

## Chapter 7

### The Daughters' Generation – *the Pragmatists*

#### 7.1 Introduction

The women in the Daughters' generation were born in the 1970s and the 1980s and they experienced the first half of their lives under apartheid. Some of them were still at high school in the 1990s when the first democratic elections took place. The women grew up and experienced adulthood in a democratic South Africa – without repression, forced removals and pass laws, or forced separation from families, the main indices of apartheid.

There are five single women who are heads of families in the Daughters' generation. One is in her 20s and four are in their 30s. Three women have casual jobs and two are unemployed. Two of them live in Old Bophelong and three live in the RDP housing extensions. The composition of their families varies – one woman has no children at all, one woman (Janet) was married and is now widowed, and the other three women have never married.

The Daughters' generation is characterised as the *Pragmatists*. The Daughters' experience the fruits of the struggles of the *Survivors'* and the *Liberators'* generations, while they themselves live in a context in which they have a very pragmatic attitude to their lives and to their conditions of living.

This chapter is organised into four parts. Section 7.2 presents brief biographies of each of the five women – Lerato (32), Refilwe (36), Rebecca (35), Janet (35) and Katlego (25) – and discusses how they became heads of their families. Lerato's life story, the basis of the chapter, is compared and contrasted with those of the other women in this generation. The Daughters' attitude to men and their identity as woman-heads of families are also discussed in this section. Section 7.3 discusses the family form of the Daughters' generation, the composition of these families, their work and sources of income, and patterns of consumption. Section 7.4 focuses on key

aspects related to the reproduction of social relations - capitalist patriarchy - within the Daughters' families. Section 7.5 sums up the discussion on the Daughters' generation in relation to the Grandmothers' and the Mothers' generations.

## **7.2 Becoming the Head of the Family**

### **7.2.1 *Biographies of the Daughters***

**Lerato** lives in Old Bophelong in a four-roomed house. She is always well dressed and her hair is always well groomed. Lerato goes to the hairdresser once a month.

Born in 1976, she lived with her grandmother, her father and her mother.

Lerato has a son from a previous relationship, and she now has a one-month-old baby, Karabo. Lerato has known her HIV/AIDS status since 2000 – she is 'positive'.

Lerato works as a 'volunteer' counsellor, based locally in Bophelong. She enjoys the work, although it is low-paid.

**Lerato:** I was born in Old Bophelong. I lived with my father, my mother [step-mother] and my grandmother.

I spent a lot of time with my [paternal] grandmother. She reared me. I slept with her, ate with her. She washed me and did everything for me till I was older. She taught me to do things for myself.

The place where the Vaal Mall is today, used to be a big dumpsite during apartheid. White people used to dump things and black people used the stuff they dumped. My grandmother told me never to take food from the dump because it was old and I would get sick. I used to look for toys, clothes and any nice things.

One day, I was with my friends at the dumpsite when a group of white men arrived in a bakkie.<sup>1</sup> They got out of the car and beat us with chains. We never did anything to them; people always went to the dump. We ran to get away from them.

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<sup>1</sup> Van with an open back used for carrying things.

My grandmother used to tell me that she would not see freedom, but that it would come. When I was 13 years old she died. I was very upset and sad. I missed my grandmother. But I still had my parents ... my father and my mother. I also had a brother and a sister.

While I was at high school I discovered from people outside, neighbours and children at school, that my real mother was dead and that my brother and sister were not from the same mother.<sup>2</sup> I came home and asked my father and he said that it was true. The woman who was living with us was not my mother. Although she was good to me, it was a shock. Something just happened in my relationship with my 'mother'. I thought, why must I listen to someone who is not my mother? We started to have arguments and unnecessary fights. I left home and went to live with my aunt.

My aunt told me that my mother had died when I was seven months old, after having an abortion<sup>3</sup>. This was not my father's child. My father was in prison at the time. Even my grandmother never said anything to me before she died. I had so many questions. Why did no one speak to me about this? I was very angry for a long time.

Afterwards my stepmother came to talk to me and I went back home. By then I had dropped out of high school, in Grade 11. When I wanted to go back to school it was difficult, because my friends were no longer at school. I didn't go back to school and now I am sorry.

When my father died in 1996, I was 19. My stepmother had left before then to live with another man in Sebokeng. She died in 1998. My stepbrother and stepsister were put in an orphanage, and some relatives came to stay with me in the house.

When Lerato grew up in Old Bophelong it was still a relatively small township. She was emotionally upset for many years after she found out about her biological mother's death.

**Refilwe** was born in 1972 in Sharpeville, and dropped out of high school in Grade 9 because she was pregnant. Refilwe has two daughters, aged 18 and 4. She lived with her parents in Sharpeville until she moved to her RDP house in Bophelong in 1998. Refilwe is well groomed, and her hair is plaited with 'extensions'. Her RDP house is

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<sup>2</sup> Lerato is referring to her biological mother, and this is not a value judgment about biological or non-biological mothers, and none should be inferred.

<sup>3</sup> This is a reflection of the status of black women at the time. Many died as a result of back-street abortions until it was legalised in post-apartheid South Africa in 1996. The Sterilisation Act of 1975 provided only limited access. This meant that black working class women resorted to back-street abortions when they needed to terminate their pregnancies. Research done by the MRC in 1994 estimated that 44 686 women were admitted to hospitals with incomplete abortions every year. Although there is now legal access to abortion for all women in South Africa, there is once again an increase in back-street abortion because of especially limited access to safe and affordable facilities (see CALS, 2004; Albertyn, 2008; Gabriel, 2008).

immaculate, neatly furnished and organised to ensure privacy. She has worked in a local crèche as a caregiver for the past two years. This is her first job.

**Rebecca** was born in 1972 on a farm in Stefansplaas, close to Bophelong. Her parents were farm-workers. Rebecca is very thin and looks older than her age. She has had no education. Rebecca had her first child when she was 15 years old, and she lived with her extended family. She moved to Bophelong when she got an RDP house in 1998 and lived with her three sons (ages 20, 18 and 16). Her twin babies died a few days after they were born. Rebecca also cares for her deceased niece's three children. Rebecca is unemployed and used to do piece jobs. Her RDP house is poor, bare and in stark contrast to the houses of the other women.

**Janet** was born in 1974 on Taaibos farm near to Sasolburg; later the family (her mother and her sister) moved to Sebokeng. She dropped out of school when she fell pregnant. At the time she was living in Sebokeng where she met her husband, a migrant from Matatiele in the Eastern Cape, who was living at the hostel. They got married and together with her husband moved to their RDP house in 1999. She has two children, a daughter (9) and a son (2). Her husband died suddenly when she was still pregnant with her son. Janet has never had a job.

**Katlego** (25) passed her matriculation exams in 2001 and was unemployed for five years. Then she got a job as a 'volunteer' with ASEDI in Bophelong in 2006. That same year her maternal grandmother died and because she was the oldest she had to take responsibility for the younger ones. She lives with four teenagers: a boy and a girl (twins) aged 17, a boy aged 17 and a girl aged 13. The twins, though younger than her, are her uncle and aunt, and the other two teenagers are her cousins. She works as a full-time volunteer.

All the women originate from townships or farms in the Vaal region. Lerato and Katlego lived in Old Bophelong; and Refilwe, Rebecca and Janet moved into their RDP houses in the late 1990s. The Daughters' generation of women was born to urbanised and proletarianised parents.<sup>4</sup> The families who lived in Old Bophelong

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<sup>4</sup> By the late 1980s many black working-class families lived in the cities despite the laws that sought to exclude them from cities. The Pass Laws were abolished in 1986 and their de facto presence in the city was legalised.

tended to be multi-generational, because of the housing shortages, the restrictions on the mobility of black people, and the poor socio-economic conditions (Beittel, 1992, discussed in Chapter 3). All the women lived in extended families before two of them (Refilwe and Rebecca) moved to RDP houses on their own; Janet moved with her husband.<sup>5</sup>

All the Daughters' were born between 1972 (Refilwe) and 1983 (Katlego), and all of them had some experience of apartheid, at least for the first 15 years of their lives. They all remember living on a farm or in a township, white racism, the police repression in Vanderbijlpark town, and living under impoverished conditions. When the first democratic elections took place in 1994, Lerato, Janet and Katlego were still at high school. By then, Rebecca had two children and Refilwe had one child. Except for Rebecca, a farm worker who cannot read and write, all the women attained some level of high school. Katlego completed her matriculation, Lerato completed Grade 11, and Janet and Refilwe dropped out in Grade 9 because they were pregnant. This is different from the Mothers' and especially the Grandmothers' generation, where the women generally had very little education. This generation had relatively more access to education than the previous one, and this reflects some of the fruits of the popular education struggles of the 1970s and 1980s.

### **7.2.2 *How the Daughters became heads of their families***

How did the Daughters become head of their families? What paths did they take?

**Lerato:** I was traumatised for a long time about my mother. I was very lost. In a short time I was alone. After my grandmother, my father and my stepmother died, I started to work at Butterfield Bakery.

I had a son in 1997 and once I had my own child I thought about my siblings in the orphanage and I went to a social worker to help me to get them back. I was working, but I wasn't earning a lot of money, but I didn't want them to grow up in an orphanage.

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<sup>5</sup> This confirms the reasoning in Chapter 4: that the provision of RDP housing accounts for the increase in the woman-headed family form and the decline in the extended family form, discussed in the context of the Bophelong survey findings (2007).

When my son was three years old I decided to leave his father. His father is much older than me and he wanted to 'settle down'. I was not ready for what he wanted. I didn't want what he wanted; it was too emotionally difficult.

I brought my child up on my own. At times things were bad. I was angry and had no one to talk to. When you don't know things people can tell you anything. My mother died alone, and now my father had another woman. All these things went on in my head. When I grew up, it was a difficult time for me emotionally. Now we have made a life for each other together, with my sister, my brother and my son.

Lerato decided to leave her child's father because they wanted different things. This is different from the reasons that the Mothers and the Grandmothers gave for leaving their children's father; their reasons related to drinking, womanising and violence against women.

Later Lerato took responsibility for her siblings by removing them from the orphanage so that they could be 'a family', despite the struggle to survive. Lerato then applied for social grants to assist her to rear her siblings. In Lerato's family, the children were still at school.

**Refilwe** left school after a teenage pregnancy; after the child was born she lived with her family in Sharpeville. Her child's father did not maintain the child regularly and Refilwe stayed with her parents. Refilwe was able to move out of her parents' home when the RDP houses become available, and she moved to Bophelong.

**Refilwe:** I was living with my family, my parents and my sisters and their children in Sharpeville. My child was getting big and we needed to find a place. The house was full but it was hard to find a place to rent. I put my name on the council's [municipality] waiting list for a house. I moved into my RDP house in 1999. I always wanted to be on my own.

**Rebecca:** When I was pregnant [at 15] I went to live with Jacobus, the child's father's family. They lived on the same farm plot and worked for same farmer. Jacobus' family was 'coloured'.

Rebecca had five children with Jacobus before he left her and went to live with her friend. After this, Rebecca had nowhere to go, so she went to live with her sister and her family on Stefansplaas, a farm plot nearby.

**Rebecca:** I took my children and lived with my sister and her family. Then I got an RDP house in 1999 and moved to Bophelong.

**Janet** moved with her husband to Bophelong. She was pregnant at the time, and he moved first and she stayed with her mother in Sebokeng till the baby was born. Then Janet went to live with him in their RDP house.

**Janet:** My husband just got sick; he said he couldn't breathe. There was something in his throat. I called the ambulance and he went to hospital. But a week later he died. I was pregnant with my son. He never saw his son.

After **Katlego's** maternal grandmother died in 2006, as the oldest in the family, the responsibility fell on her to care for the younger children.

**Katlego:** We all lived with my grandmother. My uncle and my aunt are my grandmother's children. One cousin, the 13-year-old, his mother is married again, [to someone else]. Another cousin is 17 and his mother died but his father does not care about his son. My two cousins and I, we were the first-borns of my mother and her sisters. We were born in this house and we grew up with my grandmother. Our mothers got married and left.<sup>6</sup> When my grandmother died in 2006, she left me to look after the children because I was the eldest.

By the time that the Daughters' generation became heads of the family, there was already a long history of woman-headed households, and the transition to becoming woman-headed families had begun, and was socially accepted. As mentioned in the Grandmothers and the Mothers, Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, the democratic and Constitutional rights in post-apartheid South Africa guarantee women full citizenship rights. Women's rights are concretised in their ability to live the life of their choice, to sustain and keep their families together, and maintain their independence. In this context being a woman-head was not extraordinary, there was no social stigma.

However, as we discussed in Chapter 2, the new democracy was accompanied by tough economic conditions and the 'crisis of social reproduction' as the burdens were shifted onto women (Cock, 2005). These opposing forces – democratic freedoms and economic hardship - caused tension within the woman-headed family.

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<sup>6</sup> Often, the first-borns, born of different fathers were not accepted by later male partners, and were then left to grow up with maternal grandmothers.

The Daughters' generation is similar to the Grandmothers' and the Mothers' generations in that their paths to become the head of the family varied. Similar to the Mothers and the Grandmothers, all the women in the Daughters' generation (except for Katlego), start by having relationships with men, and even having children. The Daughters' struggle to become woman-heads was different from that of the Grandmothers' and the Mothers'. Lerato chose to leave her child's father because she wanted to live on her own. Refilwe's child's father disappointed her, and she continued to live in her parental home. After Rebecca was abandoned she had nowhere to go, so she lived with her sister and her family. Janet was widowed and the headship was thrust upon her, her children were small and her mother was dead. When Katlego's grandmother died, the 'headship' passed to her because she was the oldest of the children in the home.

Lerato became the head as a result of her sense of independence and belief that she had options. There were a number of influential factors: Lerato had access to the family house in Old Bophelong. Secondly, she had a job and was relatively independent. The constitutional rights for women in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly the discourse on 'women's independence', facilitated her decision, her self-awareness to choose to be on her own. At the time she was relatively young, in her mid-twenties, and it meant that she was on her own with no immediate family to turn to. Lerato reflects the sense of empowerment of a young black woman in the new South Africa who wanted 'something different'. Refilwe and Rebecca were both single mothers for some time, caring for their children.

The constitutional rights together with access to the RDP housing ensured relative autonomy for the Daughters' generation.<sup>7</sup> Janet remained in her house after her husband's death, together with her children, and the house was transferred to her name. Rebecca and Refilwe had relative freedom and autonomy after they moved away from their extended families to live in their own homes with their children. The

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<sup>7</sup> See the discussion of Venter and Marais (2009) on housing in Chapter 3.



new democracy enabled Katlego to retain the house and continue to live with the younger children.<sup>8</sup>

The mean age at which the Daughters' generation in this study became heads of their families was 26 years, and the mean length of time for which they have been heads of families is 9 years. From the experience of the Grandmothers' and the Mothers' generations it is clear that the mean age at which women become heads of families is falling: from the forties in the Grandmothers' generation, to the thirties in the Mothers' generation, and now the twenties for the Daughters' generation.

### **7.2.3 *The Daughters' Attitudes to men***

What are the Daughters' attitudes to men and to their relationships? How do these attitudes influence their self-concept as woman-heads of their families?

Fathers are generally the first relationship girls have with males.

**Lerato:** I didn't talk much with my father. He didn't talk much. I didn't know my father; I don't know what he did. I was very unhappy when I discovered that my mother had died when I was seven months old. My father didn't know how to deal with me.

Lerato had a problematic relationship with both her parents, with her mother for dying when she was very young and with her father for keeping her mother's early death from her. By Lerato's own admission they never communicated in what was a difficult relationship. Even her grandmother never talked to Lerato about this.

The women in the Grandmothers' generation did not know their fathers because they (the fathers) were migrant workers or died young on the farms. The Mothers' generation had the most consistent relationships with their fathers.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Apartheid housing policy did not provide housing for young single women, and it is likely that social workers would have removed the minor children. Pauw (1962) discusses the tendency of the apartheid government not to recognise women and to put the house in the their son's name.

<sup>9</sup> In Chapter 6 we argued that this coincided with the stable period of growth in the economy and the rise of manufacturing in the 1960s (see Davis, O'Meara and Dlamini, 1984a and b).

The Daughters' relationship to their fathers was similar to that of the Grandmothers' to their fathers. Only Refilwe had a good relationship with her father (and her mother). Lerato was reared by her grandmother and never communicated much with her father. Janet lived with her mother and sister, and she reported that her father was abusive and uncaring. Katlego grew up with her grandmother and never knew her father. Rebecca's father died when she was young and she grew up in an extended family.

The fathers in the Mothers' generation were very supportive of their daughters, in contrast to the fathers in the Daughters' generation. When the Daughters' grew up in the 1970-80s, the international recession affected South Africa and resulted in retrenchments and unemployment (see Black and Stanwix, 1987); and this had adverse effects on the Daughters' fathers. Although they live in a different regime of accumulation to that of the Grandmothers (whose fathers were migrant workers), similar the Grandmothers, the Daughters' fathers were also not available for their children, including their daughters.<sup>10</sup>

**Lerato:** I was in love with my son's father, when I first met him. He was my first boyfriend and he took my virginity. I parted with my son's father when the child was three years old. There weren't other women in the picture. At the time I did not understand the relationship. He was older than me, and I was still a child. He wanted too much from me and I was not ready at the time and that's why we parted.

I have a history. The men I used to see were supportive with money but not emotionally. One man especially, from Pretoria, made me realise that it was time to change. He used to bed me very fast. Harsh. I thought that I couldn't stay with this man. At times he would beat me if he was in a bad mood.

I had pretty boys. I never brought the men home; none of them stayed over till the next morning. My sister, my brother and my son never saw the men; they came late and left afterwards.

If the men couldn't help me I would move on to another boyfriend, someone who was working and earning money. This was the only way to give me a chance. Sometimes the men would take a chance with me, they would say that they are working at Madala (ISCOR). Then I would think that they had

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<sup>10</sup> On the impact of the economic crisis and unemployment on men and their relationships to their families, (especially daughters), see the discussion in Chapter 6 which includes Komarovsky's (1971) study. See also Innocenti (2009: 7-8).

money, only to find out that he's only temping [temporary] with a contract for two to three weeks. Sometimes these men would only earn R50 a day. Now what can you do with so little money? And then I would change towards them. I would say: "Sorry, I don't want to see you any more. I'm stressed, it was not my intention to say that I love you." It was easy to get rid of them.

Life was tough. This was a way of surviving.

When you are young, ... people just love ... now I'm growing and working. I need to take time now. It's not just money. Now I'm earning my own money. Now I want to share things with a man.

People say I survived. In 2000 I thought that I was dying. That's when I got to know my status, that I was 'positive'. I have another chance. God made a miracle, the one I prayed for.

Lerato separated from her son's father because she was not 'ready', which had nothing to do with the child's father as such. The rationale for Lerato's decision represents a major difference from the women in the Mothers' and the Grandmothers' generations. Lerato's separation was informed by what she wanted for herself, even if she was not clear at that point about what it was that she wanted. Lerato's decision is consistent with women's independence, corresponding to their rights in the new South Africa.

In the struggle to survive, Lerato cultivated relationships with men, and this expressed a particular pragmatic attitude to men: whether they could assist her to provide for her family or not. This was the 'history' to which Lerato refers. These relationships were based on transactional sex, informed by material conditions such as low-paying jobs, and no support from family, friends or the state. Hunter's (2002) study, based on an informal settlement in KwaZulu-Natal, develops an argument about the 'materiality of everyday sex', an exchange based on love, sex and money with the male as the provider. This kind of relationship is promoted by inequality, increasing impoverishment and the decline in marital relationships, all prevalent in informal settlements (Hunter, 2002). The transactional sex was not strictly about male providers. Often women like Lerato have jobs, but their wages as black women are extremely low. Transactional sex is not only based on gender inequality, but on economic processes that coincide with masculinities as 'a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations' (Connell, 1995, in Hunter, 2002: 104). This explains that both men and women have agency in their practice. Connell (1995: in

Hunter, 2002) roots masculinities in changing material practices, as opposed to seeing transactional sex as ‘part of a long-standing distinct and internally coherent African system of sexuality’ (Caldwell *et. al.*, 1989: 187, quoted in Hunter, 2002: 104).

While the link between sex and gifts was not new, culture is not inert and Christianity, colonialism, urbanisation, migration and capitalism have reshaped masculinities and sexual practices in Southern Africa in fundamental ways (Hunter, 2002: 104). I have already referred to pre-colonial concubinage or *bonyatsi* in Chapter 3 (Maloka, 2004: 209), that involved extramarital relations, and where at times one or both partners were married. *Bonyatsi* could last for some time, and involved the transfer of gifts, including money, clothes and food. But, *bonyatsi* was reconfigured or ‘seriously deteriorated as a result of the prolonged absence of the younger men’ under migrant labour (Maloka, 2004: 209-210). Migrant labour destabilised families, social relations and cultural and sexual practices. Historically, the practice of *bonyatsi*, experienced by both men and women (an indication of gender equity), expressed acceptable forms of sexuality within a pre-colonial society. However, myriad pressures – economic, social, emotional and psychological – under capitalist social relations, have transformed *bonyatsi*.

Lerato was in a contradictory situation: while she chose her independence, the increased ‘freedom’ of women in democratic South Africa is fundamentally constrained by poverty. The ‘new freedom’, underpinned by structural poverty, makes black women vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS. Hunter (2002) argues that structural poverty and women’s agency are major contributing factors to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This was influenced by need and the Daughters’ pragmatic attitude to men and to achieving their needs.

Given the historical and cultural practices of *bonyatsi* and *isoka* (a woman’s boyfriend), the sexual relationships that both Rakgadi (the Grandmother) and Sara (the Mother) pursued after their husbands died, were not transactional. While all three women (including Lerato) share similar levels of economic deprivation, Lerato reflects a different psychological attitude and confidence in her relationships with

men.<sup>11</sup> Lerato initiated sex and ends 'unproductive' relationships with men. In a twist of irony, black women's democratic rights, including their sexuality, which appears and is freedom, is also a fatal fetter. While there are various historical accounts of black women as sex-workers (Beittel, 1992), the rise of transactional sex has come to the fore more recently, coinciding with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the socio-economic deprivation of the 1990s.

**Lerato:** My ex-boyfriend came to me one day and said, 'I thought about you'. I want to be with you. I want to marry you. I told him, let's be friends. We can't get married because I am 'positive'. He said to me, let's talk about it.

We met when we were 14 years old. Elroy lived next door to my aunt in Sebokeng. We were together in a relationship, on and off. Every time we broke off we both had relationships with other people. In 2000 we were together again. In 2003 I was pregnant with my second child. When the baby died Elroy blamed me. At the time the nurse told me my status but I did not understand it. No one explained the disease properly to us and that's why many of us were in denial. I wasn't sick, not even for a day. I was fat. I thought the doctors were just lying. After the baby died because of complications related to AIDS, we broke up in 2004.

Towards the end of 2008 we started see each other again. I explained my status to Elroy. This time I understood HIV/AIDS much better. At first I told Elroy that we should be friends only because of being 'positive'. I tried to counsel him until he got tested. He is 'negative'. Through our discussions I taught him a lot about AIDS.

I was very sick in 2004/2005. I was also very depressed after the baby died, a little girl. During this time a lot of things became clear. I prayed to God for a miracle, to get better. I prayed and I got answers. Today I have even forgotten that I am 'positive'. Before, when we were together our relationship didn't get anywhere. Now I am 'positive', and we have a real relationship.

Lerato is not distrustful of men or bitter about her status. She is very pragmatic and mature in her attitude. She is open and unashamed of the choices she made to survive, and she has taken responsibility for that.

Katlego is the youngest of the Daughters' generation and she has no biological children.

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<sup>11</sup> Hunter (2002) remarks that women involved in transactional sex do not see themselves as 'victims'. This is because, despite their conditions, they are exercising agency. Lerato also reported that when you have nice clothes and your hair is done, you feel good, even though you do not enjoy the beatings.

**Katlego:** I want to get married and have children one day. But I don't know how I will be able to leave the children [she lives with], even if they are older.

While Katlego had many boyfriends, this was always measured against her responsibilities to the teenagers at home. Katlego admits that it would be difficult to leave them and get married, even if they were older.

Refilwe's eldest child's father disappointed her and then he died. After she moved to Bophelong, Refilwe had a relationship after many years, and had another daughter. There is a big age gap between her two daughters – one is 18 and the other is 4.

**Refilwe:** I have my children, I like being on my own with my children. Besides, men never maintain children. I'm better off on my own.

**Rebecca:** I lived with Jacobus, the children's father, since I was 15 and I had five children with him. I also had twins - they died when they were babies, in Sebokeng Hospital. Jacobus bought them clothes but they never got to wear it. Then, *hy was mooi en skoon*. (Then, he was beautiful and clean.) After the twins died Jacobus was very upset and angry with me. He blamed me. I was also sad but there were other children to look after. Jacobus just left one day and went to live with my friend, another woman, on Stefansplaas. The children see him sometimes but he is *waarloos* (lost).

I think it's better to live alone. There's too many *skade* [damage or loss] when you live with men.

**Janet:** My husband worked for the *lobola*, and before my mother died he had paid half. Although he drank, he never fought with me. He used to say; we both don't have parents, so let's not fight. Let's talk about our differences.

He was a good man and I have good memories of him. I will never get married again. I don't want another man. I don't know how he will treat my children. He can say it's not his child and even abuse my children. There's too much child abuse around. My husband used to talk to me about men raping children to get rid of AIDS, and he used to tell me that we must look after the children so that it never happens to them. He used to say that he would kill anyone who hurts his children.

I also want to teach my son not to beat women, to be like his father. My father used to beat my mother. I don't ever want my son to beat another woman.

All the Daughters are happy living on their own, although for different reasons. The Daughters also have different options open to them in a democratic South Africa. Lerato and Refilwe have a similar independence, born of different experiences, but both are aware of their status as women in the new South Africa. The difference is that Refilwe prefers to live alone with her children, whereas Lerato is open to a new relationship. The source of the difference is possibly that Refilwe had her first child when she was relatively young, and she has had the children she wants. Lerato is younger (by only 3 years) but she is more youthful, and more open to the possibility of a relationship with a man; possibly youth and fertility are factors. Katlego, also youthful and full of possibilities, would like to marry and have children. Rebecca understands her husband's sudden change after the twin's death and perhaps this is an indication of how men and women differ in relation to emotional loss and grief. Men and women are socialised differently, to play socially determined gender roles (Oakley, 1974; Chodorow, 1979). Men are not socialised to express their emotions to children and to their family, in this way. Jacobus broke out of his socialisation when he allowed himself to buy his unborn children clothes, and later, he didn't know how to cope with their death. He was unable to speak to Rebecca, and it was 'convenient' to blame her. 'Breaking out' means becoming vulnerable, and Jacobus was unprepared emotionally to deal with the twins' death. It was easier to blame Rebecca, leave her and move in with her friend – in a sense the friend was a proxy for Rebecca. Rebecca's response was different; she grieved but she had to think about the other children, and through caring for them she overcame her grief. Rebecca was happy to live on her own with her children.

Although Janet has had a relatively sheltered life, her experience with her husband was positive and she remains loyal to his memory because of his goodness towards her and the children – similar to Rakgadi and Sara (in the Grandmothers' and Mothers' generations respectively). Her decision to remain alone with her children was informed by the memory of her husband, and the need to preserve the memory of their relationship. Janet also made a judgement on the general behaviour of men in the township, based on her awareness of the prevalence of violence and abuse towards women and children. Janet's husband provided an example of agency, of a man who opted for a loving relationship with his wife and his children in opposition to the historical context that formed him (including traditional and myriad forms of

masculinity) (Connell, 2005c). Janet's husband was interesting, a migrant worker who lived in a single male hostel before marrying her, and with her, building a family. His attitude to his wife, to discussing differences with her, and his care of his children, illustrates that men have, and do exercise agency, and that socialisation or habituation is never absolute.

Even though violence looms large, none of the women has a bitter attitude to men (similar to women on the Grandmothers' and the Mothers' generations). The women are pragmatic, understand, accept and express a positive approach to life and its possibilities. In addition to the particular experiences of the women, one important underlying reason was that although the women do not have good experiences with their fathers, the new rights in the Constitution provides an important context that engenders their confidence to live on their own without men. The Constitution, as it were, almost compensates for the Daughters' absentee fathers.

#### ***7.2.4 Self-image and identity as woman-heads of families***

**Lerato:** Sometimes you do things because you have to, even if it doesn't make you feel good. I earned so little and I wanted to keep the children together.

Once on her own and independent, Lerato fetched her siblings from the orphanage and they lived together. Within the constraints of poverty, even though she was working, she decided to have relationships – transactional sex – with 'pretty boys' as a means of survival. This was a reflection of Lerato taking responsibility as the head of the family, for the children, although it resulted in negative consequences for her in that she became HIV-positive. Three moments reflect Lerato's self-identity as a woman-head of a family: (i) when she broke off her relationship with her boyfriend to live on her own with her child; (ii) when she used transactional sex as the basis for her family's survival; and (iii) when she decided that 'men support you with money but not emotionally'. Lerato is very comfortable in her status as a woman-head of a family.



Refilwe moved out of her extended family's home when housing became available, and she is content to live on her own with her children.

**Refilwe:** It is difficult being a single parent. The children need things and I try to give them what they want and make a plan to do it.

Refilwe is independent and she takes pride in her home and her children.

Rebecca is similar to Refilwe in that she lived with her extended family on the farm till she got an RDP house. Rebecca lives with her three sons and her late niece's three children.

**Rebecca:** My niece, Elsie, was living on the farm plot but when she got sick she came to live with me so that she could attend the clinic regularly. When she died, she wasn't even 30; and she asked me to look after the children.

Janet had to learn to live on her own after her husband died.

**Janet:** I was very hurt after my husband died. I was pregnant and I was worried about how to make this child big on my own. The neighbours in the street used to laugh at me. They used to say that now that I'm alone, I am just like them, and now I will suffer because my husband is dead.

I thought about having an abortion and I went to the clinic. While I was sitting there I realised that I am not the first person to bring up a child on my own. God will help me. So I didn't go through with the abortion. When I look at this child now I think of how I struggled, and I am also glad that I didn't do it just because of things that people say.

Katlego is in a different situation to the other women in that she inherited the 'headship' of the family from her grandmother. She has no children of her own. When her grandmother died none of the children living with her wanted to live with anyone else. They were a family and did not want to be split up. Katlego had to take responsibility for herself and her three teenage cousins.

**Katlego:** We are too young to be the head of the family. We need help, food and especially counselling. We're supposed to be having fun at our age but we have a lot of responsibility.

The transition to being the head of the 'family' as opposed to being the head of the 'household' was made through the struggles of the Grandmothers and the Mothers, in

practice, over a period of generations.<sup>12</sup> The burden of being the proxy for the man is removed from the Daughters through the practice and the fulfilment of the Grandmothers and the Mothers becoming heads of ‘families’, and this prefigures the 1996 Constitution, which formalised women’s rights. Ideologically, the transition was no longer as important for the Daughters, and unlike many other non-Western countries there is no stigma attached (discussed in Chapter 3) (Datta, 2000: 42; Kristiansen’s, 2003).

As the Daughters grew up in the new South Africa, women as heads of families became more and more socially accepted. Lerato’s confidence, helped by this social acceptance, enabled her to decide to live on her own even though she was offered marriage.<sup>13</sup> This was an important ideological transition that allowed the women to shift from being caretakers, responsible for the needs of the households in which they lived, to become heads of their families. Being responsible for the family and not ceding decision-making to a male-head is a different psychological ‘head space’. Decisions are taken – sometimes consultatively, sometimes not – but they are not deferred to anyone.

The women have different levels of confidence, reflecting their different backgrounds, educational levels and experience. Refilwe and Lerato are open and outgoing. Rebecca and Janet are soft-spoken and have lived relatively sheltered lives. Katlego is a mixture, confident and soft-spoken. The Daughters are aware of their responsibilities and this reflects their self-concepts as heads of their families. Lerato’s path of independence began when she was relatively young and lived in her family house in Old Bophelong, she had left her son’s father and lived on her own. Rebecca and Refilwe lived with their children in extended families because of the housing shortage, which was resolved when RDP houses became available.

Katlego was extremely self-conscious in her testimony about the responsibilities that being the head of the family entails. She is very young, 25 years old, and is

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<sup>12</sup> Walker (1990a), Bonner (1990) and Beittel (1992) discuss the existence of woman-headed families from the 1930s and 1940s. Pauw (1962) discusses woman-headed families in his study of East London in the 1960s. Beittel (1992) discusses the resurgence of woman-headed families in the 1970s and 1980s – see also Chapter 3.

<sup>13</sup> Lerato’s confidence may be a product of her youth – which relates to age - and perhaps the Daughters will change when they age.

responsible for teenagers. It is with this knowledge and experience that she discusses the need for counselling. Young people of her age group should receive broad-based state support in carrying out these responsibilities. This also saves the state resources, from having to maintain state orphanage. Katlego's competency and commitment as the family-head is unquestioned, and much of her youth is focused on bringing up a family

The context that has shaped the relative ease with which the Daughters' generation has undertaken the shift to being heads of their families is best captured by Janet: 'I realised that I am not the first person to bring up a child on my own'. This was an important moment in Janet's transition: Janet reaches back into South African women's historical struggles and they 'free' her to exercise her agency to live as a woman-head of her family. Janet, very simply and powerfully traces the continuity of her social experience with the many generations of women who have come before her, and the palpable gains that women have made through their concrete struggles that underpin the Constitution and other progressive legislation. The women in the Daughters' generation enjoy the fruits of the struggles of generations of South African women. It is this context that underscores the confidence and self-assurance with which the women in the Daughters' generation have assumed their roles as heads of families. The Daughters' are comfortable on their own, and there is no social pressure to marry.

### **7.3 The Family Form of the Daughters' Families**

#### **7.3.1 *Composition of the Daughters' families*<sup>14</sup>**

**Lerato** lives with her son (11), her stepsister (17) and stepbrother (15). Lerato fetched her siblings from the orphanage with the help of a social worker, and they have been living together since 1998. The children are all still at school.

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<sup>14</sup> These relationships are summarised in Table 8.1 below.

In effect Lerato became a surrogate mother to her siblings. Her headship was based on her initiative as the mother to her son and as the older sister, and was reinforced over time because she was the only adult responsible for caring and ensuring that the children's needs were met. Over time, Lerato and the children developed an emotional relationship as a family.

**Refilwe** has lived with her two daughters ever since she moved into her RDP house in 1998. Her eldest daughter is in Grade 11 and her youngest daughter attends the crèche where she works.

**Janet** lives with her two children, a daughter (9), who is at school, and a son (2). Janet's sister lives in a shack (*mkuku*) in her yard with her child (3) and she is pregnant with her second child.

**Rebecca** lives with her three sons (20, 18 and 16) and her deceased niece's four children (6, 5, 3 and 2). Her sons do not work, although occasionally they do piece jobs. The youngest one is still at school. Rebecca looks after the young children at home.

**Katlego** lives with her uncle and aunt (twins, aged 17) and her two male cousins (17 and 13). They are all teenagers, still at school.

**Table 7.1 Composition of woman-headed families in the Daughters' generation**

Daughters	Lerato (32)	Refilwe (36)	Rebecca (35)	Janet (35)	Katlego (25)
Children	1 son (11)	2 daughters (18, 4)	3 sons (20, 18, 16)	1 daughter (9), 1 son (2)	-
Others	1 sister (17) 1 brother (15) (Same father)	-	Late niece's 4 children (6, 5, 3, 2)	Sister lives in a shack, in her yard.	1 uncle (17) 1 aunt (17) 2 male cousins (17, 13)
Total	4	3	8	4	5

The Daughters' generation consists of three different family compositions: the extended family (Lerato, Rebecca and Janet), a single generation of peers or a

different form of the extended family (Katlego), and the single woman with children (Refilwe).<sup>15</sup>

The composition of woman-headed families tends to vary (see discussion in Chapter 2). The average household size is 4.8 persons, and is larger than the average black household (3.52) (IDP, 2007, see discussion in Chapter 4). The fluidity of the woman-headed family form is affected by HIV/AIDS, death, family need and socio-economic conditions. Rebecca was a single woman with children, after her niece's death the family-household changed, and she now has three orphan children to care for. Issues of fertility and teenage pregnancies are also factors, particularly among black working people (RSA, 2009).<sup>16</sup> In the Bophelong Survey (2007), 93% of respondents reported that the people who lived with them were family, related to them by 'blood'. This seems to indicate that while similar socio-economic conditions inform the nature of the fluidity of working-class families in South Africa, 'solidarity' is mediated by blood relationships.<sup>17</sup> This is evident in the women in the Daughters' generation. Lerato fetched her siblings from the orphanage, Rebecca cares for her late niece's children, and Janet's sister lives in a shack at the back of her house, and she sometimes has to provide (food) for her sister's family as well.

### **7.3.2 Work and sources of income**

#### **7.3.2.1 Work**

What is the nature of the work of the women in the Daughters' generation? Is it different from that of the Grandmothers' and the Mothers' generation?

**Lerato:** I started to work at Butterfield bakery in Vanderbijlpark, baking bread, in 1998. This was very hard work. I started early in the morning to late at night, from 5 am to 7 pm. Sometimes I used to work night shift so that the

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<sup>15</sup> According to Laslett (1972: 29) the extended family household consists of a conjugal family unit with additional relatives. In the Daughters' generation the extended family includes mothers with their children and their siblings (Lerato and Janet), mother, children and her late niece's children (Rebecca), and family members of different ages, including her uncle and her cousins (Katlego).

<sup>16</sup> See discussion in Chapter 6, the Mothers, where this arises concretely.

<sup>17</sup> Russel (2003) discusses the importance of kin as a factor in households, although Ross (1996) disagrees, based on her study.

bread was ready early in the morning. I worked at Butterfield for three years, earning between R250 to R320 a week with overtime. The money was little and the work was too much. I was very tired and decided to leave the job.

It wasn't easy to find work. Then I worked at Vaal Portuguese, a supermarket near to Vanderbijlpark in 2001. I worked there for six months and earned R300 a week. I did packing. The hours were long and the pay was little. Sometimes they shouted at me and at night I had to walk home to Bophelong in the dark because there was no public transport. So I left that job.

I was unemployed for a time before I got the job at ASEDI as a volunteer, in 2004. We worked every day, going 'door to door'. It doesn't matter if it is raining or the sun is shining. You walk every day to every house in the township, to find out about the family, if there are orphan children or people living with HIV/AIDS. Sometimes people don't even know their status. Some children don't have a birth certificate and then you advise people about the child grant. ASEDI has other facilities like an office for [the Department of] Home Affairs and sometimes there's a social worker for people to talk to.

When I first started at ASEDI we used to get R500 a month. In April 2007 the money went up to R1 000 a month. Once we got training in counselling I enjoyed it very much. So I told Tsietsi [the co-ordinator] that if any openings came up he must let me know. I was open with Tsietsi about my HIV/AIDS status. I enjoyed the work, talking to people with HIV/AIDS and advising them. When the counselling job at the Clinic came up, Tsietsi informed me. I went for an interview and got the job. This job is linked to an NGO based in Vereeniging, which runs HIV/AIDS projects with the government [the Department of Social Development].

They gave us two weeks training and after that I started at the Bophelong Clinic. I like the work very much. I can help people and make a difference. I do general counselling as a way to protect people's status. If you only counsel people with AIDS no one will want to come and talk to you. People are still afraid to come out and talk about their status. So if you say 'general counselling', you can help many people, including people with HIV/AIDS. When we counsel, we must test everyone, it's compulsory. If the person is positive, you counsel them and then refer them to the nurse for further treatment.

I am not qualified to do anything more. I try to talk to people, to reassure them, to get them to ask me questions. I tell them that it doesn't mean that if you have AIDS that you are going to die. No, it means you have the virus but if you look after yourself, eat properly, exercise and take the ARV medication you can live long. I tell them my status.

It's very difficult with men; only 1 in 5 is a man. The men don't want to talk. Especially when they discover they are 'positive', they become silent. I tell them you must talk; it's important. Men keep everything inside. They rather go to shebeens [taverns]. I advise the men that it is important to tell their

partners about their status. I even tell them to ‘practice’ talking to me. I feel sorry for men; emotionally they don’t know how to deal with problems.<sup>18</sup>

I like the work very much. Sometimes a job is a ‘calling’. But there isn’t much money, only R1 000 a month. I am also going to register for night school.

Janet has never worked formally in her life. When her husband died she was pregnant.

**Janet:** I would like to get work, and take the child to a crèche. I am very willing to work. But it’s difficult to find work with a small baby. I can’t go to work with a baby. Once my son was very sick and I had to take him to hospital. The boy is very energetic.

I can do housework and cleaning.

**Rebecca:** After I left Jacobus I went to work at the Shakespeare Hotel. I worked in the kitchen for two years, in about 1997.<sup>19</sup> I did piece jobs afterwards. I used to go from house to house in the white areas looking for work. Sometimes you get R30 or R40 or R50 a day. I went to Durban with one employer and I worked for R200 a month.

I still do piece jobs when I can. I put the baby on my back and take her with me. I leave the other three children with my sister next door. I wash, iron and do housework.

Refilwe has only worked for the past two years. She works at a local crèche from Monday to Friday, from 8am. to 5pm. every day, and she gets R500 a month.

**Refilwe:** My class is the 2-4 year old age group. I have 80 children in my class. The work is hard and the money is little. Every month the money is put into my FNB [First National Bank] account. Before we used to get a salary slip but now we get nothing.

The crèche is subsidised by the government, but I don’t know how much the owner gets. She just sits in her office; she doesn’t help us with running the crèche.

At 8am. I receive the children. When the children have all arrived I count the number and pass this on to the kitchen and the cook dishes up the breakfast porridge. After they dish up, I fetch the food, the children eat and then I clear

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<sup>18</sup> As with Rebecca’s partner, Jacobus experience after the death of their twins, this is a reflection on the socialisation of men, especially black men. While men and women are socialised to traditional gender roles, women ‘talk’ because they are carers and nurturers, and have to show feelings towards others, which makes it possible for them to show their own feelings.

<sup>19</sup> Rebecca says she cannot remember dates and people she worked for; there were too many employers, and too many piece jobs (see Appendix 3).

the dishes to the kitchen. Then I start with activities with the children. The activities include colouring, painting and telling them stories. They take a toilet break and then lunch is at 12 noon. I go through the same process of dishing for the children, they eat and I clear the dishes away.

At about 1pm. the children go to sleep. At 2pm. the children get a snack and then they play till their parents come to fetch them at 5pm. and I leave for home.

After being unemployed for five years, Katlego got a job as a volunteer and earns R1 000 a month.

**Katlego:** I work from Monday to Friday as a volunteer from 8 am to 4.30 pm. We are about 20 volunteers altogether. We go out in pairs every morning, and the weather doesn't matter. We go door to door, to see if there are problems in the community. In the afternoon I look after orphaned children. We give them lunch and help them with homework and play with them. Sometimes people are unemployed and have no food, or someone is [HIV] 'positive' and needs medicine. Sometimes there are orphans and the family needs help with a social worker or to get a grant.

When I started in 2006 we earned R500 a month. In 2007 the money was increased to R1 000. The money is very little and the work is a lot, very tiring.

All the Daughters (except Janet) have done work traditionally associated with black women – baking bread and packing food in a supermarket (Lerato), domestic work (Rebecca) and caregiving (Refilwe, Lerato and Katlego). The hours are long, the money is very little, and there are few opportunities for young black women to train and to develop a career path. The nexus of colour, class and gender inherited from apartheid continues to dominate and inform the nature of black women's work, their social status and economic position (Hassim, 2006) (discussed in Chapter 3).

Janet has never worked for pay in her life – she does lots of unpaid work. Refilwe is working in her first job as a caregiver. Refilwe works for a small business enterprise in the township. Sustainable development and job creation that specifically addresses the apartheid legacy of black women (and all others) is almost non-existent.

Domestic work was the dominant form of work in the Grandmothers' and the Mothers' generation. In this generation only Rebecca struggles to find piecework daily, for very little income. Domestic work has been restructured (Ally, 2008) and this accounts for the break in the Daughters' generation and the shift to "care" work



(England, 2005). Two Daughters (Lerato, and Katlego) work as ‘volunteers’, and one (Refilwe) is a caregiver at a crèche, doing a variation of care work.

The growth of care work in South Africa is partly explained by the restructuring of domestic work and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and its ripple effects on families, men, women and children in every community. The ‘volunteers’ are exploited because they cannot access a proper wage, social benefits, or labour legislation; and are ultimately exploited by the South Africa government (Fayers, 2005).<sup>20</sup> This impacts on gender inequality, and substantively undermines the struggle for gender equality (England, 2005), which the government is constitutionally bound to uphold.

Refilwe’s work as a caregiver is vital to the development of children.<sup>21</sup> The work is emotionally taxing and the number of children (80) that one person has to care for affects the quality of the care. The crèche’s owner receives support from the Department of Social Development, but the nature of this relationship is not transparent to the workers like Refilwe.<sup>22</sup>

The Daughters’ generation, with a mean age of 35 years and without any recognised qualifications, are indicative of the lack of institutional training for women in post-apartheid South Africa. Except for Rebecca, the women only have some level of high school education that has not been developed in the new democracy. Refilwe is the only one in this generation who received training in baking and sewing from a government department. Besides reproducing gendered stereotypes, the training was not linked to a job opportunity. Both Katlego and Lerato received minimal training and then used their own latent talents, initiative and agency in their work. Lerato especially has illustrated her agency in bringing her experience and informally acquired skills to her work, and hence she has ‘job satisfaction’.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Various labour legislation provides protection for workers – for example, the Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (RSA, 1993) and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (RSA, 2008). If any home-based worker is infected through the care of persons, they will not receive compensation (Fayers, 2005: 38).

<sup>21</sup> Child development, especially for black children, is a major related issue for discussion that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>22</sup> The Department of Social Development supports various NGOs, related to the state’s commitment to the privatisation of social services including care, and contracting out such services (see AIDSbuzz, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> There is legislation and an institutional framework – the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) – to recognise informally acquired skills in an attempt to begin to

In South Africa, the absence of significant training and development exacerbates the apartheid legacy that already accounts for the racial and gendered inequality in skills development with respect to black working women (and men) (discussed in Chapter 3). In the process, the sexual division of labour, gender inequality and black women's continued subservience and subordination continues. The 'stipend' they receive is a neoliberal expression of the absence of worker rights and benefits, a paternalistic and discretionary measure of a philanthropic state, and not one based on the rights of all, including women. This places single-woman-headed families at a decided disadvantage and explains why women tend to be poorer, especially single-woman-heads. This coincides with arguments made by Picchio (1992); Muthwa (1994); Chant (2007); Katapa (2005); and Armstrong, et.al. (2008)

### 7.3.2.2 *Other sources of income*

In South Africa earning a wage generally means having certain rights as a worker, minimum wages, working condition and benefits, and certain protections derived from workers' struggles against exploitation. As a volunteer Lerato earns a stipend and she is not a 'worker' with rights.

**Lerato:** I get a stipend of R1 000 a month. They haven't paid me for three months. Through the NGO, we work for the Department of Social Development. I enjoy the work so I don't mind the little money but they must pay us.

I get the Child Support Grant for my son (R210), and the Foster Care Grant for my brother and my sister, R650 for each one of them a month. This is our total income for the month.

My son's father helps to buy clothes sometimes, when he has work.

The women (Katlego, Refilwe and Lerato) who are working earn generally low incomes so that they qualify for the state's means test and receive government social grants where this is applicable (see Table 7.2 below).<sup>24</sup>

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offset the legacy of apartheid. An assessment of their relevance is important, especially with regard to job opportunities for woman-headed families, and further research is needed on this.

<sup>24</sup> Delaney *et.al.* (2008: 62) recommend a review of the means test and that the CSG keeps abreast of inflation.

The social grant system in South Africa has many shortcomings (discussed in Chapters 2, 5 and 6); it is inflexible and is not ‘user-friendly’. The grants make a difference in family incomes, and despite considerations of potential abuse, they do not differentiate positively amongst people, especially woman-heads. Delaney *et.al.* (2008: 62) in their study of the CSG recommend that ‘...more attention needs to be paid to addressing the higher exclusion error’. For instance, Rebecca is unemployed and has four children with no birth certificates who are thus denied access.<sup>25</sup> (Rebecca’s sons are unemployed and assist her when they get piece jobs, but their support is very irregular.) For Janet the grant is her sole income, and it is far below the poverty line. There is no grant to ensure that every family does not fall beyond a ‘basic floor’ in terms of income and poverty levels (Hassim, 2005). In contrast, Lerato has access to three grants, and two of them are foster care grants that are more substantial in amounts than the CSG (see Table 7.2 below). The basis for the large gap in income between Lerato and the rest of the women is: the type of grant accessed and its equivalence in monetary terms, and how many grants one is eligible for.

**Table 7.2 Wages and income in woman-headed families in the Daughters’ generation**

<b>Daughters</b>	<b>Lerato</b>	<b>Refilwe</b>	<b>Rebecca<sup>26</sup></b>	<b>Janet</b>	<b>Katlego</b>
<i>Wages</i>	-	500.00	-	-	-
<i>Stipend</i>	1 000		-	-	1000
<i>Grants</i>	2 x FCG (1 300) 1 x CSG (210)	1 x CSG (210)	-	2 x CSG (420)	1 x FCG (650)
<i>Total Income</i>	R2 510.00	R710.00	-	R420.00	R1 650.00
<i>Grants as % of Total Income</i>	60.1%	29.6%	-	100%	39%

*Notes: (a) Social grants as at 1 April 2008; (b) all amounts in South African Rand.*

The grants constitute significant percentages of the women’s total income as follows, (based on Table 7.2 above): 29.6% (Refilwe), 39% (Katlego), 60.1% (Lerato) and 100% (Janet). While Janet’s sole income is derived from a grant, for Lerato this amounts to 60.1% as she accesses three grants in addition to her income (stipend). For Refilwe the CSG increases her income by almost 30% (29.6%) and for Katlego

<sup>25</sup> Examples of exclusion such as Rebecca’s were noted by Delaney *et.al.*, (2008: 62).

<sup>26</sup> Rebecca is unemployed and has no regular income. If she is lucky enough to get work, she might earn R30-R50 for the whole month, or perhaps nothing because the child was sick or she could not find work. I have been in her home when at times there has been absolutely no food.

almost 40% (39%). While Janet receives two CSG grants for her two (biological) children, it is far less (R420) than the Foster Care Grant (R650) for non-biological children. Yet, all children have the same needs.<sup>27</sup> The grant amounts make a difference to family income levels and their levels of poverty (Hassim, 2005b; Delaney *et.al.*, 2008).

The Daughters, like the Mothers, do not receive any direct financial (or other) support from the South African government, to reproduce themselves. Similar to the Mothers, they are at a productive age, full of hope and possibilities. But they will need to wait a long time before they qualify for a state grant, namely the OAG.

### 7.3.3 *Patterns of consumption*

What are the patterns of consumption – the food, the clothes and the living standards – of women in the Daughters' generation? (See Table 7.3 below.)

**Lerato:** In the mornings we have tea and bread. When the children come home from school they eat bread with jam or peanut butter.

We eat pap every day. In the week we eat pap with milk or *maas* [sour milk] or spinach. We only eat meat once or twice a week. Mostly we eat chicken and sometimes beef. On Sundays I try to make a nice lunch with roast chicken and vegetables and rice.

We buy the pap here at Ola's [in Bophelong] because it's too heavy to carry. I send my son or my brother with the wheelbarrow, to buy the 50kg bag of pap. You can't buy everything here because sometimes it's old, like the oil. So we do go to Vanderbijlpark. You can't spend your money at the shops here; it will be gone before the month is up. But I try and go myself because you try and teach them what to buy but sometimes they come with the wrong things. You must know how to make money stretch.

I don't pay school fees, but I have to buy electricity, about R50 to R100 a month. I do have clothing accounts at Total Sports, to buy clothes for the children. The children are getting big and their clothes get small quickly. I do my hair at the salon in the next street every month. It costs R120.

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<sup>27</sup> One reason for this is that the FCG is much cheaper than the maintenance of state orphanages (Picchio, 1992: 85).

Life is hard but before I stress and think too much, I say to myself that I am not alone. There are many people who are suffering. Especially if I look at where I come from, I have a lot.

Lerato's expenses are basic – food, electricity and clothing. The price of food is more expensive in the township than in the large supermarkets in Vanderbijlpark. People in Bophelong still spend most of their money on basic goods in the former white towns (Slabbert, 2004). Lerato does not want the teenagers to go shopping as she thinks she makes the money stretch more. This inhibits the division of labour in the home, and was also observed in Chant's (1991 and 2002) study of female-headed families in Mexico.

**Table 7.3 Basic household expenses for the women in the Daughters' generation**

Consumption	Lerato	Refilwe	Rebecca	Janet	Katlego
<i>Food</i>	1 200	300	-	250	800
<i>Food as % of total income</i>	47%	39%	-	51%	38%
<i>Education</i>	—	-	-	-	200 (4 children)
<i>Electricity</i>	100	100	-	100	100
<i>Electricity as % of total income</i>	4%	6%		8%	7%
<i>Rent</i>	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Rent as % of total income</i>	-	-			
<i>Transport</i>	150	80	-		60
<i>Transport as % of total income</i>	5%	5%		7%	7%
<i>Crèche fees</i>			-		
<i>Clothes</i>	500 Total Sports/ Edgars	200	-	50 (lay bye, Pep Stores)	300 Jet
<i>Association fees</i>		-	-	-	25 (funeral society), 50 (church)
<i>Other:</i>	250 Furniture Account		-		100 banked for fostered cousin's schooling
<i>Total</i>	2 200	680	-	400	1 585
<b><i>Total Income</i></b>	<b>2 530.00</b>	<b>730.00</b>		<b>420.00</b>	<b>1 650.00</b>
<i>Balance</i>	330	50		20	65

*Note: All figures in South African Rand*

While there is a general struggle to cover basic family needs, Lerato has a positive attitude and acknowledges the suffering of others. This attitude is important for Lerato, as stress is detrimental to her health.

**Katlego:** I buy the R260 hamper at Ola's, with mielie meal and oil, etc. I buy some of the other groceries and the cleaning stuff at Vanderbijlpark. I spend R150 at the butcher, Nhlapo's, on chicken, *wors* [sausage] and red meat. They give us free juice. Then I buy vegetables. We don't eat meat every day. I also have to keep money for bread for the month. I bank R100 for the 13-year-old for his future schooling, R250 for clothes, and R100 for electricity. Most of the money goes on food.

In the mornings we eat bread and margarine. In the evenings we eat pap with milk or *maas* or eggs.

Everyone in the house has a cell [phone] and we have a TV. I am going to open a clothes account at Jet for the children. They never ask for clothes but I know they need it and I can't afford to pay cash. If I run short I phone my mother for help.

**Refilwe:** We eat pap and vegetables, like cabbage and spinach every day. Sometimes we eat pap and milk. We try to eat chicken and a little fish at least once a week. I don't belong to any 'society', I can't afford it.

With the small child you can buy clothes at Pep Stores, she doesn't mind. But the eldest one wants clothes from Jet, Woolworths, Mr Price or Legit.

There's no money for school. I'm struggling to keep the children at school. I wish the government could provide education for children after Grade 12. If the government can help us like this, it will make a difference.

I try give to the children everything, and to make a plan to do it. Sometimes I have to go to my mother and my sister for help when I'm really broke.

**Janet:** I buy some meat, chicken necks, bones and vegetables but it doesn't last long. The children like chicken feet. I buy a 12.5kg pap for R50. Electricity is R50 but it doesn't last the month. If I don't have R20 sometimes there's no lights. We eat pap three times a day, just like that, with nothing else.

I don't cook every day. If there's something in the house I cook, sometimes the children just go to bed with nothing. [Janet bursts into tears and breaks down.] I'm happy for a time at the end of the month when I get some money to buy food. Then I have to worry for the next days again. When there is hunger in the house my heart is sore. There's no one to even talk to, no one to turn to. My mother's sister lives in Sebokeng hostel but she doesn't worry about us; and my husband's family in Matatiele [Eastern Cape] don't even try and see the children.

[After Janet recovered, she continued.] Every day my daughter goes to ASEDI for lunch, but what about food for my two-year-old son at home?<sup>28</sup> The lunch is only during the week. There's nothing, no support, no food, for the children on weekends.

I must buy clothes for the children because they are growing and their clothes don't fit. I take R50 and sometimes lay-bye clothes and shoes, and pay it off over three months for my son. Pep Stores is the cheapest. Sometimes, by the time I finish paying, the clothes are too small and we must choose something else. I just wash and iron my old clothes. Sometimes people give me clothes and I wear them. I don't remember when last I went to the shop and bought myself something to wear.

When my brother died we didn't have money to bury him. My brother had a burial society but after he was shot in 2007 we couldn't find his ID [identity document]. The burial society didn't want to bury my brother and the street committee just wanted to wrap him up and bury him like that. Then I went to my Mother's sister and she helped us, and my father's sister. This was the only time we got help from my family.

When I cook I share everything with my sister and her child. So there's a lot of pressure on me, on the small [CSG] grant. I can't even see to my own children on such a little money. This is more stress. My sister gets R210 for her child – the grant – but she pays R110 for the crèche and R90 for the child's transport.

I have a cell phone but no TV or radio.

**Rebecca:** I only buy food when I have some money. Sometimes we buy pap and tea when we can. Sometimes we get lucky and the boys get a piece job or I get work. But many times we go to my sister for a little pap because there's no food in the house. We can't afford electricity for the prepaid meter for the month; sometimes we stay in the dark. I have to walk with the baby on my back to look for work because there's no money for transport. Everything we get we spend on food. I don't have a cell phone or a TV.

All the Daughters struggle to meet their family's basic needs. Rebecca and Janet have serious food security problems. Rebecca takes the children to eat at her sister's house and this is similar to what Ross (1996: 66) found in the Western Cape (discussed in Chapter 3), that 'children lodged with relatives and friends ... people ate in different units to those in which they slept'. Even Lerato who earns more than the rest of the women (because of the three social grants she accesses), struggles to make ends meet.

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<sup>28</sup> This is the programme for vulnerable children of school-going age, sponsored by the Department of Social Development and implemented at ASEDI.

Janet says the ‘children like chicken feet’, and this is an indication of their habituation to particular kinds of food. The majority live on pap (a refined starch), with very little protein as meat is expensive. Protein foods include milk, *maas* and ‘cheap or fatty cuts of meat.’<sup>29</sup> The women buy food that can be ‘stretched’. Spinach and *morogo* are the ‘common township vegetables’. We also noted in Chapters 5 and 6 that woman-headed families spend a larger portion of their income on food, confirmed in Table 7.3 (above), where the women spend between 38% to 51% of their income on food. While Janet spends the most on food (51%), Rebecca does not have any money to spend consistently on food. The women live a hand-to-mouth existence. Makgetla’s (2004) study (discussed in Chapter 3) supports the women’s experience that food security is a major concern for those living on a grant. Statistics SA (2008) also confirms that people who receive a grant spend most of their income on food.

Based on the discussion in Chapter 2, the IES 2005 of Statistics SA (2008a and b) indicates that an amount of R211 (2000 prices) is enough per person, per month, to satisfy the daily energy requirement of 2 261 calories (foodstuffs) for low-income South Africans. This is the same amount as the CSG, R210, per month. This amount was the food component of the poverty line (Armstrong *et. al.*, 2008: 26). An additional amount of R111 is allowed for essential but non-food items, bringing the total per capita monthly minimum to R322. Statistics SA (2005) used the R322 per capita per month in 2000 prices as the ‘lower bound’ poverty line.

In terms of the Statistics SA’s designated food amount (R211), (see Table 7.3 above), only one woman (Lerato) covered the family’s food expenses and its daily energy requirement. The other four women - Janet, Katlego, Refilwe and Rebecca - were unable to meet their daily energy requirements, and amongst them there were eleven children under eighteen years old. In terms of the ‘lower bound’ poverty line, only two women (Lerato and Katlego) just about manage. Three of the women – Refilwe, Rebecca and Janet - have a clear deficit in the nutrition and health of their families, especially their children.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Tankiso Matlakala, 2007, See Appendix 1.

<sup>30</sup> This is confirmed by Faber and Wenhold’s (2007) study on ‘Nutrition in Contemporary South Africa. They argue that that childhood malnutrition starts early in life. Besides being deficient in key vitamins, they argue that the diet of South African children is inadequate in energy and nutrient density.



Child mortality rates are indicative of the overall well being in a country. The *Limpopo Leader* (2008: 4), a publication of the University of Limpopo, focuses on women and children ‘whose positions in our democratic society leaves a huge amount to be desired’. The United Nations (UN) estimates South Africa’s Under 5 Mortality Rate (UFMR) to be 69 deaths per 1 000 live births (*Limpopo Leader*, 2008: 17). In South Africa, ‘The Saving Children 2006 report compiled by Child PIP (Problem Identification Programme) users and the MRC Unit for Maternal and Infant Health Care Strategies sets the figure at 59/1 000’ – but they note that this refers only to deaths in hospitals (*Limpopo Leader*, 2008: 17). According to the same report, many more children die and this is not registered. The major causes of death include lower respiratory tract infection, diarrhoea, severe infections and meningitis. More than 50% of children died from symptomatic HIV and two-thirds were malnourished. Since signing the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, South Africa is one of 12 countries where the UFMR has increased. African countries that have done better in this regard, and that do not have the resources and infrastructure that South Africa has, include Malawi, Tanzania and Mozambique (*Limpopo Leader*, 2008: 17-18).

The general level at which children’s basic needs are provided is also an indication of their social position, and their overall conditions of living and their life chances. On the other hand, a low level of provision of children’s needs develops a particular emotional and psychological make-up that prepares them for low standards of living, for acceptance of this standard and thus for subordination: they are ‘hegemonised’ and/or habituated to a life of poverty.

## **7.4 The Daughters’ generation and the reproduction of capitalist patriarchy**

### **7.4.1 Division of labour**

**Lerato:** The children are big and they help in the house. My sister does the housework and my son and my brother clean the outside. They sweep and do the garden.

We don’t cook every day. Between my sister and me we make something to eat. I cook every Sunday.

The children, we all get on very well with each other. Sometimes there's a small problem over dishes, or sweeping or not wanting to go to the shop. Sometimes they don't listen to my sister, but these are normal things, part of life. We don't have problems.

In Lerato's family there is a gendered division of labour. Lerato and her sister cook and do the housework and the boys sweep the outside and do the garden. The 'small problem over dishes or sweeping' is because the boys do not listen to her younger sister when Lerato is not there. In general the children co-operate with each other and look after themselves when she is at work.

**Katlego:** The boys are stubborn. The main problem is dishes. The boys don't want to work in the house. My cousin and I refuse to cook if they don't help us. I asked them who must do all the cleaning if everyone doesn't help? The boys do help and sometimes they fry an egg and make pap for themselves only.

**Refilwe:** My daughter and me, we share the housework and even the cooking. We don't have any problems.

**Rebecca:** The boys help me in the house. They can do everything. Sometimes when I look for work the boys help with the children.

**Janet:** When we started to live together [she smiles as she thinks back and remembers] my husband used to clean the house. Afterwards he said that his friends would laugh at him and that it's women's work, but he used to help and he used to clean the house.

My daughter helps with little things in the house. My son is two years old but I will also teach him how to do things for himself, to wash his socks, because it's better to teach children. What I have learned is that sometimes one is alone. If I die, they must be able to look after themselves. I only hope that they will be able to stay at school and finish, and not be like me.

In Lerato's family, while the children co-operate and assist with chores, there is a gendered division of labour. However, the seeds of potential struggle exist as her sister does not want to do all the housework and sometimes the boys do not listen to her. The boys are still young but the struggle that is taking place through her younger sister may lead either to more egalitarian forms of sharing housework or increased conflict. In Refilwe's family the division of labour is shared with her daughter, and there are no sons.

A struggle over housework is occurring in Katlego's family, amongst the boys. The boys do not want to do housework because they believe this is 'girls' work. This is the contradiction related to boys growing up in woman-headed families and the need to differentiate themselves and develop an identity. Katlego's pragmatism about the boys helping is influenced by her sense of women's rights and equality in the new South Africa. This underlines her question when she says, 'Who must do all the cleaning if everyone doesn't help?' While the boys could just be resisting doing work, they also see housework as 'girls' work. This indicates that the boys are influenced by 'outside' influences, school and friends within the township, as there is a clash between the traditional gendered roles for men, which is countering the woman-headed family.<sup>31</sup>

Rebecca is the poorest and the most egalitarian in her approach to the division of labour in the home. Rebecca's sons grew up relatively sheltered on a farm plot rather than in a township, but it is a reflection of their mother's upbringing that they co-operate and assist her with housework and caring for the children. Janet's experience with her husband was definitive in shaping her approach to rearing children, to rearing a son. Although her husband was mindful about what his friends would say, he helped her with the housework. Janet wants to rear her children to be independent, and to teach them to care for themselves.

This study confirms the important role that women play in the development of gendered subjectivities and their location to 'subvert' existing power relations. There are substantive attempts in the Daughters' generation to ensure that housework is shared and not gendered. In some families (Lerato and Katlego) this caused disagreements, minor in the case of Lerato, but more representative of struggles against traditional gendered roles in the case of Katlego. The nature of the co-operation in the home is important if gender stereotypes are to be broken down. When children, especially boys, are young, the contradictions are dormant, and emerge as

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<sup>31</sup> As we observed in the Grandmothers and the Mothers, Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, the struggle over housework is important to change the traditional gendered patterns of work that are patriarchal and keep women in subordinate positions (Oakley, 1974; Ursel, 1986). To the extent that the women do not challenge the traditional gendered division of labour, they objectively reinforce 'mothering' and gender inequality (Chodorow, 1979). It is not enough for children to co-operate in the family; it is important for gendered stereotypes to be engaged and broken down.

they grow older and their struggle for identity within the broader community and the world comes up against the patterns of their upbringing, including their ‘mothering’.<sup>32</sup>

Compared to the Grandmothers’ and Mothers’ generations, the male children are young and the contradictions within the Daughters’ families have not yet matured. The tensions and struggles over the division of labour are dormant. In the case of Lerato’s family the boys’ resistance is not expressed against Lerato, but against her sister. To what extent is this conflict fuelled by Lerato’s own gendered approach to the division of labour, and to what extent it is because of the small age difference between Lerato’s sister and the boys, is not clear. The other example where conflict is emerging is within Katlego’s family-household where the age differential between her and the boys is not significant, and this may also account for their resistance. Further, Katlego does not stand in the relation of a Mother to the boys.

Considering the relative youthfulness of these families, the gender stereotypes in relation to the division of labour are not as pronounced as in the Mothers’ generation. This reflects the self-assurance and confidence this generation of women has shown in being heads of their families, and the fact that the choice of living alone has not only come at an earlier age, but that none of them went through an experience of living under dominant and abusive husbands. This, together with the post-apartheid gender discourses, may account for what is a generally egalitarian approach to the division of labour in the family.

#### **7.4.2 *Decision-making***

**Lerato:** I make all the decisions in the home. We have no difficulties in the house. I decide on the food we eat, I buy clothes and see to everyone. Whoever needs something tells me. Maybe they need something for school. I consult with them. I talk with them about many things. I do take most of the decisions. They are young and still at school.

Lerato is conscious of her role as the head of the family, and she is attentive to the needs of her siblings and her son if they need anything or have a problem. Although Lerato consults, there are clear indications that she ‘is in charge’ and makes the

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<sup>32</sup> This refers to the discussion of ‘mothering’ and the development of gendered subjectivity discussed in Chapters 2, 5 and 6.

decisions. This is a combination of factors: the children are young, but her siblings are older and can be engaged. On the other hand Lerato has had to make difficult decisions, do difficult things to survive, and this may explain why she makes most decisions.

**Janet:** The children are small and I make all the decisions.

**Refilwe:** We discuss things and the house decisions we make together. We talk about food from month to month, what worked and what food lasted longer.

But if my daughter is naughty and comes home late when she goes out, I make decisions then and say no going out for the next week or so.

**Rebecca:** I discuss everything with the boys. We always try to help each other. The other children are too young.

**Katlego:** I discuss with everyone in the house, about food, and work and all that. But the boys want meat every day and we can't afford it, and so I make the decision or the money won't last. But it's stressful.

All the Daughters consult with their children to varying degrees, often because the children are still young (Janet and Lerato). Rebecca is egalitarian and has a close relationship with her sons. The age difference between Rebecca and her sons is not huge given that she had the eldest son when she was 15. Refilwe differentiates between sharing decisions that affect the family, and when she needs to discipline her daughter, and takes responsibility for that. This is an important differentiation that woman-headed families have to make, as they are the only parent, and in this case the only adult in the family. Similarly, Katlego consulted with all the teenagers in her family; there was an attempt to be egalitarian but sometimes she has to make the decisions in the interest of the family and this causes stress. Making limited resources stretch is difficult, and having to make decisions that are unpopular among the boys is understandably stressful for Katlego. Lerato consults where necessary but she does harbour tendencies to 'control' and this is the weight of years of being alone, as a woman-head of the family when the children were still small. Lerato has been a woman-head of a family for almost a decade, and she is only 32.

The Daughters are generally consultative but they do have a sense that at times they need to be firm, and make decisions that are in the best interest of the family. The Daughters are shaped by the discourse of women's rights and democracy in South Africa. The children (especially the boys) are relative young and the conflicts at this stage are still containable and are even dealt with humorously (Katlego). The boys are all still at school and this is perhaps a countervailing force to Bame in the Mothers' generation and Rakgadi's son in the Grandmother's generation.

Lerato does reflect some tendencies to emulate the male model of leadership within the family but this is not serious enough to undermine the general advance towards egalitarianism. Despite their tendencies towards egalitarianism, Connell (2005a) draws on the work of the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud to remind us that women and men harbour both masculinity and femininity, that from time to time comes to the fore; and this is the challenge for developing egalitarian relationships within woman-headed families without having to resort to the masculine patriarchal model.

#### **7.4.3 Authority**

What are the authority relations within the families of the Daughters' generation?

After her parents died, Lerato had three children to look after, and she was herself a young adult. Lerato was not close to her extended family, she does not know them, and had to deal with being the head of the family on her own.

**Lerato:** I am very open with my family about my status. I told my brother and my sister that I was 'positive' and I told them not to sleep around. They were very shocked and scared. I reassured them. I told them that I was not going to die. I have a virus, but I don't have AIDS. I am looking after myself and I won't die, I am waiting for the cure for HIV/AIDS and it will come because there are people who are working hard on this. Now they must be careful and they must take care of themselves. I advised them not to walk around in the township and go with this one and that one. If they feel that they are ready to have sex, they must make sure that they use a condom. I told them not to trust anyone because you can't tell by just looking at someone's face whether they have many partners or whether they are 'positive' or 'negative'.

Lerato was transparent and honest with her family and would like to rear her son in a positive environment (away from alcohol and drinking). She was also very open about her HIV/AIDS status, to educate her family and not to create fear in them. This is an important aspect of parenting and develops egalitarian relations.

**Katlego:** The boys want meat every day, for every meal.

The boys are always out till late at night and it's not easy to control them as I'm not much older than them and sometimes the boys are difficult.

**Refilwe:** It is difficult being a single parent. I try to give Paulina everything she wants and make a plan to do it. Sometimes I go to my mother and my sister for help.

It's better to speak to children openly. When children reach 14, 15 and 16, it's stressful.

I talk to my daughter a lot and my advice to young people is to have safe sex. After the sex men often say that it's not their child. Even now, I am struggling to cope and I can't have another child to look after in the house; it will just increase my load.

**Rebecca:** The boys don't give me any problems. I just wish they could find work. Then they will help all of us in the family.

**Janet:** I don't have any problems in the family.

Refilwe and Lerato are very open and engaging with their children, and this cultivates egalitarian relations between the children and the woman-heads. This also facilitates communication within the woman-headed family, in stark contrast to patriarchal traditional families. Refilwe indicated that it was more difficult as children grow older, and this was related to the role of 'outside' influences. The outside influences tend to inform children's identity, related to issues of gender and even tradition.

Rebecca and Janet do not have problems related to authority, although Rebecca's sons are grown up and one is still at school. Rebecca's sons used to help on the farm and their formative habituation has been very different to growing up in a township. This explains partly why her sons are generally co-operative, even with housework, and do not pose any problems of authority for Rebecca.

Janet's children are still very young and pose no problems.

Katlego is experiencing problems of authority with the teenage boys in her family. One of them is her uncle and the other two are her cousins. The youngest cousin (13) is generally not problematic. The boys want meat and they are difficult to control. The issue of food, and especially meat, is a gender issue, especially in the South African context where meat is linked to visible representations of masculinity across all social classes, colours and cultures. The 'braai and beer' that white males oversee is a widespread image of social power in the South African media. The practice of traditional and many other cultures in South Africa, is constructed around the slaughter of animals.

In his study of authority in families, Horkheimer (1949) argues that woman-headed families are generally less authoritarian than traditional patriarchal families, and that they provide an example of an alternative means of socialising children. The openness with which the women in these families have approached their relationship with the members of their families seems to confirm this tendency towards less authoritarian leadership, although their families and children are relatively young and conditions are yet to mature.

#### **7.4.4 Associational life**

**Lerato:** I don't belong to a stokvel or a funeral society. I was never interested in politics. I'm not a member of the ANC. I do attend my church regularly, the Faith Mission here in Bophelong. This is an important part of my life. I am better now and have a good attitude to life because of the church. I don't have many friends and I prefer to spend my time at home with my family.

I still help ASEDI if they have a function or an event. I talk to people about HIV/AIDS and advise them not to be afraid, that they can live even if they have this disease.

**Katlego:** We still belong to the funeral society that my grandmother belonged to. I pay every month. I don't know why I go to church but I still go. I used to go the ANC branch meetings but not any more. It's just not the same.



**Refilwe:** I go to church sometimes. I see my sister and my mother. I also have friends but not too many.

**Rebecca:** There's no money for stokvels or funeral society. Sometimes I go to Church.

**Janet:** Most of the grants go on food; there's no money. I do go to church.

Only Katlego belongs to a funeral society, which her grandmother belonged to and which she continues to contribute to. None of the other women belong to a stokvel or a funeral society as they do not have the cash to spare for this, in particular Janet and Rebecca. All the women attend their local churches to various degrees. Lerato's church has given her meaning and helped her to deal with her HIV status and was the reason she believes, for the improvement in her health.<sup>33</sup>

Although largely underplayed, the women do have friendship networks in the township, and their testimonies indicate they are friends with women across generations.

An interesting feature of this generation is the disjuncture between their community involvement – for example, the community work done through ASEDI – and the women's understanding of their involvement. None of them, including Lerato and Katlego, see themselves as involved in the community. There may be a number of reasons for this. One may be that local politics have been depoliticised, and although some of the women are doing 'political' work in the community (visiting households, helping with social and community problems and so on), they see it as just another form of employment. This is the contradiction in the idea of volunteering that is promoted by the government, and in which the women are objectively participating. The attitude of the women to their volunteering community work supports Fayer's (2005) that home-based care schemes provide the state with cheap labour.

The low level of participation by the women in this generation in stokvels and other associations is also an indication of the levels of poverty in Bophelong in particular,

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<sup>33</sup> This is consistent with the Survey findings (2007), which indicated that religious organisations were the most popular (71%) in Bophelong, followed by funeral societies (47%) and stokvels (7.5%), (See Chapter 4).

and is consistent with the evidence in the Grandmothers' and the Mothers' generations.

Although the Daughters are relatively young, they do not participate in any activities or social amenities in the community.<sup>34</sup> Although Bophelong may be a particularly poor community, the lack of any significant social activity may indicate a general decline in social amenities in townships, and poverty levels that put priority on struggles for survival.

What is striking is that although the women are involved in HIV/AIDS work in the community, there is no mention of any form of social activism around HIV/AIDS, and there is no mention of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC).<sup>35</sup> This also shows the extent to which social movements have failed to penetrate communities like Bophelong (Lehulere, 2005; McKinley and Naidoo, 2004).

#### **7.4.5 *Culture, tradition and patriarchy***

What culture and traditions are practised in the Daughters' generation of woman-headed families?

Lerato did not grow up in a closely-knit family. For most of her life she lived alone.

**Lerato:** I used to go to the graveyard but nothing happened. There was no change. Then I started to pray and now I have something. Before, I felt alone and cried a lot. After a while I thought to myself: I go to the graveyard and spend my money to get there, but I don't get anything. I would use up all my money for the transport to the graveyard and there would be no money for food at home. I used to go to the graveyard because I was in search of my family, but there was no change.

I am not strong on culture. My boyfriend is strong on culture and we talk a lot.

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<sup>34</sup> In my research, the only organised social clubs I encountered was the Multipurpose Disability Centre, organised by people living with disabilities and Soul Buddies (a children's group) organised at the Bophelong library.

<sup>35</sup> The TAC was a popular organisation involved in struggles for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Going to visit the graveyard is one of the traditional ways in which families 'communicate' with the dead, with the ancestors, but this was expensive and Lerato ran out of money. Lerato believes that her life changed; she was very ill and got better after she prayed and attended church regularly. This consolidated Lerato's 'Christian' approach to life, facilitated by her relatively weak family bonds, thereby reducing the access to, and the need to, practise traditional culture.

We don't practice *lebollo* [traditional male/female circumcision]. The boys go to the hospital. We believe in God. It is very dangerous and you can get AIDS.

I spoke to my son about this. He is going to high school next year and some boys try to bully others. I told my son to tell me immediately if there's a problem at the school. I will go to the school. It's a big problem when they kidnap boys and force them to go for traditional circumcision. What kind of culture is it that has to kidnap people?

Lerato is opposed to traditional male circumcision. Tradition is contrasted to belief in God and Christianity. Lerato's opposition is also related to her knowledge of the dangers associated with contracting HIV/AIDS. Lerato was not convinced by a culture that bullies and kidnaps boys, and this is a reflection of the overall awareness of democratisation in South Africa.

Lerato openly engages her son about traditional male circumcision and the high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. This is similar to the concerns that Margaret in the Mothers' generation had about her son, Bame. The Daughters are confronting the issues of traditional culture not just in their families but also more broadly with regards to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This represents an objective advance in the struggle against patriarchy and traditional forms of masculinity.

**Katlego:** In our [Zulu] culture men are the head of everything. But women have rights now so it can't be the same.

**Refilwe:** My family is from Lesotho and we still have family there but we don't practise Sesotho [male and female] initiation. We sing Sesotho songs and wear traditional clothes but since my mother's generation they don't practice *lebollo*.

When you want to honour the ancestors – *badimo* – you must go to the men in the family. My father is dead so I must go to my brothers and my uncles, even

on my mother's side of the family. But I don't even see them often. The big feast – *Bame ya badimo* – the gift to the ancestors, is for good luck. It is a feast with food and sometimes you go to the graveyard to speak to the ancestors. We haven't done this for a long time because it's very expensive. You need to have lots of food and slaughter sheep. Then you use those big chickens – 'rocks' – that cost R60 each. We can't afford it.

I don't go to any *mokete* [celebration] in the neighbourhood because people gossip if you don't have a *mokete*, they also want to come to your celebration.<sup>36</sup> I choose to go to certain people's *mokete*, not just to anyone's home. There's too much pressure to have a *mokete*, and I can't afford it.

**Janet:** I went to the *berg skool* [mountain school] for my initiation when I was 13 years old. I went for six months in the Free State, close to the Vaal Dam. My mother organised this for me. You must wear blankets when you come from the school. The family gives you the blanket. It costs a lot of money but my big brother was working at the time and he paid for the 'doctor' and the food. It is a secret I can't talk about. They teach you to respect your elders. Once you've been to the 'school' it doesn't mean that when you return you can do what you want. You must still know your place in the community and respect others.

I won't send my daughter to a 'school'. I will rather take her to the hospital because it is not safe any more. You can get AIDS.

It costs money to put up a tombstone and you can't even have a feast to honour your ancestors without the rest of the family. You must consult the men in the family. My brother is dead and my husband's family is in Matatiele but they have never bothered to contact us or to even find out how the children are.

I haven't introduced the child to his father. In our tradition I must put the child on his father's grave and say, 'Here is your child. He has the family name Sabonga, and we are pleased. This child's name is Lumka.'

**Rebecca:** We don't practice *lebollo*. My children's father was 'coloured'. But we do practice our tradition at funerals and also to thank the ancestors. But there isn't money for the ancestors now with so many to feed.

None of the women in this generation support the practice of traditional circumcision - given the dangers of contracting HIV/AIDS - except for Janet, but she proposes to send her children to a hospital because it is safer, given the danger of contracting HIV/AIDS. The practice of traditional circumcision has declined over time within the Daughters' families, and the obvious reasons include proletarianisation and

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<sup>36</sup> Named after the 'tent' that is usually put up in the yard when a celebration occurs.

urbanisation. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a strong factor militating against the implementation of traditional circumcision (as Lerato and Janet indicated).

Men or male kin are the mediators of traditional culture. However, their general absence over time, whether due to economic or social conditions, weakens familial bonds and relations, and is a concrete challenge. Refilwe and Janet discuss their tenuous relationships with male kin, if they want to pursue traditional practices. This confirms the tenuous links with family, especially male kin, which the Daughters experience. The socio-economic conditions tend to prevent families from seeing each other regularly, for instance, high transport costs and unemployment (De Koker *et.al.*, 2006), and this tends to weaken familial bonds.

The new democratic discourse, in particular women's rights, has affected the implementation of traditional culture. Katlego's family is Zulu-speaking and they do not practise traditional male circumcision. Katlego acknowledges that in traditional culture men are the 'head' but it has to take into account that '...women have rights now so it can't be the same'. This contradiction is pervasive in South Africa and its basis is located within the Constitution, and was particularly important in the generation of the Mothers, where it was discussed.

Except for Lerato, all the other women express a preparedness to practise certain aspects of their culture. Besides the issue of men as mediators and their general absence, the absence of resources is prohibitive. Lerato ran out of money every time she visited the graveyard to 'communicate' with the family ancestors.<sup>37</sup> Refilwe explained that food was necessary to hold a feast for the ancestors – to slaughter sheep and to buy chickens. Rebecca explained that '...there isn't money for the ancestors now with so many to feed'. The economic situation was so prohibitive that Janet had not yet 'introduced' the child to his deceased father in the traditional manner as she could not afford it. Traditional practice is being overridden by the daily struggle to survive. The lack of resources was potentially breaking down community solidarity and causing tension and division, expressed in Refilwe's testimony as 'gossip' and the 'pressure to have a *mokete*'.

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<sup>37</sup> This is also a result of modernity as opposed to pre-capitalist societies, where the graves were relatively close to the village.

While the changes to traditional culture are positive to the extent that they undermine patriarchy, they also undermine those aspects of cultural practices that the women want to practise. These practices may lead to more progressive and collective forms of social and cultural practices within woman-headed families and communities as a whole. On the other hand, it might inform a conservative backlash to retain forms of traditional culture in the context of its demise.

**Lerato:** My boyfriend wants to pay *lobola* [bride price] for me. My boyfriend is very traditional and I am not traditional at all. My boyfriend wants to pay *lobola* but I don't have family. He wants to do the *lobola* to show that it is meaningful, and to not just live with me. I spoke to my neighbours who know me since I was a child and I am close to them. My neighbours advised me not to allow a man to just stay with me without paying *lobola*. Maybe this will also bring the family together.

But I thought about it for a long time and then I told Elroy that I am too old for *lobola*. I want to assist my children and *lobola* will only set us back because it is very expensive. I want to talk to Elroy about this so we can still make it meaningful for us. I want us to meet the different families and to tell them what we want to do. Then we can even go and 'sign' [civil marriage] at [the Department of] Home Affairs.

Elroy linked the struggle for a meaningful relationship to traditional culture, and he holds a particular conception of traditional culture. This is not surprising, as it coincides with traditional forms of patriarchy and masculinity, despite genuine considerations of integrity.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the neighbours, with the best of intentions, advise Lerato not to just 'live with a man'; and this was linked to perceptions of men leaving, even though traditional culture was not a deterrent to men leaving. Lerato wants a meaningful relationship, and believes that it may bring the family together, something, which she has searched for constantly. But Lerato does not see traditional culture as the necessary expression of a meaningful relationship and as a way to bring her family together. She was pragmatic about the needs of the children in the face of contested and limited resources. Lerato decided that she did not want *lobola*, that she was 'too old', and proposed a simple alternative that she intends to negotiate with her boyfriend. This is an indication of the nature of their relationship, to the extent that Lerato can negotiate with Elroy about traditional culture without any fear of

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<sup>38</sup> See Connell (2005c) on the different forms of masculinity.

retribution. The experience of living in a woman-headed family, independently within the democratic discourse of woman's rights, facilitated the emergence of a progressive path to seek meaning in a heterosexual relationship.

Overall, the women in the Daughters' generation represent an advance in the struggle for an egalitarian family form. Despite scarce resources (and even having to confront hunger), the Daughters objectively, and subjectively, question traditional male roles in the way they organise their families. Within the woman-headed families there are conscious efforts to build egalitarianism.

Although the women hold contradictory views on aspects of their lives, they believe in women's rights and independence, and their youth, their drive to advance and rear their children, as well as their social location places them in contestation with traditional culture. In the woman-headed families of this generation (in fact of all three generations), 'the paradoxical effects of neoliberal globalisation' have placed women in a struggle that advances the egalitarian project and potentially seeks new forms of meaning (Perry, 2005: 221).

## **7.5 Summing up the Daughters' Generation**

The Daughters' make the choice to live on their own in the context of democracy and women's rights and this is different from the Mother's and the Grandmothers' generations where violence against women is paramount as a reason for deciding to live alone. The Daughters do not have to struggle to be head of the family as it is socially accepted, inherited from previous generations of women's struggles, the Grandmothers and the Mothers, and is expressed in their democratic rights guaranteed in the South African Constitution in 1996. The RDP houses are a concrete expression of their relative autonomy and the fruits of the democracy they experience, based on the popular mass struggles that came before them. This informs their individual and pragmatic approach to life - as they didn't experience the collective anti-apartheid struggles, unlike the Grandmothers and the Mothers.

The Daughters' pragmatic attitude to men and their self-identity is strongly shaped by their belief in the discourse of women's rights and women's independence. Unlike the Grandmother and the Mothers, they do not have strong feelings of anger towards men. This is also shaped by the absence of strong bonds with their fathers (besides Refilwe), who are largely absent from their lives.

The transactional sex that affected one of the Daughters (Lerato), reflects a number of issues such as sexual rights and independence and sexuality as women. It is underpinned by poverty, and reflects indices of masculinity. This also reflects an individual response to issues of structural poverty. The sexual relationships that both the Grandmothers (Rakgadi) and the Mothers (Sara) pursued after their husbands died, were not transactional. While all three generations share similar levels of economic deprivation, their choices are a reflection of women's rights, including their right to their sexuality, in post-apartheid South Africa. While there are various historical accounts of black women as sex-workers (Beittel, 1992), the rise of transactional sex has come to the fore more recently, coinciding with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the socio-economic deprivation of the 1990s.

Democracy, on the one hand, and the structural violence and poverty, on the other, are strong opposing influences in the women's attitude to life and their youth. However, it emerges strongly in the composition of their families, the struggles against unemployment, for food security and general survival. In this respect there are similarities with the Grandmothers' and the Mothers' generations. However, the Daughters experience relatively more poverty than the Grandmothers, whose social grant is nominally larger. Even though some of the Daughters are employed, their income is so low that they qualify for the social grants, and this is similar to the condition of the Mothers. A bizarre situation exists where the Grandmothers, older and retired, are relatively better off economically than the Daughters, younger and potentially productive. The Grandmothers receive the state's old age grant which often raises their incomes higher than many employed women who also get a CSG. This has implications for this generation's struggle to maintain their families in the context of the new discourse of rights, in particular women's rights, which influences their lives concretely. The Daughters are young and life is full of possibilities that they are open to engage. They are at ease living without men, both socially and



psychologically. However the structural poverty weighs heavily on their struggle for daily survival.

The nature of women's work in this generation has changed, influenced by the changes within domestic work and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, so that the women who are working are involved in care work. The state is their employer and the women are objectively exploited, notwithstanding women's rights enshrined in the Constitution. Although exploited as volunteer workers, there is the potential for a collective struggle against public patriarchy (Moghadam, 2003). This struggle is an advance in that it is not against a private employer, but against the state as an employer, and will potentially concretise women's rights and advance the content of what women's citizenship should mean concretely in South Africa.

Overall, the women in this generation provide an important advance towards an egalitarian alternative. This is expressed in the attitude to struggle against a gendered division of labour within their families and with regard to decision-making processes. (In this respect the Daughters are similar to the Grandmothers, and differ with the Mothers who are gendered in their approach to housework and adopt a patriarchal leadership.) While there is conflict with the boys in Katlego's family over housework, only Lerato promotes a relatively gendered division on labour. However, this is mitigated by her sister's struggle with the boys in the family, and by Lerato's consultative and open engagement with her family and her orientation as a whole. Although the children are still young in these families, there is a preparedness to engage them on issues of authority and masculinity. In this generation the conflict between sons and their mothers is not yet intense.

The absence of men in the Daughters' generation has weakened patriarchy and traditional culture, further eroded by the irregular presence of male kin. This, together with the general lack of material resources, has weakened the consistent implementation and general prevalence of traditional cultural practices.

Practically, the Daughters decide how resources are allocated, although the choice is often overridden by considerations of preventing absolute starvation. (For example, Janet's son has not yet been 'introduced' to his deceased father.) The women are keen

to practice their culture, though. These experiences may stimulate the need to retain 'traditional culture' or to act in favour of its possible demise. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is also an important consideration in this equation. Traditional cultural and patriarchal practices are in transition and are being contested in a multiplicity of ways in all the woman-headed families. However, the concrete need to survive is central to their choices and decisions. While this is seemingly pragmatic, objectively it does weaken the 'hold' of tradition over individuals, their choices and their agency. In this context relatively new forms of symbolic expression are being chosen, as expressed in Lerato's rejection of *lobola* in the interests of the children.

The Daughters have grown up without men, so unlike the Grandmothers, they do not believe that men have an automatic right to 'lead' or be the head of the family. Hence in terms of culture they do not defer to men, and in this sense they are their mothers' daughters. The challenge to patriarchy is not without contradictions, and their sons are still too young to contest their leadership role or to want to practise traditional male culture (like circumcision). The women still want to practise certain aspects of their culture, the basis of which is patriarchal and promotes male dominance. This also makes the woman-headed families vulnerable to the intrusion of male kin. This could possibly deter alternative and progressive forms of culture emerging within the woman-headed families. Two women in this generation want to marry and have children, one has just given birth, and three were happy to live on their own with their children.<sup>39</sup> Four of the five woman-heads have never married. The changed political context in South Africa, the democracy, provides the basis for the variation in attitudes and ideas, and the emancipatory possibilities that are emerging in the woman-headed families. It is the dominant discourse of rights that informs the Daughters' individual approach to problems and their political and general pragmatism.

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<sup>39</sup> My last interview with Lerato was in December 2008. She phoned me in October 2008 to inform me of the birth of a healthy daughter, Karabo. Elroy moved in and lives with her, together with her son and her two siblings.