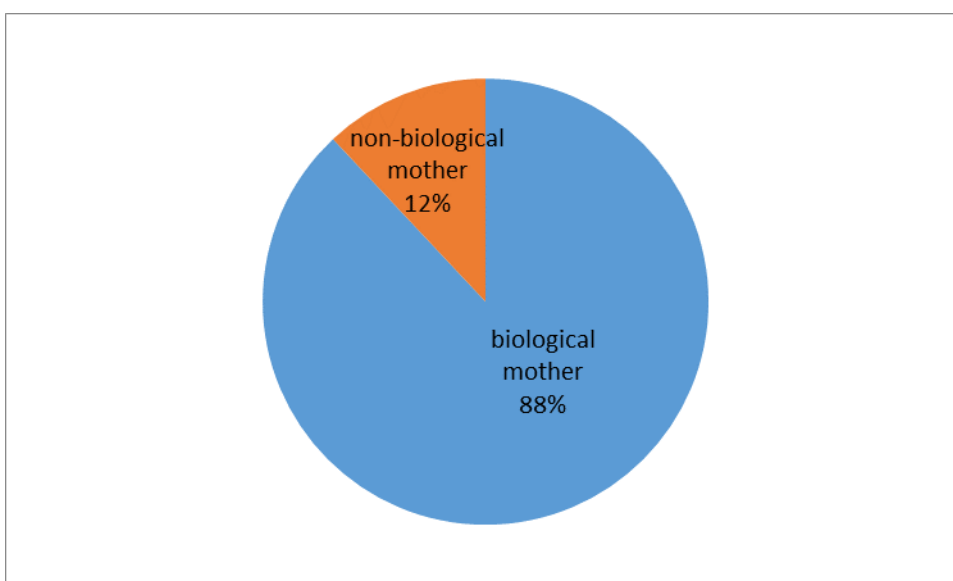
Educational attainment amongst the Riebeek East caregivers is exceedingly limited (see Figure 5.4). None of the mothers have educational qualifications of any significance beyond matriculation. In fact, only 23% of the respondents achieved Grade 11 or matriculated with Grade 12, though 34% passed either grade 9 or 10. Nearly half of the caregivers (43%) reached only Grade 8 or less. Given their low levels of education and the structural unemployment existing nationally, these women are in large part marginalised from the formal economy and labour market except as unskilled labourers and, even in this case, steady work in Riebeek East is difficult to access.

Figure 5.4: Educational Qualifications of Recipients



One of the exceptional attributes of the CSG is the fact that it can be, and is, given to caregivers of children below the age of 18 years who may not be biological parents of the child receiving the grant, but possibly members of the extended family who may have been left with caring for a particular child. It is not unusual for a child or children to be left without biological parents because of the AIDS pandemic, particularly given the South African government's failure to make treatment available in the early years of post-Apartheid society under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki.

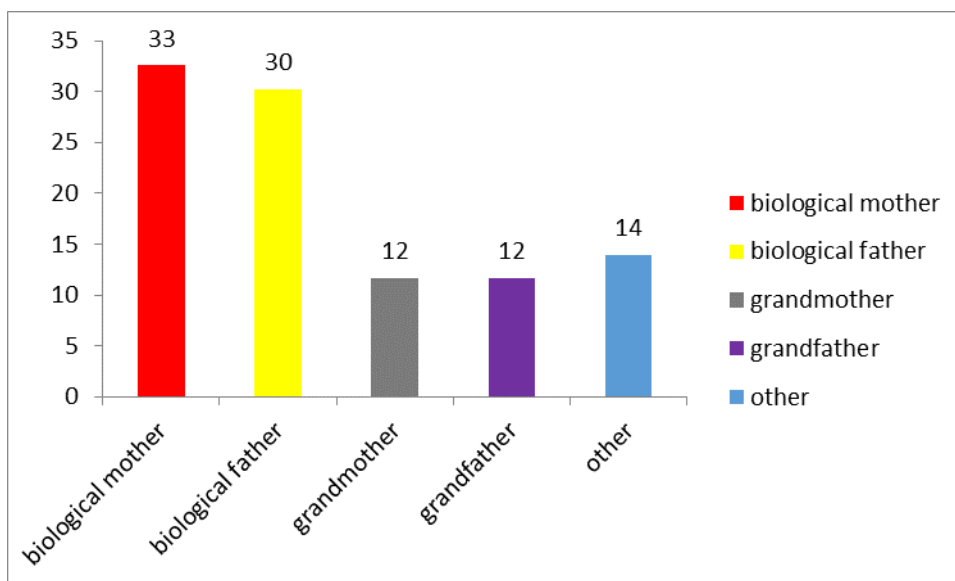
Figure 5.5: Parental status of caregiver to child on CSG



In spite of this, Figure 5.5 (above) shows that (in this study) 88% of respondents were the biological mothers of the children under their care. The other 12% was mostly grandmothers, and this was for various reasons such as absenteeism or parents being out of Riebeek East seeking formal employment elsewhere.

Figure 5.6 below shows different categories of heads of households in which the care givers reside, and emphasises the relationship of the head to the child for whom the CSG is granted. This information is important in order to explore relationships within households, and variations in intra-household relationships across households, with particular emphasis on household decision-making, grant expenditure and livelihood activities amongst Riebeek East grant households. In doing so, it speaks quite directly to one of the key subsidiary objectives of the thesis. The study found that 33% of the respondents, all of whom were the biological mothers of children receiving the CSG, were heads of households – which corresponds with the 33% who likewise are single mothers (as seen in Figure 5.2 above). Further, 30% of the households had the biological fathers of the children as household heads.

Figure 5.6: Head of household in relation to child on CSG



Grandparents proved to be quite central in Riebeek East as not only direct caregivers (as noted in Figure 5.5) but also as household heads despite their own children being the recipient of the grant or grants for their grandchildren. In other words, many of the Riebeek East biological mothers as recipients lived with their own parents such that – for 24% of the sample – the head of household was either a grandmother or a grandfather. The ‘other’

category in Figure 5.6 represents those households where for instance boyfriends or uncles resided with the caregiver and effectively were the head of household. For those caregivers who lived with others, and were not themselves the household head, this would invariably and quite explicitly raise questions around responsibility for the usage of the CSG money for household expenditure and consumption purposes.

Figure 5.7 (below) shows the number of people per household amongst the sample, such that this provides further details about the structure and composition of the households in which the Riebeek East caregivers are residing. The sizes of the households vary considerably from two to ten. Over half of the households (53%) have at least six members. Of course, not all household members are living from the child grant or grants received because, in a number of cases, there are other sources of household income including that generated by members other than the grant mother. The composition of these Riebeek East households, the forms of income earned and the very number of household members will all in some way – at least potentially – have a bearing on the allocation of grant money to different household expenditures.

Figure 5.7: Number of People per Household

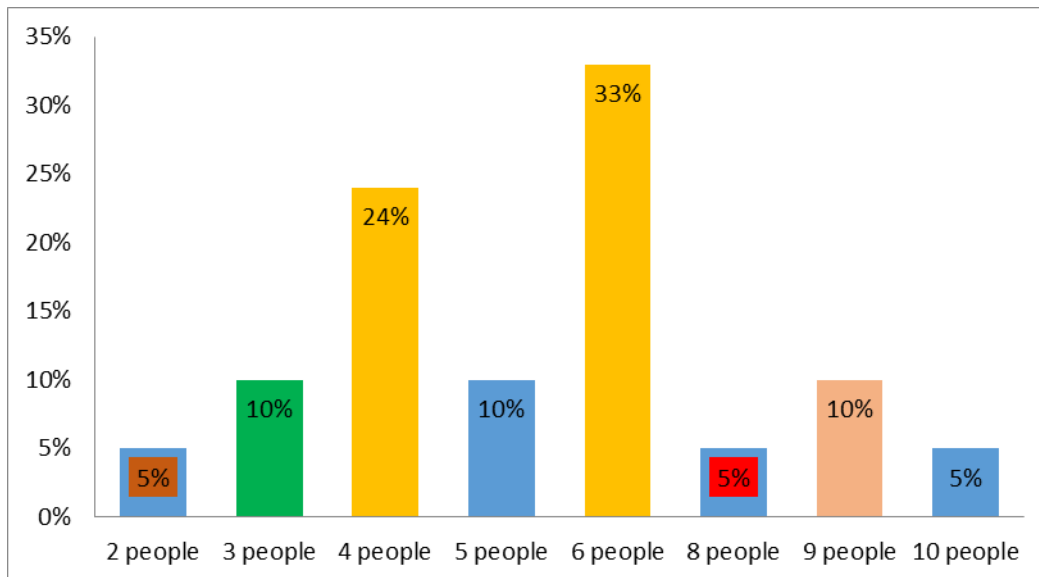
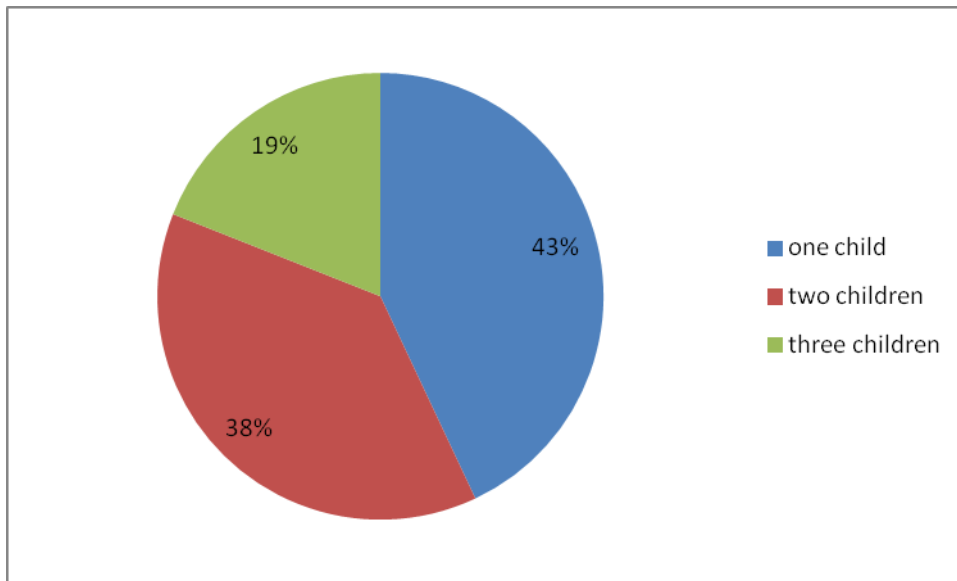


Figure 5.8 below shows the number of children in the respondents' households that are receiving a CSG, or at least the children who fall under the caregiver who participated in the survey. Overall, 19% of the households had three children receiving a CSG which, at the time of the study, was valued at R290 per child. Nearly half of the households (43%) though

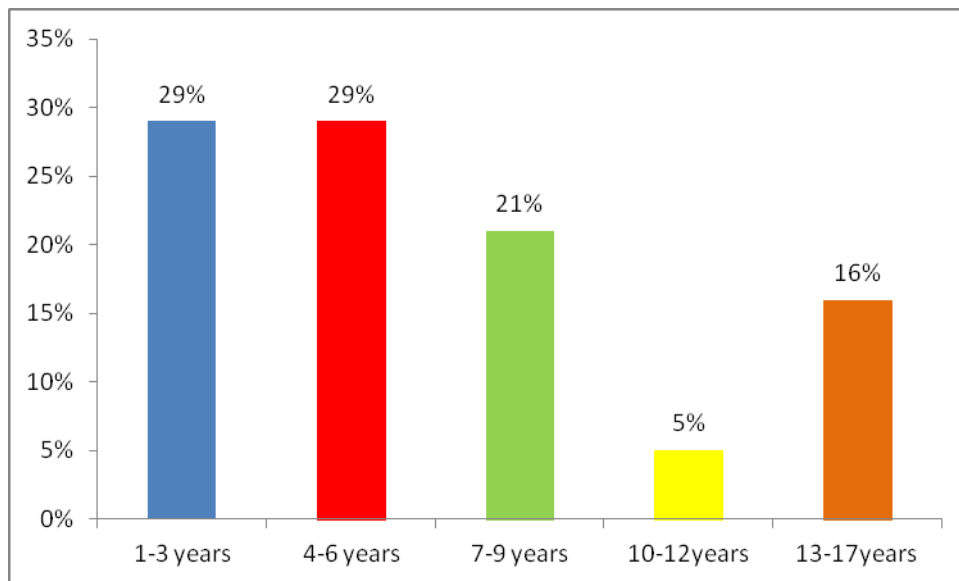
only had one child receiving a CSG while 38% of households had two children receiving the CSG. Thus, the grant money received by households ranged from R290 per month to R870 per month. Later I discuss expenditure of the grant money and note that there are certain expenses (notably monthly transport in collecting the grant money in Grahamstown) which effectively lessens the value of the grant received.

Figure 5.8: Number of Children receiving CSG in Household



Finally, in Figure 5.9 (below) I indicate the age of the children receiving grants in the surveyed Riebeek East households. Currently, the CSG is applicable to children up to and including the age of eighteen if the caregivers meet the minimal threshold required. Amongst the Riebeek East caregivers' households, most of the children (58%) are six years and younger, but a significant number (16%) are teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17. This is significant because the threshold to increase the grant to children to 18 years of age was only recently increased from January 2012 (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012). The 10 to 12 years age grouping had the least recipients with only 5% while the 7 to 9 years age grouping had 21%. The age of the children is of some significance in that the kinds of expenditure required in caring for the grant children will vary to some extent with age.

Figure 5.9: Age of Children receiving grants in households



5.3 Household Income and Expenditure

In the preceding section I have sought to provide a comprehensive overview of the caregivers of CSG children in Riebeeck East along with their households. Based on the evidence set out so far, it seems clear that poverty is likely endemic amongst the child support grant households and that household-based livelihoods are marked by perennial shocks, stresses and crises. In this section I pursue this matter further by examining the CSG as a source of income and other sources of household income, as well as grant expenditures and household decisions around this expenditure.

As noted earlier in the thesis, the very purpose of the grant is to contribute directly to the costs of caring for young children (notably their food requirements) (CASE 2008). In other words, the grant money is supposed to follow the child (or be for the child) such that the CSG is not attached to the biological mother or caregiver *per se*. But, in practice, this exclusive focus on the child may not always take place because of the direct needs of the caregiver and possibly due to the interests and demands of other household members (Samson et al. 2004). Therefore, grant expenditure is conditioned by the character of the lives and livelihoods of the grant recipient and the household in which the recipient is located.

5.3.1 Grant Expenditure, Adequacy and Decision-Making

In this context, the thesis sought to establish the uses that the CSG money was put to by the recipients, the overall adequacy of the grant in making ends meet, and decision-making

processes within households concerning grant expenditure. Most Riebeeck East caregivers cited making use of the grant money for buying basic commodities such as groceries and clothes for the children, as well as other expenses such as electricity which indirectly meet the needs of the grant children. They also highlighted the importance of the grant for expenses related to schooling for their children including paying for day-care at the local pre-school. The study also revealed a tendency to use the grant money to support the financial needs of the caregiver and at times contribute to overall household expenses. Therefore, when they buy groceries or other items, caregivers (particularly in the larger households) may have in mind the requirements of the whole household. The respondents involved in this justified their action by claiming that none of the children live in isolation but are embedded in larger living arrangements. This shows that the child support grant is at least a partial lifeline for others than simply the caregivers and grant children.

Though at times the grant is used in this way, it is clear that the Riebeeck East caregivers are fully aware that the purpose of the grant is to follow the child, and that they prioritise the basic needs of the children. In this respect, the critical importance of the grant was repeatedly emphasised by the caregivers. As one caregiver remarked:

I think people who receive the grant really need it. If there was no grant, I would struggle. Other people would struggle too. However, I would love to have my own job too (Nomalungisa; 11 May 2013).

This quotation also emphasises the inadequacies of the grant. In fact, in some instances where the child support grant was the only source of income in the household, other basic expenses such as the payment of school fees were not met:

I use the grant money to buy clothes and food for my child. I do not pay school fees for my child since there is not enough money for that (Nobelengu; 11 May 2013).

The uses of the child support grant money were limited because the amount was not adequate to meet even all basic needs. The fieldwork was conducted in May of 2013 and, as such, this was the winter season. One respondent therefore commented that:

The grant is helping but not that much. I would appreciate it if we can be given R800 for the grant. I would use the money to buy a bed for my children and some blankets because they do not have them. However, it is useful because we do not go to bed with empty stomachs (Monica; 18 May 2013).

In Figure 5.10 below, I provide an overview of the main expenses to which the grant money is allocated by the households in Riebeeck East. All the CSG mothers indicated that

food is a top priority when considering grant expenditure. While the money is supposed to buy food for the child only, all caregivers generally noted that this is not always possible for the reasons indicated above. Thus, in as much as they know that the purpose of the grant is for the children, they also believe that the grant indirectly belongs to them as well. As such, it is easier for them to justify using the grant for more than just the child's needs; for example, the payment of electricity or even instalments for local societies (see more on this below):

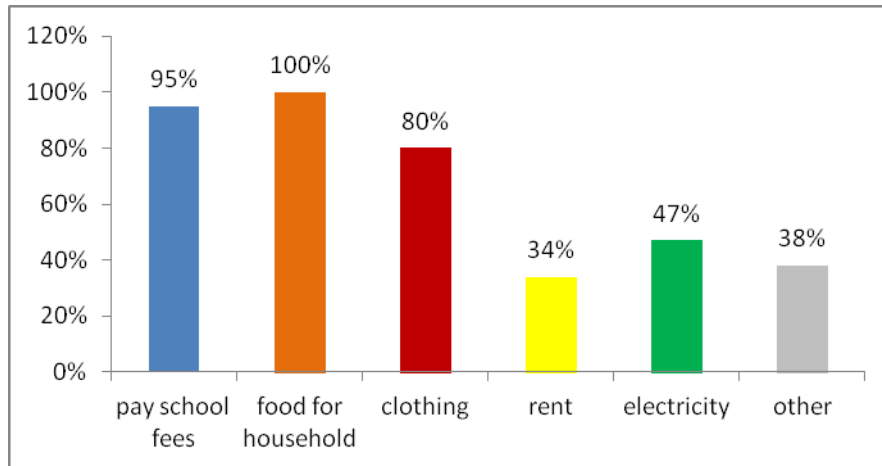
The child support grants I receive for my two children assist me in paying my accounts, such as the furniture account. In addition, I make payments for my funeral policy and the society. For the society I am a member of, we pay R200 a month, and this society is very helpful for me when I want to fix my house or buy furniture (Thandeka; 25 May 2013).

As well, nearly all mothers (95%) spoke of using the grant to pay for school fees. This is in-line with the new regulation implemented by the South African government in January 2010 in which, as a condition of receiving and ensuring continuation of the child support cash transfer, caregivers are expected to ensure that their child or children attend school (Lund 2011). However, the cost of schooling (at both the primary school and pre-school in Riebeeck East) is R100 per month, or one-third of the value of the monthly grant. In addition to food and schooling, clothing (mainly for the grant-child), as well as broader household expenses (rent and electricity), was of significance. Other, less significant, expenses included – again – child-focused expenses (such as nappies and school uniforms).

Some of the recipients, particularly those in small households, cited the fact that they were part of a 'society' (or *stockvels*) which would consist of a group of members and each month they paid a monthly subscription. At a designated period, each member would receive a lump sum from the subscriptions. These caregivers were thus able to benefit from the group financially at some point in time, and were able to purchase small household assets which they would otherwise not be able to afford. In some cases, caregivers also belonged to funeral societies to meet unplanned funeral expenses in the event of the death of a household member. Both *stockvels* and funeral societies are not common amongst the Riebeeck East caregivers, but any involvement in them indicated an attempt on the part of some caregivers – within their very limited financial capacity – to invest in the future or to guard against future unforeseen occurrences. The high death rate arising from the AIDS pandemic bears testimony to the need for money set aside for such eventualities, as does the existence of the large

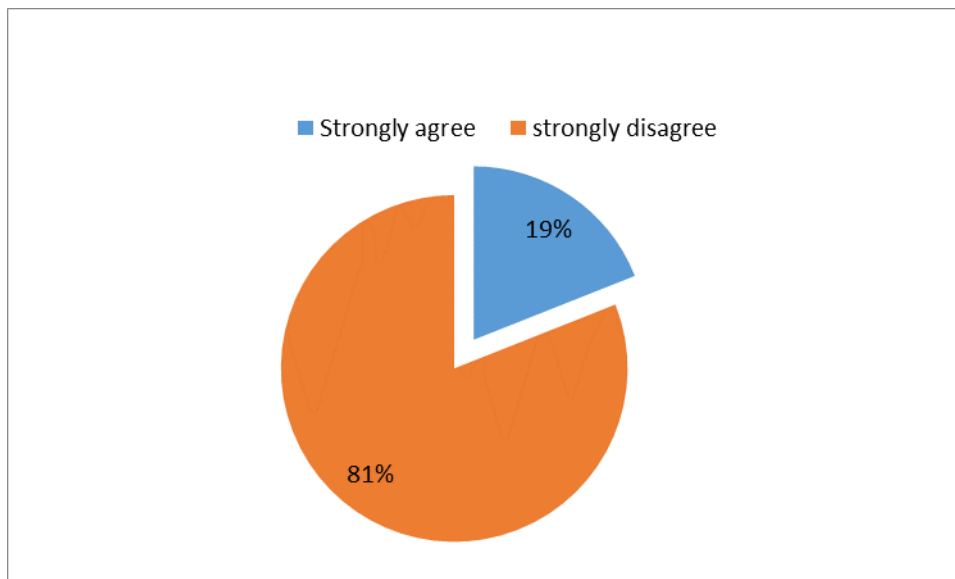
cemetery that sits alongside the boundaries of the township inhabited by the Riebeek East caregivers.

Figure 5.10: Expenditure of CSG



The child support mothers clearly considered the child support grant money as inadequate in terms of its monetary value. In fact, 81% (see Figure 5.11) indicated that it was inadequate purely in terms of meeting even the basic needs of the grant children, let alone all additional expenses incurred for the direct needs of the mother; and they stressed the significance of an increase in the value of the monthly grant. This of course goes against the public discourse often expressed that women intentionally become pregnant with the knowledge that there is a sufficient safety net (the child grant) in existence to assist them with child rearing. A small number of mothers (19%) felt that the grant was adequate but these mothers consisted of those who were in smaller households, were perhaps employed or had alternative sources of income (such that the CSG served as a supplement to the household income and not the main source of household income). All respondents stated that the amount of the grant, particularly because of its low monetary value, certainly did not discourage them from seeking employment and, hence, this also undermines the common understanding that the grant system leads to a dependency syndrome amongst child-grant care givers. In other words, while they are clearly dependent on the grant for their livelihoods, the mothers do not have a dependency mind-set.

Figure 5.11: Adequacy of grant money to meet expenses



For all of the child grant mothers, and caregivers more generally, receiving the child support grant was an important stepping stone in addressing the condition of poverty. One mother stated that the CSG was largely helpful in helping her avoid the scourge of absolute poverty because it enabled her to meet her basic needs. Another mentioned how

Receiving this child support grant has really helped me to get out of extreme poverty (Jeniffer; 4 May 2013).

Such comments and remarks from the caregivers continually highlight the role and importance of social assistance amongst for the chronically-poor in contemporary South Africa. This of course in no ways entails the formation or construction of sustainable livelihoods because in effect it simply softens the blow of ongoing poverty. At the same time, while they appreciated receiving the grant and the role it played in their lives, the caregivers in Riebeeck East highlighted that the grant amount was dreadfully insufficient. To quote some of them:

I feel the money that I receive is not enough for me, [as] I also want to fix my home so that it looks nice (Joyce; 25 May 2013).

R290 is not enough though we just have to budget and make ends meet, we don't buy expensive stuff (Stella; 25 May 2013).

It is not enough money to buy clothes and prices are too high for example flour to make bread (Sera; 25 May 2013).

As well, a grandmother who was receiving a grant for her granddaughter also expressed frustration. Unfortunately, the granddaughter was constantly ill and thus, more often than not, the grant money was used up in medical expenses and related transport costs, as the child had to be constantly taken to Grahamstown for medical care. The grandmother only recently became aware of the care dependency grant through other neighbours, but was yet to apply for it (for the granddaughter) because of health concerns and her age.

Another care giver, in her comment, highlighted the serious condition of poverty often experienced by the grant recipients despite accessing a grant:

The grant money is not helping me get out of poverty because it is too little. I live with the R290 only for the whole month. However, we do go to bed having eaten some food (Gomotso; 11 May 2013).

Regrettably, one respondent claimed that, due to the low amount of grant money received, she resorted to borrowing from other local households when things got particularly tough. This potentially perpetuates the poverty cycle further as it may lead to debt.

In this context, some recipients highlighted that the grant money officially received was in fact not what is received in practice, and this is because the care givers had to travel to Grahamstown to draw the grant money from banks – with a return trip by kombi costing R80. They suggested that SASSA issue them the grant in Riebeeck East to avoid expenses incurred in travelling to and from Grahamstown. One respondent therefore remarked that

I wish we could have an ATM in Riebeeck East because it is very expensive to travel to Grahamstown (Luyanda; 4 May 2013).

The situation is even further complicated for some of the caregivers. These caregivers had more than one child residing with them yet only one of these children was receiving the child support grant. One of the reasons for this failure to register all children under SASSA was a lack of appropriate documentation (such as the absence of birth certificates which are a requirement for the grant application). In certain cases, though, it seemed that the failure to register arose in part because the caregivers had alternative sources of income, such as physically-absent fathers who made some sort of financial contribution to the upkeep of the unregistered child or children.

Nearly all respondents however cited the need for the child support grant amount to be increased. Indeed, this was a reoccurring theme throughout my engagement with the caregivers. One interviewee remarked that

I would love to receive R600 for my child. This would enable me to do so many things such as furthering my own studies for my own sake (Florence; 4 May 2013).

Another respondent mentioned that

I would really appreciate the government to add another R290. If this were to happen, then I would be able to buy some clothes for my child (Mandisa; 4 May 2013).

However, in some instances, the reasons for the need to have the money increased potentially came across as luxuries that the government would possibly not view in the same light as assisting those living in extreme poverty. One respondent remarked that

I don't pay school fees sometimes, sometimes I do. The child support grant is just not enough. If it were to be increased I would go for R500 per child. I would then proceed to build a beautiful home so that each child can have their own room. It's important to have grants because people are really people (Thumeka; 11 May 2013).

Clearly, the 'beautiful home' is not a luxury as the recipient is speaking about the importance of decent housing as a basic human right and of the need to live in conditions of human dignity.

In seeking to address the inadequacy of the grant money, the care givers in Riebeeck East felt almost powerless and without hope; they indicate that they had no voice to represent them. While they have a councillor who is supposed to represent them in the political arena, one respondent remarked that

Our councillor is not helping us at all. People have been complaining that they want houses but nothing has happened. We are just getting empty promises (Nomfundo; 18 May 2013).

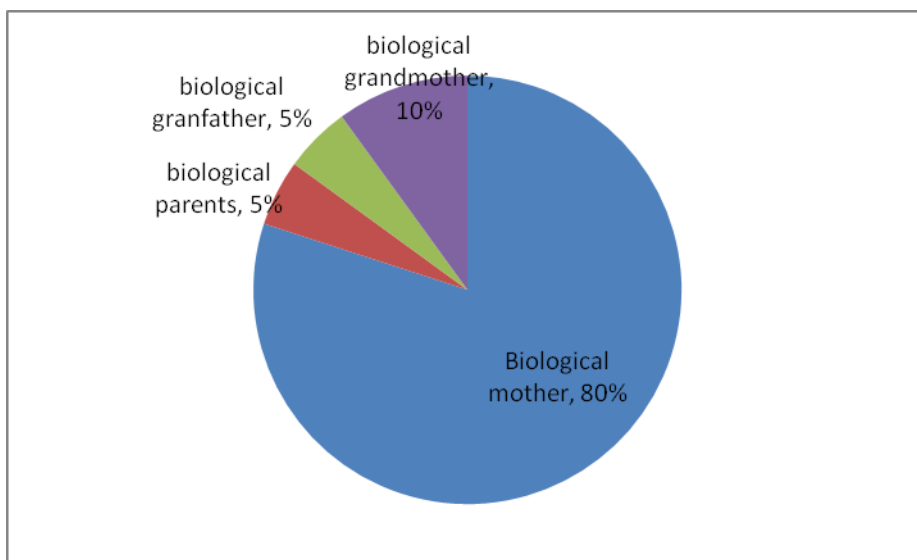
While these remarks are unrelated specifically to child support grants, it nevertheless brings to the fore the perspective amongst caregivers that they have no real means, even locally, to address their concerns about the CSG, such as the need to travel to Grahamstown. In the case of Riebeeck East, the caregivers remain frustrated with the government, because there are insufficient mechanisms available to assist, support and complement the grant in making it more effective. Such thoughts also demonstrated the inadequacy of the child support grant, as they entailed more specific concerns around the absence of gainful employment in Riebeeck East. Particular emphasis was placed on the role of the central state in this respect. As one mother remarked:

I know I cannot rely on the grant my whole life, but I wish the government could do more for us to get jobs (Nomsa; 11 May 2013).

This exemplifies a high level of expectation and need to be self-sufficient, or to earn income rather than simply receive grant money; it thus indicates a willingness to break free from dependency on state largesse.

When it comes to the expenditure of the grant money, in the main the women caregivers as biological mothers of the grant children and as household heads took on this responsibility (in 80% of the cases). But, in some cases and typically where they were not household heads, there were others involved, including the biological grandmother or grandfather of the child receiving the grant (see Figure 5.12). In these cases, where the biological mother is the caregiver but not the head of the household, the biological mother is involved to some extent in decisions pertaining to grant expenditure. In this sense, when part of broader households in which they are not heads of households, they still retain a degree of autonomy and control with regard to the grant and expenditure of it.

Figure 5.12: Decisions about CSG Expenditure



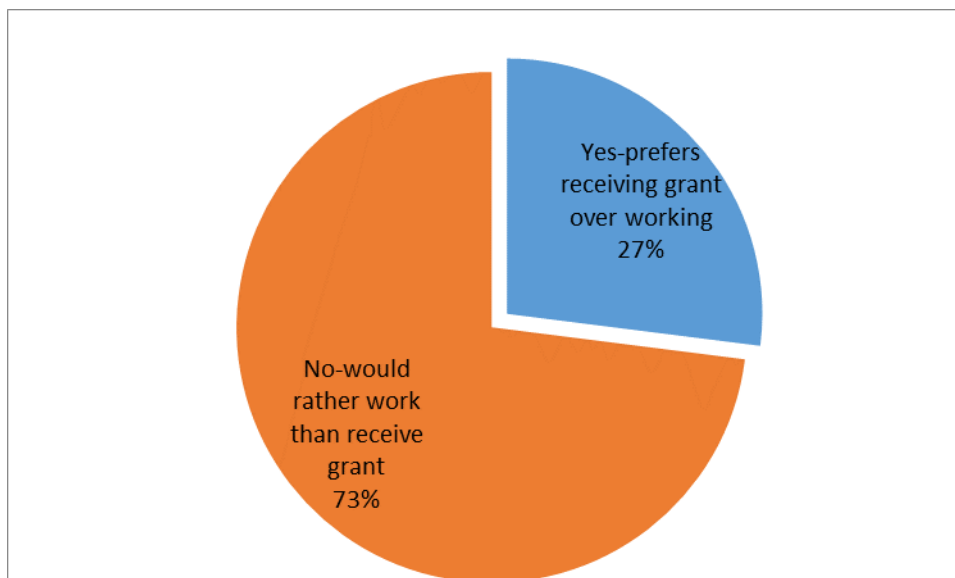
5.3.2 Other Household Income Sources

In this sub-section, in the light of the claims about the inadequacy of the CSG for the Riebeeck East caregivers, I consider other household income sources for the CSG households, including formal employment and informal economic activities.

Most of the Riebeeck East caregivers (73%), if given a choice between working full-time or receiving a child grant, expressed the view that they would prefer to be employed on a regular basis (see Figure 5.13); thus once again undermining any claim about state

dependency on a voluntary basis. Though appreciative of the grant and its importance in caring for some needs of their child or children, being unemployed (or perhaps at times engaging in part-time work) was not a choice but a structural condition of existence for the caregivers which mired them in deep levels of poverty. Some recipients (27%) though spoke about a preference for the grant over employment and claimed that, given their marginalised socio-economic status, accessing state assistance in the form of a grant was their right or even an entitlement owned to them from the state for raising their child or children in such dire circumstances not of their making. This does not imply however an outright refusal to seek employment.

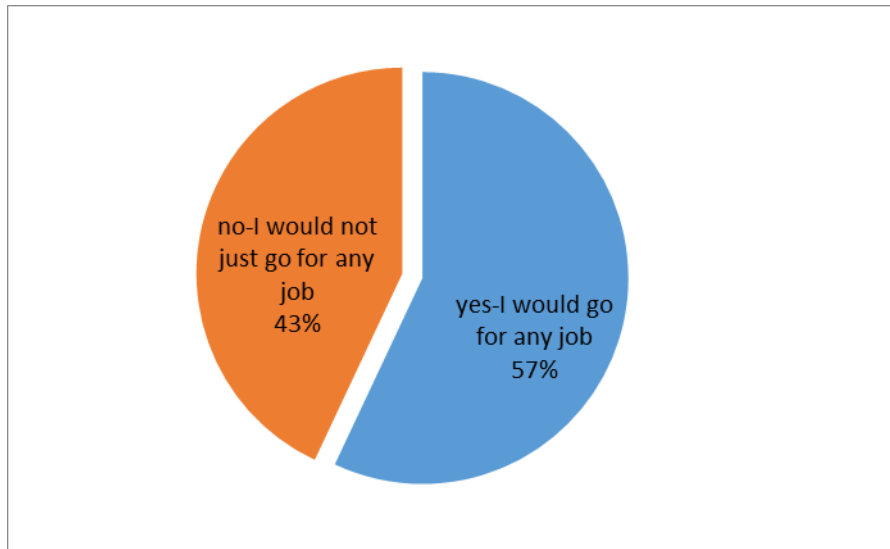
Figure 5.13: Preference of formal employment versus receiving a grant



Respondents were asked about the type of employment they would be willing to commit to, were there employment options available in Riebeeck East. The majority of the respondents (57%) – see Figure 5.14 – were so desperate for work that they would be prepared to take any form of employment that came their way, no matter the conditions of work experienced or the wages received. Others though (43%) would be more selective, despite their marginalised economic status and level of poverty. They thus claimed that they would work on condition that it entailed decent work with decent pay (or dignified work); at least that is what they felt they deserved. In practice, given the absence of a diverse range of work opportunities in Riebeeck East, they would likely be less selective than asserted. Indeed,

numerous long-term obstacles or stumbling blocks stand in their way of finding employment locally.

Figure 5.14: Job preference



The biggest obstacle in becoming employed, according to the care givers (59%), relates to the character of the local economy in Riebeek East and the sheer dearth of employment opportunities (See Figure 5.15). Other mothers engaged in self-reflection by noting that the biggest limitation was their own human capital either in the form of low educational qualifications (27%) or inadequate work experience (14%) considering the requirements of any work on offer. During discussions with the Riebeek East recipients, reference was also made to the existence and importance of nepotism as inhibiting their prospects for employment particularly with local government. In this regard, they meant that informal social networks play a critical role in being offered employment, even short-term and temporary employment.

In addition to the child support grant, Riebeek East households in certain instances have other income streams, either regular or irregular, to supplement grants received and as a basis for pursuing household livelihoods and reducing levels of poverty. Some of this income is generated by the caregivers themselves and additional income sometimes comes from other household members.

Of all the Riebeek East mothers who participated in this study, 14% were widows (see Table 5.1 and Figure 5.2). Of this grouping, 20% were employed full-time and thus had an additional source of income beyond the child grant. Another 20% had temporary employment

and therefore at times had a supplementary source of income. As well, 40% of the widowed caregivers were pensioners – while not employed, even casually, they were recipients of monthly old age pensions. However, the other 20% of those widowed had no alternative source of income at all, and had to draw exclusively on the child grant because there was no other household member or at least no other household member generating income.

As shown in Figure 5.2, over 50% of the Riebeek East mothers (53% to be exact) are single mothers. Importantly, none of the mothers in this grouping had full-time employment. In fact, 44% of them were unemployed while 56% had some form of temporary employment on occasion. In effect, it could be argued that all were unemployed though not all may have been actively seeking work. For those that were temporarily employed, this meant they had at irregular and undetermined intervals some form of alternative source of income to supplement the child grant(s) that they were receiving. But the 44% of the single mothers literally had only the child grant(s) as their household income, and this was manifested in the state of their homes and the assets that they had which were very minimal and sparse.

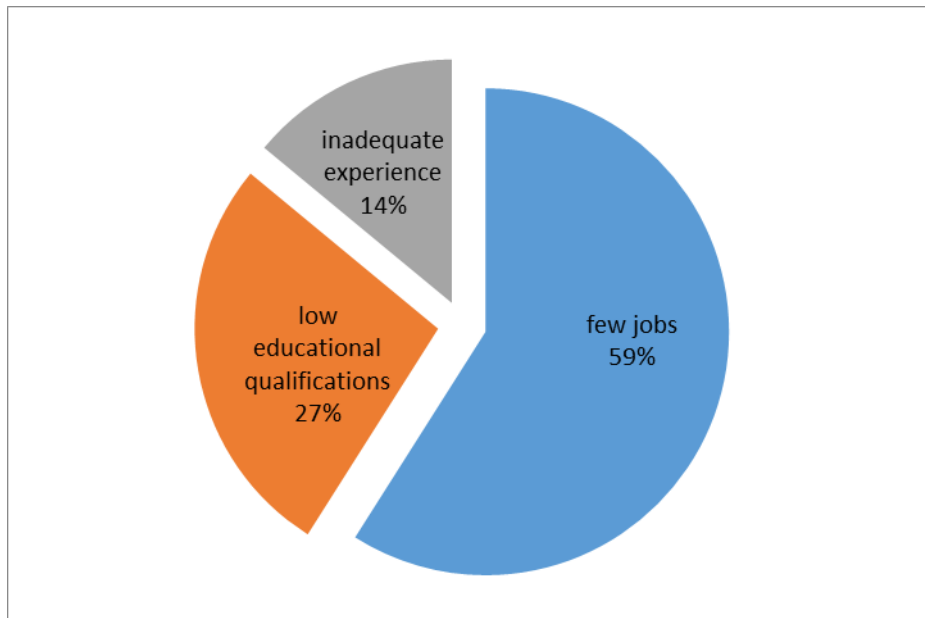
The Riebeek East caregivers who were married (33%) had – potentially at least – spousal support as a source of income beyond the child grant(s) that were receiving. As well, 36% of these married caregivers were themselves employed on a full-time basis while 43% had part-time employment – the balance, 21%, were unemployed. For those unemployed, though, their household income was supplemented either by income generated by their spouse, old age pension or foster care grant. As noted earlier, some of the households are headed by grandparents who are in receipt of an old age pension or access a foster care grant because they are caregivers for children who have lost both parents through death.

Clearly, based on this disaggregated evidence, there is variation between the Riebeek East households in terms of overall household income, with some households financially less insecure than others. As a measure of financial security, the implications of overall household income depend on the number of household members. Nevertheless, given the diversity in income streams and livelihood activities, and in household structure and household composition, not all Riebeek East caregivers find themselves in the same level of poverty.

With respect to the type of temporary employment taken on by the CSG caregivers, this often took the form of domestic work, general farm labour, the local clinic, tuck shop assistant and working for the community works programme under the Roads and Transport Department. The prospect of entering into full-time and permanent work in and around Riebeek East is extremely limited for all poor Riebeek East residents because of the sheer

absence of this type of work opportunity. But it is particularly difficult for caregivers of grant-children, and even more so for specifically single mother grant recipients, because of their household-based nurturing responsibilities.

Figure 5.15: Obstacles to finding employment



During the interviews, the Riebeek East recipients were asked to comment on how often they sought employment, if they were seeking employment at all. Once again, this line of questioning was meant to facilitate an understanding as to whether grant beneficiaries (at least those covered in this study) displayed a dependency syndrome or were unemployed due to circumstances not of their own choosing. In this regard, one respondent indicated that

I have tried to look for a job but it has not been easy. There are just no job opportunities here in Riebeek East (Nandipha; 4 May 2013).

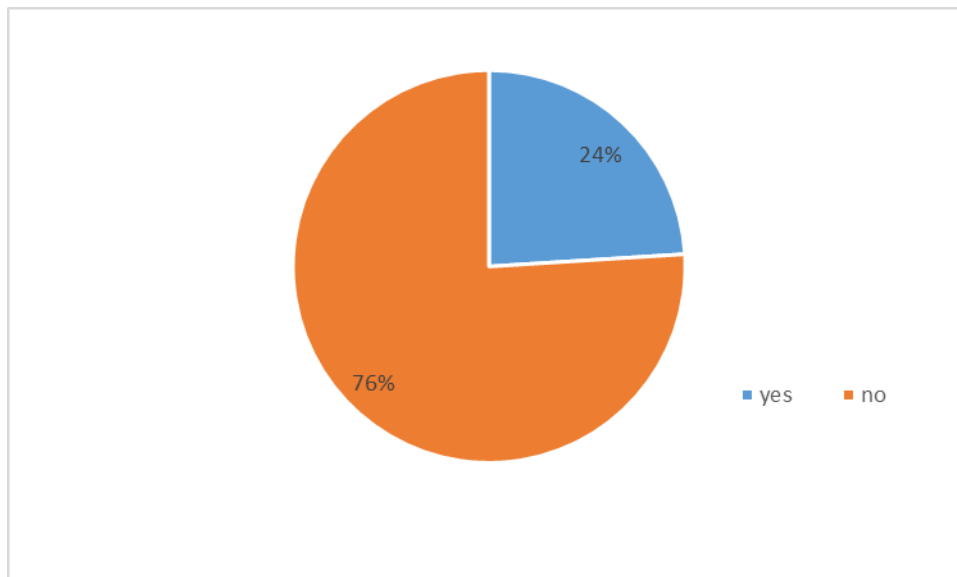
As such, respondents are left with few options, which normally entail temporary employment involving piece work with various government agencies who occasionally conduct maintenance initiatives in Riebeek East such as the Roads and Transport Department. Remarks such as “*I do not have a job and I have been searching for a job – it’s really hard to find one*” (Nobinge; 4 May 2013) were very common amongst the caregivers. One respondent made specific reference to her employment on a short-term contract with Roads and Transport and expressed deep concern about her financial position in 2014 given that the contract would be expiring at the end of 2013:

I need to find another job soon because the amount of the child support grant is too small to meet the basic needs of my child (Mavis; 4 May 2013).

Though the money received from her short-term contract was very minimal, it nevertheless did make a significant contribution to meeting the necessary expenditures for her child. Other respondents considered the possibility of working in Grahamstown, but indicated that the grant money was dreadfully insufficient to even seek employment there, given that the cost of travelling to and from Grahamstown in search of work would cost R80 (or about 25% of the monthly child support grant). Based on this evidence, it seems clear that caregivers remain unemployed because of the absence of work in Riebeeck East, such that many have become discouraged work seekers.

Besides employment, whether formal or informal or permanent or temporary, I also investigated the question of informal economic activities amongst the caregivers, and their possible status as self-employed individuals. Additionally, I wanted to find out if the caregivers were able to use their grant money to invest in any form of business initiative that would complement the child support grant(s) received.

Figure 5.16: Investment in Small Business



In the end, it was discovered that a minority of respondents mentioned investing the grant money in any way (see Figure 5.16 above). Overall, the caregivers complained that the grant money was insufficient for this purpose. One respondent mentioned, when asked about the prospects of investing:

The grant money is not enough to do some things. For example, my younger son wants grasshopper shoes which cost R400 or Nike sneakers. I can't buy those because the money is not enough. As a result, my son feels different when playing with other children who have these. However, when I explain the situation to him, he understands (Doreen; 18 May 2013).

The majority of the respondents (76%) did not invest in any form of small business or economic activity, which was attributed in large part to the sheer inadequacy of the grant money. After ensuring basic goods and services for their child or children, and often insufficiently as noted already, there was simply no capital left for purposes of investment – even if there were prospects for viable economic activities locally. The balance of the caregivers (24%) used their grant money to start some form of small business activity in order to maintain a cash flow for the duration of the month once the grant had been put to use – which was normally within a few days after receiving the grant. These informal activities, which were intermittent and unreliable as sources of income, included trading (buying and selling chicken pieces, beef and fruit) as well as sewing clothes.

However, there was an intense desire to pursue informal activities. One respondent emphasised that

If there was a project here, I would take part. Some of the young people here have got skills but do not know how to go about using them, for example, starting a hair salon due to things like a lack of financial capital (Emeka; 11 May 2013).

In another instance, a respondent felt that

I have a talent in singing and I would really love for someone to help me with my talent as a singer (Yanda; 11 May 2013).

Pursuing such ventures in Riebeeck East though has very low prospects of success.

Besides employment and informal economic activities, some caregivers (amongst the single mothers specifically) received financial support from the fathers of their child or children despite living apart. One respondent remarked that

I use the grant money to buy clothes, food and pay school fees. I find that the grant money is enough because the father of my child helps on the side (Fundiswa; 25 May 2013).

In relation to this study, most mothers (53%) were not married. In some instances however, the father of the child or children was in the picture in so far as assisting with child maintenance at certain times. In other cases, the father was nowhere to be found and clearly

was not interested in offering any kind of support for their child or children. It is unclear though as to whether some of these fathers decided to abscond with regard to their parental duties because they soon or eventually realised that the state was supporting, or going to support, their children through the child support grant. Insofar as fathers do offer any support, it is often highly unreliable as a source of household income for the single mother caregivers. As one mother put it:

The father of the child only helps when asked. He only works for himself; as a result, the child does not have warm clothes for winter (Thumeka; 25 May 2013).

Previous studies have shown that when the fathers are not present, some of the social workers or social security agents responsible for child support grant applications compel the caregivers who arrive without an affidavit from the father to first seek relief from the court to obtain some kind of maintenance from the father. This though is a highly tedious and expensive process, particularly for those seeking to escape the scourge of poverty as a matter of urgency. In other instances, in fact, any communication with the father of a child could be a threat to the lives of the mother, particularly if domestic violence has taken place in the past (Khunou 2012, Goldblatt 2005). There is no specific evidence of this in the Riebeek East study.

On the contrary, some fathers were helping fend for their children even though they were not married to the mother. In this respect, it was interesting to note the significance of support from the father for some of the caregivers who were religious in ensuring that the child support grant received was solely used for the child at hand. One interviewee outlined that:

My child who is 16 years old receives the child support grant. I use the money for school fees, to buy food and pay for electricity. If I buy something using my son's grant, I return the change to him (Nolutando; 18 May 2013).

Such a position, in this case at least, was justified on the basis of support from the father, who supplemented the child grant money. In other cases, when a single mother had children from more than one father, one father may have abandoned any thought of supporting his child while another father provided support sufficient enough to be used by the mother for both his child and other children in the household.

In addition, some of the child grant mothers relied on other types of social grants. For example, one respondent mentioned how her disability grant was extremely helpful in so far as it helped with household expenses. Other respondents, namely, the grandmothers taking

care of their grand children because their own children had passed away, had an old age pension and could apply for a care dependency grant.

Clearly, the caregivers' households have minimal sources of income, leading to very low levels of per capita income within households – though I did not seek to quantify this. In many cases, this led to CSG money being pooled with any other available household income (including income from the caregivers' themselves and other household members' income) in order to cover general household expenses, such as rentals and electricity. The caregivers, overall, tended to claim that the grant money was not used for household expenses other than for those directly relating to the grant child or children. It is possible though that the extent to which the CSG money contributes to overall household expenditure is underestimated by the Riebeek East mothers, given their realisation that – officially – the grant money is designed specifically for the grant children. At the same time, considering the low monetary value of the monthly grant, it is highly unlikely to stretch beyond the most basic needs of the children.

5.4 Impact of CSG on Poverty and Livelihoods

Despite the fact that the child support grant is generally seen by the caregivers in Riebeek East as inadequate and unable to address their ongoing condition of poverty, it clearly has had some positive impacts in terms of basic livelihood needs. In this section, I examine further the impact of the CSG on poverty and livelihoods amongst the Riebeek East caregivers. I do not do so in any strict objective sense in that the measurement of the standard of living for the caregivers is determined subjectively and comparatively in relation to other surrounding households in the Riebeek East community.

In this regard, Figure 5.17 below brings to the fore the subjective comparison around living conditions and poverty prior to first receiving a child grant. Over two-thirds of the recipients (72%) claimed that, prior to initially receiving any child grant cash transfer, their living conditions were below average; 14% claimed that their living conditions were average and another 14% indicated that they were above average. This variation tends to correlate with the extent to which households had secure and reasonably steady forms of income prior to accessing a grant, including employment by parents of the new child-grant mother.

Figure 5.17: Standard of living before CSG

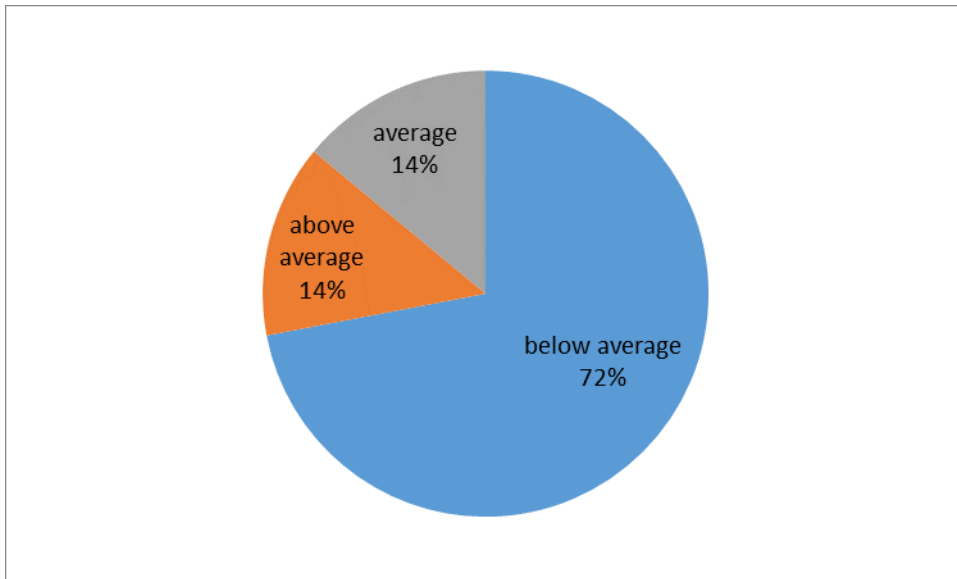
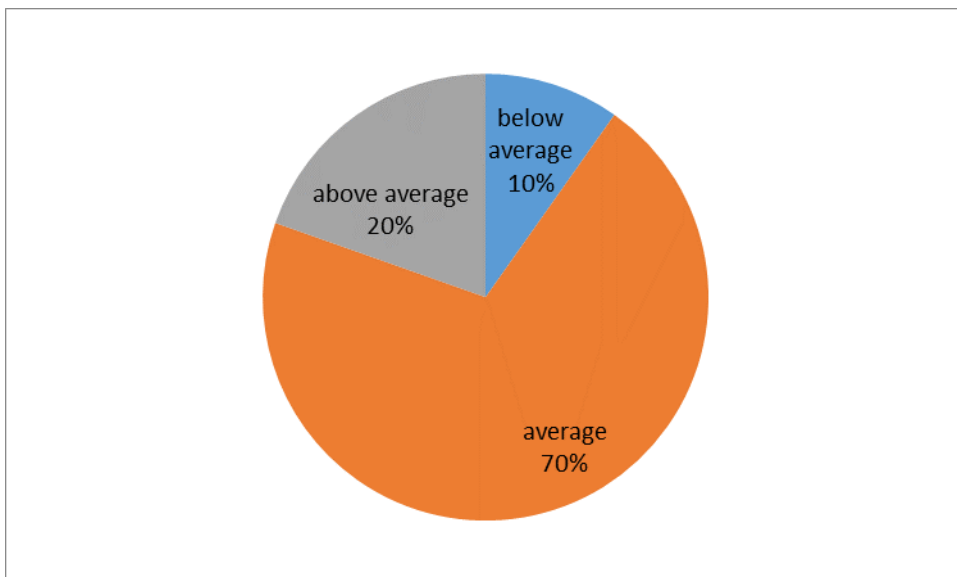


Figure 5.18 (below) shows the variation in living standards, again as measured subjectively, after receiving the first or only grant. Now, 20% of the caregivers spoke about an above-average standard of living and only 10% of the respondents claimed that their standard of living was still comparatively low. Again, just over two-thirds (70%) indicated that it was now average.

Figure 5.18: Standard of living after CSG



This, at least impressionistically, would seem to imply minimal or no change for the better in the livelihoods of Riebeek East caregivers in comparative terms. Alone, this evidence does not indicate if, historically, the grant system has reduced their household's condition of poverty in any way. Insofar as there is no significant change comparatively, this could mean that their livelihoods have improved commensurate with the livelihoods of households around them, or that their livelihoods have deteriorated commensurate with the livelihoods of others (or that no improvement or deterioration has taken place across the community).

It was thus necessary to question the caregivers more directly on the significance of the child grants to their lives and livelihoods. Thus the respondents were asked to comment on how they felt about the child support grants and specifically their role in lifting them out of poverty (see Figure 5.19). Given the income threshold and the means-test for determining who can receive the grant, it is of course assumed that all respondents receiving the grant were poor with varying degrees of poverty per household. Only a small minority (14%) disagreed with the statement that the CSG was reducing the level of poverty in their households. These respondents felt that the grant was of such low monetary value that it did not cause any dent whatsoever in their condition of poverty. For example, one respondent mentioned that

The grant does not really help me get out of poverty because it is too little. I can't buy everything for the children. They also have needs at school that have to be met. I even find it difficult to buy food sometimes (Belinda; 11 May 2013).

At the same time, it was evident from responses of all the caregivers (even these 14%) that if the government for whatever reason immediately terminated the grant, this would lead to chaos as recipients would struggle to survive due to minimal employment opportunities available in Riebeek East.

Nearly 90% of the caregivers in the Riebeek East study believed that the CSG played a role in reducing their situation of poverty: 58% believed strongly that it did and another 28% believed so very strongly. The respondents cited a range of reasons for making this claim. To quote some of the recipients:

I am now able to pay school fees and buy food (Gomotso; 11 May 2013).

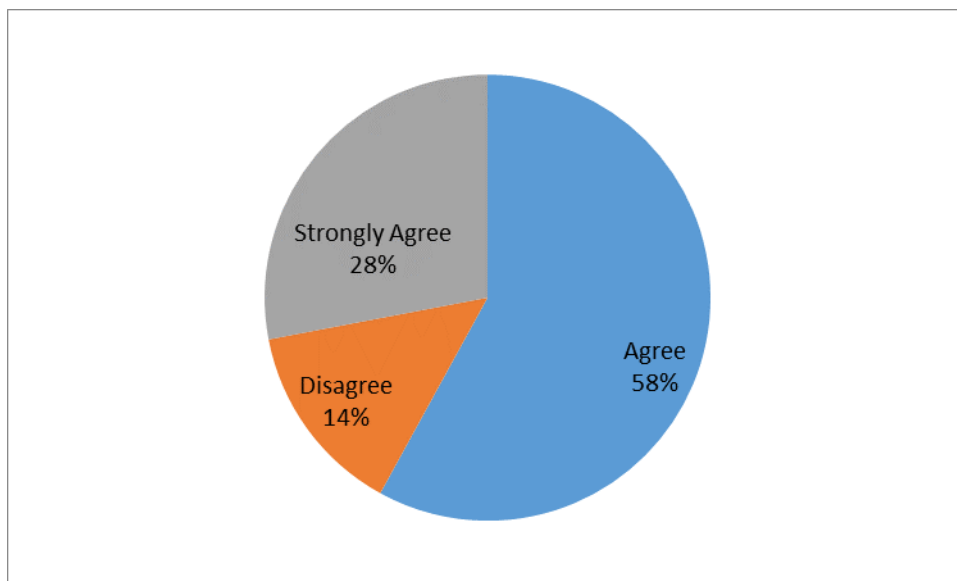
I can now manage to take the children to pre-school, pay electricity and buy food (Luyanda; 4 May 2013).

Yes indeed, it is certainly better for the young boy because now I can buy him clothes and uniforms too (Nonqaba; 11 May 2013).

The responses from the grant recipients are similar in indicating the significance of the grant money for improving – at the most basic of material levels – their household livelihoods and those of their children in particular.

Further, the recipients as a general tendency speak about now having access to a source of income (a child grant) which in most cases they did have previously and that this access gives them a sense of autonomy, direction and control over their own lives (and the lives of their children). More specifically, the Riebeek East caregivers tend to have significant control over the expenditure of the child grant within the household in which they reside, and this is something which they value and cherish.

Figure 5.19: Perception of the role of the CSG on poverty levels



5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the caregivers in Riebeek East studied for the purposes of this thesis. It is clear that poverty is endemic amongst these caregivers and that, even though they are in large part appreciative of the CSG and recognise that it makes some form of contribution to their livelihoods, it does not in any significant manner facilitate a move out of poverty. In fact, despite the rhetoric of the ANC government that the CSG is designed to do this, social assistance simply softens the blow of structural poverty which

needs to be addressed through changes in macro-economic policies and programmes away from the neo-liberal trajectory that continues to prevail in post-Apartheid South Africa.

The care givers are invariably women and a disheartening finding of this study is that unemployed mothers and caregivers in Riebeek East have no other source of state support in seeking for employment, starting informal businesses, educating themselves or simply feeding, housing and clothing themselves, let alone realising the other rights and capabilities to which they are entitled constitutionally. Women effectively act as agents of the state in mediating the relationship between delivering social assistance and alleviating poverty, yet it is a burden that they are ill-equipped to do, particularly considering the low monetary value of the monthly CSG. Cash transfers alone are not sufficient to reduce poverty and would need to be accompanied by other poverty alleviation programmes. It in fact seems unreasonable to expect unemployed and impoverished women (often single mothers) without any other means of income to provide child care services in exchange for almost nothing. Yet, it is clear that the caregivers are responsible caregivers in that they use the limited grant in the most productive and efficient way with the needs of their children foremost in their minds and hearts. They enact agency in negotiating their lives and livelihoods in very troublesome times and under trying social conditions.

But constructing sustainable livelihoods has proven impossible for the caregivers in Riebeek East mothers and the CSG programme reinforces their marginalisation and inhibits their capacity to participate fully as citizens of contemporary South African society. In this context, in the following chapter, I examine the results of my study in the context of the theoretical framework discussed in chapter two.

Chapter Six: Theorising Livelihoods of CSG Caregivers in Riebeek East

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter seeks to analyse the fieldwork findings, as discussed in the previous chapter, in the light of the contextual chapters of the thesis and most notably the theoretical chapter. In chapter five I showed that the CSG caregivers in Riebeek East, in the face of extreme conditions of poverty and vulnerability, pursue grant-based livelihoods through prioritising basic household expenditures. Though the South African state, through the child support grant system, seeks to reduce poverty, the end result – based on the experiences of the Riebeek East caregivers – is not poverty alleviation in any significant manner or sustainable livelihoods over the long term. Day-to-day livelihoods of the caregivers are undoubtedly enhanced by means of this social protection measure, but these livelihoods remain exposed to the detrimental effects of structural poverty and unexpected crises and shocks coming their way in the context of the contemporary political economy of South Africa and its local ramifications. The capacity of the Riebeek East caregivers to withstand this ongoing exposure is not measurably enhanced through the monthly grant, despite the fact that the caregivers are active agents in handling and managing the effects of their structural conditions of existence.

The ensuing discussion of the livelihoods of the Riebeek East child grant caregivers raises the question of the significance of both structure and agency in their lives. This entails examining the structures in place prior to receiving the CSG and thereafter, and thereby trying to establish the effects of the CSG on livelihood changes and outcomes in face of structural constraints and enablers. It also involves understanding the causal potential (or agency) of the caregivers in using the resources available to them (CSG) in struggling in, with and against the structural conditions they face and thereby enhance their household-based livelihoods. Overall, this requires analysing the dynamic interface between structure and agency in pursuing the main objective of thesis, namely, to understand the livelihoods of child support grant caregivers within households in South Africa with specific reference to Riebeek East and in the context of vulnerability and poverty. I now go on to examine the research findings in relation to Archer's work and then, later, with regard to the SLF.

6.2 CSG: Structure and Agency

Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach is set within critical realist social theory. Through the critical realist ontology of stratified reality and casual powers (both structural and agential), Archer offers a social realism which provides important insights into social phenomenon including the livelihoods of CSG caregivers. Of particular significance for this thesis is her analytically dualistic view of structure and agency. Archer argues that differentiating these levels of analysis in sociological explanations is critical so that the specific causal influences of structure and agency can be studied, identified, understood and explained. Particularly crucial for this thesis is Archer's recognition of the causal power of people which are irreducible to structure, as this allows the sociologist to move beyond the conception of social grant recipients as merely disempowered victims of the *status quo*.

In the case of the CSG caregivers, clearly there are social structures of great importance to their lives and which shape their conditions of existence and provide the context for agential action. The very existence of poverty, as existing because of the contemporary political economy of South Africa, is a preceding structural condition which in many ways constrains the lives of the caregivers. At the same time, the South African state's redistributive programmes – the social grant system of relevance for this thesis – may be understood as a structural enabler insofar as it provides monthly income for the Riebeek East caregivers and facilitates livelihood activities or at least household expenditure and consumption. The grant in-and-of-itself though can only be enacted and realised through the agency of the caregivers such that the grant alone does not reveal the particular ways it will be enacted and realised. This is fully contingent on agential agency – on internal conversations taking place, on household needs prioritised, on choices made and on livelihood activities pursued. These cannot be read off from the grant itself but are mediated by caregivers (and their agential powers), and in varying and divergent ways. Thus caregivers have the power to determine the usages of the child support grant, and therefore they navigate and manoeuvre their way through their poverty-riddled conditions in Riebeek East.

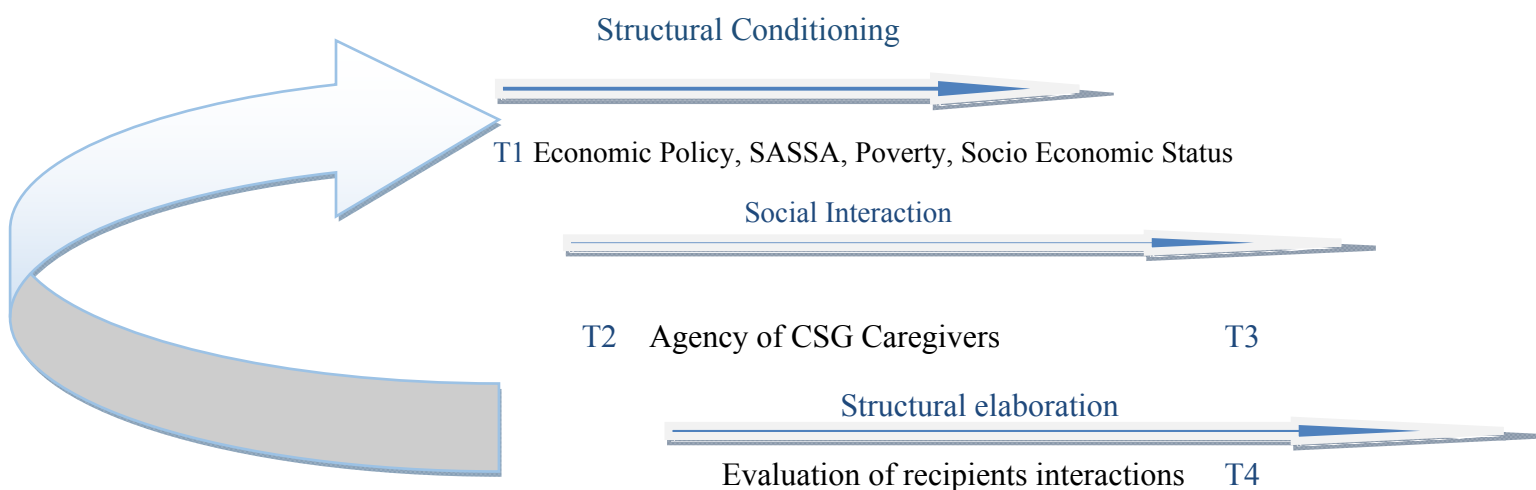
Marx famously claimed that “men may make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances already given, and transmitted from the past” (Marx 1852:1). The circumstances from the past refer to the pre-existing structures which, in terms of Archer's morphogenetic approach, precede the actualisation of agential power, which in turn (in making history) has an effect on the preceding structure. The fact that agential power may

simply reproduce or maintain the prevailing structures, rather than transform them, does not undermine the claim that men (or people) make history, as history is marked by both continuity and change. In the case of this thesis, though the recipients chose to apply to be grant-holders, they did not opt to live under conditions of poverty, they did not formulate and implement the state’s social grant system, and they did not determine the value of the monthly child grant. All of these are not self-selected circumstances. However, their very existence as grant-holders, and all the thinking, choices and activities arising from being a grant-holder or CSG caregiver, is a manifestation of agential power. As indicated, in making history, the caregivers primarily simply reproduce the prevailing conditions of poverty such that for instance racial inequalities continue to mark post-apartheid society. But, at household level, the enacting of the CSG through caregiver agency does have transformative effects.

6.3 Morphogenetic Model: CSGs and Livelihoods

As argued in chapter two, the morphogenetic model presumes that structures predate action(s) which then act upon it and that structural elaborations take place after the particular actions (or agency) have taken place. Figure 6.1 (below), which relates back to the generic morphogenetic model as shown earlier in Figure 2.1, illustrates the interplay that occurs between structure and agency with specific reference to the child support grant.

Figure 6.1: CSGs and Morphogenesis



At T1, the structural conditions present prior to recipients of the CSGs receiving or even applying for the grants are given. The key structures that condition and ultimately cause the social action and interaction of the CSG caregivers are poverty, the neo-liberal macro-economic policies of the state as well as its more redistributive policies (including the grant system and the institutional framework within which this is enacted, namely, SASSA) and the socio-economic status of recipients (since receiving the CSG is based on a means-tested).

The existence of poverty conditions the action of CSG recipients in that it puts pressure on poor mothers and others to seek social assistance from the state in order to be able to contribute to the lives of the child or children under their care. It is also tied in with state policy (as part of the broader political economy of South Africa): poverty itself has not been properly addressed by post-apartheid neo-liberal restructuring yet, in trying to overcome the racialised inequalities of the past and to cushion the blow of post-apartheid restructuring, the state is pursuing social assistance as a redistributive strategy to confront conditions of poverty. Hence, even before considering the agency of CSG recipients at household level, there are structural conditions (with causal powers and properties) which simultaneously bring about poverty and seek to reduce it or which, in the end, constrain the agential powers of recipients in leading poverty-free and dignified lives and/or enable or facilitate the possibility of alleviating poverty for the recipients.

Likewise, the socio-economic status of potential recipients (as marked by poverty) along with their low educational levels (which is a product of the unjust educational system of apartheid South Africa and post-apartheid educational dysfunctionality) makes them highly dependent on any state redistributive programmes for which they are eligible. This is particularly the case in a country such as South Africa which is marked by significant levels of unemployment and where alternative income-generating activities are often few and far between (or at least require capital, no matter how minimal, to activate). Further, the South African national economy is characterised by a high-skills regime and this makes caregivers particularly vulnerable in being excluded from the labour market. In the case of the local Riebeek East economy specifically, there are simply negligible work opportunities available, even low-skilled employment for which the recipients would be most suitable. Even in the nearest town of Grahamstown, massive unemployment exists and hence moving to Grahamstown is not a viable option. The small size of the Riebeek East population also inhibits the prospects for informal economic activities as the consumer market is exceedingly limited.

Also, and though not necessarily an inevitable consequence, there is a tendency for the poor in post-apartheid South Africa to be without voice, or at least their voices are muted and not heard during the ongoing economic restructuring and nation-building process which in large part is elite-driven. They are not able to directly present their voices in formal democratic spaces and hence resort to so-called service delivery protests as a basis for presenting themselves to the state. They remain represented by others at a distance, including by the ruling party and its redistributive programmes. The Riebeek East local ward councillor, who could possibly act as a conduit for the concerns and grievances of local residents to higher levels of power, seems at times to be far removed from the daily lives of Riebeek East residents (including potential caregivers) and is not politically capacitated to make any significant change to their lives.

In addition, the country's macro-economic policies and related fiscal policy objectives (currently neo-liberal policies and objectives in South Africa) determine how much money is given to social welfare from the national budget annually. As such, the amount of money that recipients receive on a monthly basis for the CSG is pre-determined and restricted, thereby limiting the options available in the use of the grant money. As indicated in chapter five, the most common use of the grant involves basic foodstuffs, school fees and clothes. Though usage does entail internal conversations of caregivers and household-based decision-making around grant expenditure, usage is heavily constrained. As well, there is at least formal pressure from SASSA placed on CSG recipients in terms of the kinds of expenditure allowable (first and foremost, to cater for the nutritional needs of the children), and there are conditions also formally set out by SASSA (annual means-testing or sending their children of school-going age to school) which must be met if the grant is to be ongoing and not withheld. Though monitoring of all this by SASSA is not efficient and effective, the fact that the Riebeek East caregivers thought that perhaps I was there to check on their financial status and to monitor their use of the CSG does highlight the institutional structuring of the lives of recipients by this government agency. In fact, their very status as an official caregiver is defined and authorised by SASSA.

On a related note, the fact that different government departments did not work in tandem to ensure that the CSG funding reached its maximum potential only made matters worse. In this respect, legislation requires that beneficiaries of the CSG attend no-fee paying schools in order to save on the meagre amount of money received. Furthermore, when they go to government hospitals or clinics, their children where possible should be treated free of

charge. Regrettably, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and SASSA did not properly coordinate this arrangement, at least in the case of Riebeek East. For instance, the school in Riebeek East is a fee paying school and all the children are expected to pay school fees; and user fees were sometimes paid for basic health services. This complicated the structural conditions within which the caregivers found themselves, and also affected for example the prioritising of specific grant expenditures.

Overall, then, structural conditioning (T1 in Figure 6.1) and its importance, as representing structural causality, needs to be identified and examined in its own right (as Archer demands) and clearly its significance cannot be underestimated in making sense of the livelihoods of Riebeek East caregivers. But these causal powers, as existing at the structural level, do not determine these livelihoods in any strict sense. In Figure 6.1, the arrow linking T2 and T3 refers to the agency of the CSG caregivers (or agential powers) and thus how they respond to conditioning depicted in T1. There are many commonalities in the responses, and the ways in which individual caregivers make use of the grant money. But this commonality does not imply that caregivers simply react to receipt of the grant and act out their livelihoods in some sort of automated and pre-programmed manner. As conscious agents they engage in internal conversations and they draw upon their energy, wit and ingenuity in making household-based decisions in caring first and foremost for their grant children. In this regard, there is considerable diversity amongst the caregivers in Riebeek East in terms of household composition, household structure, employment status, existing assets and so forth which in specific ways mediate and affect the actual content of the agency around the CSG. Overall, though, the CSG serves as a lifeline mechanism in which recipients can expect a form of cash transfer every month in order to meet their needs though, as the fieldwork evidence has shown, the money is stretched where possible to meet other household needs beyond the respective children's immediate needs. Thus, the grant is a structural enabler but the ways in which it enables requires an understanding of the agential powers of the caregivers which, like the structural factors, need to be unpacked and analysed in their own right.

As a way of trying to overcome this, caregivers do not simply sit back idly but pursue alternative income streams to complement the grant as a source of household livelihoods. As a sign of reflexivity, in weighing up the costs and benefits, they for instance join local associations or societies as a form of investment or seek part-time or casual employment. Or they draw upon the resources of other household and family members, including parents who may be receiving an old age pension, spouses where the recipients are married, or fathers of

the children concerned where they are known and employed or at least willing to play an active role in their child's life. These are the few and highly limiting alternatives that the respondents in this study have in going beyond relying exclusively on the monthly grant. The sheer amount of money received therefore also constrains by limiting the possible uses that can be achieved with it. In this respect, chapter five provides evidence of recipients constantly citing various expenses such as transportation or medical costs for their children that the grant cannot pay for making it insufficient as a livelihood resource on its own.

Therefore, from T2 to T3, social action of CSG caregivers, and their interaction with others, takes place as livelihood practices. And, on this basis, it is possible to examine T4 and its feedback effect on T1 (the original structures), or the effects of agential power on the preceding structures (that is, structural elaboration). This study has established that the CSG is associated with increased school attendance and decreased child hunger and that – overall – it reduces poverty at least as a monthly stop-gap measure. In other words, the structural enabling power (the grant system) along with agential powers (as displayed through livelihood practices and outcomes) do contribute in some small measure to poverty reduction for CSG caregivers, as the Riebeek East study shows. However, no significant morphogenesis takes place because the cycle of poverty repeats itself over time despite the CSG system being in full effect. In the end, the CSG caregivers in Riebeek East remain continuously dependent on the grant for survival each month without any hope of being able to get off social assistance in the near future. Broadly speaking, their agency is simply reproducing their structural condition of extreme poverty.

Nevertheless, this does not imply that the structural context has remained static throughout the post-1994 period. Significant changes are taking place in contemporary South Africa including ones which relate specifically to the CSG. For instance, the extension in June 2013 of the CSG to children up to under the age of 18 years is of importance. Understanding this particular change, using Archer's works, is beyond the scope of this thesis. But undoubtedly it speaks to both the importance of the CSG as a poverty-reduction measure as well as the weaknesses of the CSG in poverty-reduction as then implemented. Insofar as this is labelled as morphogenesis, it cannot be explained through the agential powers of the CSG caregivers themselves, as their agency is not collectivised either locally or nationally. They act in the main on an individual, household-focused, basis. At the same time, the extension of eligibility is not the outcome of structural reworking in-and-of-itself, but involved the agency of collectives (including within the state itself) which reasoned on the

importance of such an extension. This did however alter the structure pertinent to the CSG and therefore it acts as a preceding structure for the agency of mothers (and other caregivers) now eligible for a grant or for those who now have more children eligible. This makes the morphogenetic model a historical model of social reality because it makes room for social outcomes which are influenced by the actions of those whom have gone before.

6.4 CSG: Agential Mediation and its Consequences

Structure exerts causal powers on interaction thereby influencing people by shaping the situations in which they find themselves (Hoel 2010). In essence, structure preconditions certain actions as possible and other actions as difficult if not impossible. The manner in which situations are shaped, and are acted upon, is known as mediation. Mediation can therefore be defined as “an objective influence which conditions action patterns and supplies agents with strategic directional guidance” (Archer 1995: 196). In all this, people remain as the only constant as they are the ones who ultimately mediate structure. While structures are the result of past interaction, they also – through agential powers acting upon them – have diverse and contingent consequences and sometimes these are unintended and unwanted. A key point here then is that, though agential power regularly entails conscious and deliberation action, this does not imply that the actual outcome is as intended and hence structural elaboration is not a pre-determined outcome of agential powers (again, structure as elaborated is not irreducible to agential power in any straightforward manner).

The apartheid government bequeathed to the incoming ANC government deep structures of inequality and poverty. The post-apartheid government inherited these (unwanted) challenges and has had to deal with them as best as is possible (through redistribution programmes) while also seeking to maximise economic growth. Through policies around social assistance (including the CSG), state agency has sought to mediate the impact of preceding structures and bring about or influence redistributive change. These same structures, at local level, are mediated by the actual beneficiaries of CSGs in and through their livelihood activities. But poverty remains pervasive in contemporary South Africa, and this is neither the intended outcome of the state nor of the CSG caregivers. It is clear then that, in examining the interplay between structure and agency, the forces for enablement are vastly deficient in terms of addressing the roots of poverty in post-apartheid society.

In fact, it may be argued that one unintended consequence of all this is dependency amongst the poor upon the state – not a dependency syndrome as such (though this may exist)

but a structural relationship of dependency in which the poor (including the CSG caregivers) have no other option but to look to the state for activating household livelihoods and for any hope in the future. Arguably, this is not a situation which the state itself favours and (certainly based on my fieldwork in Riebeeck East) it is not a situation in which caregivers would choose to exist. It is situation to which they do not voluntarily consent but one to which they comply given the unavailability of viable local alternatives. And it is marked more by morphostasis than by morphogenesis.

Constitutionally, it is mandatory for the South African state to address the socio-economic rights of its citizens within what is possible. Within the realm of what is possible, the ANC government has pursued what is considered desirable (neoliberalism over developmentalism). In doing so, it has failed to mediate the apartheid past in a manner which tackles and resolves the preceding inequality and poverty, and simply reproduces these albeit in new post-apartheid forms. The CSG caregivers in Riebeeck East and elsewhere continue to pursue their livelihoods under these structural constraints. The caregivers feel trapped within these constraints despite their concerted efforts to mediate the constraints and break free from conditions of poverty. Based on their particular concerns, the caregivers in Riebeeck East had to be very frugal in deciding what projects (if any) to embark on, realising certain projects (such as informal economic activities) may not even get off the ground.

Thus, through relevant policies and programmes, the post-apartheid state has failed to address the condition of poverty in a manner which enables (rather than mainly constrains) household-based livelihoods including for the CSG recipients in Riebeeck East. Until the South African state breaks free of its current model of macro-economic restructuring (neoliberalism), the reproduction of poverty will continue to be a key unintended (and unwanted) consequence of its actions and the livelihoods of CSG caregivers. Structures of inequality and poverty do not predetermine the state to pursue neoliberalism. And likewise, even in adopting neoliberalism, there is seemingly still some room to manoeuvre despite the neoliberal constraints in effect. But, while structure may not always determine a particular action it does provide a strong incentive for choosing some courses of action over others. For example, given the country's apparent move towards becoming a developmental state yet still economically limited to being a pronounced neo-liberal state, this situation ensures that social assistance spending – while available – will be limited in terms of the amounts available in order to be in line with fiscal spending priorities. As Archer (1995:216) puts it, though the

structures do not determine they do provide strategic guidance “by supplying good reasons for particular causes of action”.

In Archer’s distinction between the various categories of agency (Persons, Agents and Actors), the Riebeek East caregivers all fall into these categories. As Persons, caregivers (even though dependent on the grant) are individuals able to make their own decisions, exemplified by how they prioritise the money firstly for the child’s nutrition and education and thereafter for other household needs (for some, though, the grant is used exclusively for the child). As Agents, the role of the guardians as ‘caregivers’ entails in itself access to a particular resource – the grant – which they receive on behalf of the children and which they make use of within the specific location of Riebeek East, where there is limited access to alternatives needed for everyday household survival. Thus, the interplay between structure and agency is constantly at play as caregivers (as both Persons and Agents) use the resources at hand in constructing livelihoods within their specific socio-economic location and standing.

The category of Actor entails the positions that the caregivers would hold in society beyond being caregivers to the grant children. However, from the fieldwork evidence, it is clear that the caregivers themselves did not occupy any significant positions within society. Certain caregivers, albeit in limited ways, had positions of prominence locally: some were heads of households, others were responsible for their local associations or societies and still others were employed (whether temporarily or full time) and thus able to enter the world of work and enact roles to enhance their livelihoods. But these roles did not involve any collective action on the part of the caregivers in Riebeek East and thus the caregivers cannot be considered as Corporate Agents. In the end, they tended to pursue their livelihoods on an individual and isolated household basis and they did not engage as a mobilised group in their poverty-reducing livelihoods. This shows the extent to which their voices were muted and it further emphasises their overall marginalisation and disempowerment.

6.5 Archer, SLF and CSGs

In the light of this discussion, it is clear that Archer’s work is relevant to the focus and objective of this thesis. In a manner which seeks not to reduce agency to structure (and vice versa), and thus recognises their distinctive existence and causal powers, her particular understanding of structure and agency facilitates an examination of the poverty-reducing livelihoods of CSG caregivers in Riebeek East in a nuanced manner. First of all, structure is

not seen simply as constraining agency but also as enabling it. Though this is not an argument unique to Archer, it is combined secondly with the claim about the irreducibility of agential power (or agency) to structure. The agency of the caregivers cannot be read off from preceding structures as structures are invariably mediated by agential powers and in diverse ways (despite similar or the same conditions of existence). I have sought to show the constraining and enabling structures in this chapter by referring back to discussions in chapters three and four about the social grant system in the context of the political economy of post-apartheid South Africa. And I have drawn on the discussion in chapter five to highlight the agential powers of the Riebeeck East caregivers as they negotiate their way in and through structures but mediate them at the same time. In the end, agential powers are not actualised in bringing about morphogenesis because of the overbearing influence of constraining structural powers.

In this regard, the domain of the real includes the overwhelming structural presence of poverty in the context of the political economy of post-apartheid South Africa and the effect this has on the caregivers, particularly their dependence upon the state to subsidise their income for survival. Within the domain of the actual, the role of the state is especially evident in ensuring that there are redistribution measures in place, such as the grant which caregivers receive to fight the scourge of poverty. On an everyday basis, caregivers have to find a way to survive and make the most of the grant, and they try to stretch it through each month to meet the needs of the child or children and the household. This is the domain of the empirical in which they live and construct their livelihood activities as observed during the fieldwork. The agential powers actualised, as evidenced in the everyday livelihoods of caregivers, seemingly reproduce the realm of the real prevailing in post-apartheid South Africa.

In addition to Archer's morphogenetic approach, I used the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) in studying and analysing CSG caregivers in Riebeeck East. Critical realism and the morphogenetic approach provide the overarching framework for examining, first of all, the structures that create the situation of chronic poverty in contemporary South Africa and, secondly, the activities of CSG caregivers in navigating through and managing the circumstances not of their making or choosing.

The SLF, as a middle-level theory, focuses more specifically on livelihood strategies without necessarily ignoring structural conditions. Indeed, it is clear from chapter five that institutional sustainability, as discussed in chapter two as entailing (from the perspective of the SLF) the presence of state policies, programmes and apparatuses capable of bringing an

end to poverty, do not exist in the case of South Africa; and, thus, structural enablers are few and far between with regard to poverty alleviation. It should also be clear from the preceding discussion in this chapter along with the research findings in chapter five that the livelihoods of these CSG recipients can in no way be considered and defined as sustainable (or economic sustainability, as discussed in relation to the SLF in chapter two). For this to take place, the South African state's policy and programmes would need to alter fundamentally to act as structural enablers to ensure that households such as those in Riebeek East could construct and pursue viable household-based livelihood strategies with sustainable outcomes – rather than to be continuously dependent, over generations, on the social grant system with its mere ameliorative effects on conditions of poverty.

The empirical study has shown that grant recipients, by virtue of their socio-economic standing as well as because of their constitutional right, believe they are in some way entitled to support from the government – in this case, through the CSG. This sense of entitlement therefore relates back to the deep and chronic condition of poverty in which they exist as well as to the promises contained within the post-apartheid transition of addressing the inequalities of the racial past. I have stressed throughout this thesis that this does not amount to a dependency mindset amongst CSG caregivers as the latter clearly envisage themselves as making their own history so to speak, as building and pursuing livelihoods on a sustainable basis in the interests of the future of their households. There is however a clear divergence between the realisation of that entitlement and capacity to pursue sustainable livelihoods, and this speaks to the relationships of power which exist in contemporary South Africa and how these relationships impact on access to resources (or capitals, to use the SLF term).

But this does not take away the fact that any analysis of CSG caregivers, as my study of Riebeek East brings to fore, must be fully cognisant of the agency of the caregivers in pursuing livelihoods no matter how unsustainable these may be. No doubt the CSG caregivers, because of their structural conditions, experience exclusion, marginalisation and disempowerment; and they are deeply embedded in these structural conditions despite the grant. The SLF however, in re-centring its analysis at the household as the crucial unit of analysis, is able to move beyond victimhood and to have an actor-centred (or agency-based) perspective on livelihoods. By examining a small grouping of caregivers in Riebeek East and their concerns and projects, I have sought to be faithful to this re-centring process in both my mode of social research and sociological analysis.

Just as important is that the SLF speaks of agency as entailing significant reflexivity. Admittedly the framework may have an over-rationalised conception of people, constantly strategising by weighing costs and elements in pursuing pre-determined and clear ends. The CSG caregivers in Riebeek East do not come across as so fixed in their livelihood pursuits as they are constantly rethinking and revising in the face of unexpected crises and shocks. But certainly reflexivity is critical to their way of existence, as they are not simply moved along with the structures so to speak in an un-reflexive and unresponsive manner. On the contrary, as indicated already, their reflexivity mediates the casual powers of structures. And, further, their ensuing livelihoods become re-inscribed in the prevailing structures around them.

In chapter five I clearly demonstrate the active pursuance, indeed the construction, of household-based livelihoods amongst the Riebeek East caregivers. They live in a deeply vulnerable context which constrains their livelihoods materially but this does not constrain their existence as agents actively seeking to navigate and negotiate their way in and through their conditions of existence. It may be argued that they are in fact compelled to do so (in order simply to get by, or to survive), but any such notion of compulsion can be applied to the human condition itself and to all humans irrespective of their station in life.

As agents they thus make the effort to apply for a CSG and repeatedly in the case of more than one child. This is not always an easy process because of all the requirements which must be met to prove eligibility. They then prioritise grant expenditure either on their own or in conjunction with others in their household. In doing so, they invariably act responsibly in ensuring that the basic needs of the child or children are met. They seek alternative income streams in the form of employment (even casual employment) and informal economic activities, though at the same time recognising that these alternatives are not readily available or easily able to pursue. In all this, they seek to maximise the usage of the exceedingly limited resources or capitals which they possess or to which they have access. As noted, this may entail going beyond the household and establishing social relationships and engaging in local associations which provide group-savings when they most need it. In the final analysis, though, the caregivers as a whole do not have any significant resources of any kind beyond the child support or grants received. Having read chapter five, the reader no doubt readily appreciates the agency embodied in the lives and livelihoods of the CSG caregivers in Riebeek East.

6.6 Conclusion

Based on the theoretical framing adopted in this thesis, I have sought to understand the poverty-reducing livelihoods of child support grant recipients in contemporary South Africa with particular reference to Riebeek East. I make no claim, either weak or strong, that Riebeek East is representative of South African grant recipients as a whole in terms of any specific conclusions reached about the specific livelihoods of the Riebeek East caregivers. These conclusions are two-fold. First of all, the CSG does – no matter however insignificantly – impact positively on the livelihoods of the Riebeek East caregivers at least by allowing them some material basis for living from month to month. I do not measure this impact in any statistical sense, but certainly the subjective experiences of the Riebeek East caregivers leads to the conclusion that the grants do play some kind of role in poverty reduction (again, not on a sustainable basis). Secondly, and following from this, conditions of extreme poverty remain even amongst these caregivers such that the grant in-and-of-itself does not provide a strong basis for tackling poverty in any genuine and meaningful way. It may that other researchers, studying other sites, come to differing conclusions about the CSG and poverty reduction.

The main significance of the thesis though does not lie in its particular empirical conclusions but in the theoretical means by which these conclusions were reached. The theoretical framing, combining Archer and the SLF, does not only lead to these conclusions but, more importantly, facilitates an understanding of these conclusions and it is hoped that other researchers will see the heuristic value of Archer's theory in studying poverty, vulnerability and livelihoods in contemporary South Africa. Importantly, though Archer's model is normally spoken of the morphogenetic model, it seems clear from this study that it might be more apt to speak of it as a morphostasis model at least when applied to the relationship between child grants and poverty-reduction livelihoods. Only if the South African state were to radically restructure its policies and programmes pertaining to poverty-reduction, and bring about structural enablers rather than the prevailing structural constrainers, would it be possible to provide an analysis which speaks more of morphogenesis than morphostatism.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

A. PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. **Age:** 21-25 26-35 36-40 41-55 56+

2. **Gender:** Male Female

3. **Race:** Black White Colored Indian

4. **Marital Status:** Single Married Divorced Widowed

Other please specify.....

5. **Highest Level of Education:**

Primary grade.....

Secondary grade.....

Matric

Tertiary

6. How many people are live in your house? 1-2 3-4 5-6 more than 6

7. Who is the head of the household? Biological mother
Biological Grandfather Other

Biological Grandmother

B. USE OF CHILD SUPPORT GRANT

9. Who makes decisions about how the grant is used? Biological mother Biological
Grandmother Grandfather other

10. Do you have children of your own who are receiving social grants?
Yes No

11. If yes to Q10 how many are they?
1-2 3-4 5-6

12. What are the ages of the children?
0-3 4-6 7-9 10-12 13-18

13. For how long have you been the beneficiary of the grant (s)?
0-2 yrs 3-5yrs 6-10yrs 11-15yrs

16. What is your estimated total amount that you get every month from the grant (s) you are receiving?
R280 R281-R500 R501-R1500 R1 501+

17. What do you use the grant (s) for?

Pay school fees

Buy food for the entire household

Use for self well being only

Clothing

Health needs

Other please specify.....

C. OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME BESIDES THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT(S)

18. Do you have any other source of income besides Child Support Grant(s)

Yes No

19. If yes to Q18, which other source do you have?

.....

Do you receive any other grant?

20. Is the amount that you are getting from this source higher than the grant(s) that you are receiving?

Yes No

21. What do you use the money from that source for?

Pay school fees

Buy food for the entire household

Use for self well being only

Clothing

Health needs

Other please specify.....

22. If no to Q18, why not?

.....
.....
D. THE DEGREE TO WHICH A CAREGIVER OF CHILD SUPPORT GRANT (S) HAS THE DRIVE TO SEARCH FOR EMPLOYMENT

23. Are you employed? Yes No

24. If No to Q23 are you looking for a job?

Yes No

25. If yes to Q24 how many applications for work have you submitted in the past 12 months?

1-5 6-10 10+

26. If No to Q24, the amount of grants is adequate that it discourages you from seeking work.

Agree Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

27. Do you prefer receiving social grants than going to work?

Yes No

28. Would you go for a job that you do not like when there was no other job to go to?

Yes No

29. What is your biggest obstacle in finding jobs?

No/Few jobs available Not enough qualifications

Not enough relevant experience Other please specify.....

30. Work gives you a sense of belonging to the community.

Agree Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

E. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CONDITIONS HAVE CHANGED OVER TIME AS A RECIPIENT OF CHILD SUPPORT GRANTS

31. How would you describe your standard of living?

(a) before you were receiving the grant?

Below Average Average Above Average

(b) Now when you are receiving the grant?

Below Average Average Above Average

32. Did any child in this household go hungry because there was not enough food before you started receiving the grant(s)

Never Sometimes Often Always

33. Did any child in this household go hungry because there was not enough food after you started receiving the grant(s)

Never Sometimes Often Always

34. Since you started receiving the grant have you invested into any business and/or activity to empower yourself?

Yes No

35. If yes to Q34 what type of investment have you undertaken?

Garden project

Poultry farming Saving schemes Sheep farming

Other please specify.....

36. Being a beneficiary of social grants help you to get out of poverty.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

37. Are there any changes in your lifestyle after you started receiving the grant?

Positive changes

.....

.....

.....

.....

Negative changes

.....

.....

.....

.....

F. ATTITUDES OF RECIPIENTS TOWARDS CHILD SUPPORT GRANTS.

38. Do you agree that most people on social grants desperately need the help?

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

39. Do you think the government is giving enough money?

Yes No

40. If the government terminates the grants today are you able to survive without them?

Yes No

41. Are you striving to get off from welfare one day

Yes No

42. Are there any benefits that come along with receiving the Child Support Grant (s)?

Yes No

43. If yes what are the benefits?

.....
.....
.....

44. In your own words how would you describe the role being played by the grant(s) that you are receiving in your life?

.....
.....
.....
.....

45. Are there any challenges that you have met as a result of being a recipient of Child Support Grant(s)?

Yes No

46. If yes what are the challenges?

.....
.....
.....
.....

47. Any other comments that you want to make concerning Child Support Grant(s)?

.....
.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION ☺

Appendix 2 – Interview schedule

ISIGABA 2: IMIBUZO NZULU

A. Personal information (*Isahluko A: Imibuzo Ngawe*)

1. Age (*Iminyaka yakho*):
Gender (*Isini - umntu obhinqileyo okanye oyindoda*):
2. Marital status (*Ingaba utshatile*)
3. The highest level of education (*Ibanga eliphezulu esikolweni*):
4. Who is the head of the house? (*Ngubani umntu omkhulu ekhayeni?*):
5. Who makes decisions about how the grant money is spent?
6. Employment status (*uyaphangela?*):

B. The drive for beneficiaries to search for employment

Isahluko B: Isizathu sokuba ufune umsebenzi

1. Are you better off claiming social grants than going to work?
(*Ingaba kungcono xa ufumana isibonelelo sikarhulumente kuna xa unokufuna umsebenzi*)
If yes explain (*Ukuba uthi ewe kungcono, cacisa - xela isizathu sokuba uthi ewe*):
If no explain (*Ukuba uthi hayi, cacisa - xela isizathu sokuba uthi hayi*):
2. Do you feel alright to be out of work? Explain (*Uziva njani njengokuba ungaphangeli? cacisa*)
3. How often do you search for work? (*Mangaphi amatyeli othi ufune ngawo umsebenzi*)
4. What is the biggest obstacle in finding jobs? (*Yintoni oyena nobangela omngquobo owenza ukuba ungawufumani umsebenzi?*)
5. Is the amount of social grants high that it discourages you from seeking work?
(*Imali yesibonelelo sikarhulumente ikwanele ukuba ungalala ungawufuni umsebenzi?*)
6. Does the social grant help you in searching for work?
(*Ingaba imali yesibonelelo sikarhulumente iyakunceda ekubeni ufune umsebenzi?*)
7. Do you intend to search for employment and stop being a beneficiary of social grants?
(*Ingaba unayo na injongo yokufuna umsebenzi ungaxhomekeki kwimali yesibonelelo sika rhulumente?*)

C. Role of child grant(s) in mother' lives

ISAHLUKO C: Indima edlalwa sisibonelelo sika rhulumente ebantwini

1. What led you to seek the grant? (*Yintoni eyabangela ukuba ufune isibonelelo sikarhulumente?*)
2. For how long have you been the beneficiary of the grant? (*Lixesha elingakanani ufumana isibonelelo sikarhulumente*)
3. What do you use the grant for? (*Usisebenzisa njani isibonelelo sika rhulumente?*)
4. What impact does the grant have in your life? (*Ikunceda njani empilweni yakho into yokufumana esi sibonelelo?*)

D. Other sources of income besides child grant(s)

Isahluko D: Ezinye iindlela ophila ngazo ngaphadle kwesibonelelo sika rhulumente

1. Do you have any other source of income besides the child grants?
(*Ingaba unayo enye indlela ophila ngayo, ngaphandle kokufumana isibonelelo kurhulumente?*)

If yes which source (*Ukuba uthi ewe, yeyiphi enye indlela?*)

If no, why not (*Ukuba ayikho, sithini isizathu sokuba ungabinayo?*)
2. Is the amount that you get from this source higher than the social grant or is it less?
(*Ukuba uthi ewe, ingaba imali oyifumanayo ingaphezulu okanye ingaphantsi kwemali yesibonelelo sikarhulumente?*)
3. What do you use that money for? (*Uyisebenzisa njani imali yesibonelelo sikarhulumente?*)

E. Building livelihoods

1. What activities or projects have you been involved in to be able to supplement your income?
2. Have you been able to buy more assets since you started receiving the grant?
3. Does anyone else in the household assist you with meeting your household expenses?

F. Effects of reliance on social grants

Isahluko E: Iziphumo zokuxhomekeka kwisibonelelo sika rhulumente

1. What has changed in your lifestyle after you started receiving the social grant
(*Butshintshe njani ubomi bakho emveni kokuba ufumene isibonelelo sika rhulumente?*)

Positive changes (*Butshintshe ngendlela engcono*)

Negative changes (*Butshintshe ngendlela engaxolisiyo*)
2. Have you started a small business of your own in order to improve your livelihood?
3. Are there any benefits that come along with receiving the child grant(s)?(*Ingaba zikhona izinto oye wazixhamla kuba ufumana isibonelelo sika rhulumente?*)

4. What challenges have you met as a result of being a beneficiary of child grant(s)?
(Zeziphi iingxaki oye wahlangabezana nazo kuba ufumana isibonelelo sika rhulumente)_

5. Does being a beneficiary of a child grant(s) help to get you out of poverty?
(Ingaba ukufumana isibonelelo sikarhulumente siyakunceda ukuba uyeke ukuhlupheka?)

If yes how? *(Ukuba uthi ewe, njani? Xela izizathu)*

If no how?*(Ukuba uthi hayi, njani? Xela izizathu)*

6. Are you totally dependent on child grant(s) for your children's needs? *(Ingaba uxhomekeke kuphela kwisibonelelo sikarhulumente qha ukujongana nezidingo zabantwana bakho?)*

7. If the grant is terminated today are you able to survive without it?
(Ukuba isibonelelo sikarhulumente singaphela namhlanje, ungakwazi ukuphila ngaphandle kwaso?)