

https://dspace.org/

Social reproduction, labour markets, and economic change in South Africa

Francis, David Campbell

2023

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/38753

Francis, David Campbell. (2023). Social reproduction, labour markets, and economic change in South Africa [Master's dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WireDSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/10539/38753

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Insights from Agincourt

Social reproduction, labour markets, and economic change in South Africa

David Campbell Francis

Supervisor: Professor Imraan Valodia

July 2023

Table of contents

Declaration 4

List of figures 5

List of tables 5

Acknowledgements 6

Abstract 7

Acronyms and abbreviations 9

Chapter One

The paradox of busyness and unemployment in Agincourt

- Introduction 10
- Women in the South African economy 10
- Overview of the research 15
- The Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance Site 16
- Research questions 22
- Structure of this thesis 23

Chapter Two

Continuity and disruption: A history of economic lives in Agincourt 27

- Introduction 27
- A brief history of Gazankulu, Mhala and Agincourt 30
- The political economy of Agincourt 37
- Economic lives in Agincourt 44
- Rural-urban articulations in South Africa 51
- Looking forward and backwards: Moments of continuity and change 58

Chapter Three

Studying the economic lives of women in South Africa: Literature and Theory 60

- Introduction 60
- Reviewing the literature on women's labour force participation 62
- Gaps and limitations in the labour force participation literature 69
- Theoretical approaches to understanding labour force participation 70
- Theoretical approaches to thinking about the role of households in the economy 88
- Studying the household in South Africa 93
- Households in Agincourt 96

Chapter Four

Making sense of the South African labour market: Methodological approaches 102

- Introduction 102
- Key concepts for the analysis 103
- Outline of the methodological approach 104
- Inductive and deductive epistemologies 105
- A mixed-methods approach 107

Chapter Five

Work, gender, and social reproduction in Agincourt 123

- Introduction 123

The South African Context 124
Rethinking the concept of work in the Agincourt area 126
Incomes in Agincourt 132
Unpaid work 138
The political economy of Agincourt 142
A deeper understanding of work in Agincourt 144

Chapter Six

Households, the economy, and social reproduction in Agincourt 146

Introduction 146
Examining households in Agincourt 147
Gender and households in Agincourt 151
Migration and movement 153
Households, contestation, and economic change in Agincourt 156
Conclusion 161

Chapter Seven

Fieldwork: Households and traders in Agincourt 164

Introduction 164
Main findings from the fieldwork 165
Gender relations structure both the household and economy in overlapping ways 167
Work is a job: A hierarchy of employment 174
Making sense of unemployment when there are no jobs 177
Households in Agincourt are stretched households 181
Economic change and the Agincourt village 183
Work, households, and the political economy of Agincourt 187
Conclusion 188

Chapter Eight

Gendered labour, social reproduction and rural-urban articulations in Agincourt 190

Introduction 190
The cheap labour thesis and 21st century Agincourt 191
Economic change and the cheap labour thesis 192
The articulation of households and capitalism in 21st century Agincourt 198
Feminist economic theory and the cheap labour thesis 204
Conclusion 205

Chapter Nine

Conclusions: The paradox revisited 207

Introduction 207
Answering the research questions 207
Revisiting Wolpe's cheap labour thesis 208
Theoretical contributions 210
Policy contributions 212
Gaps and limitations 214
Future research directions 214

References 216

Appendix A: Interview questions 230

Appendix B: Informed consent form 232

Appendix C: Participant information sheet 233

Appendix D: Ethics Clearance..... 234

Declaration

This thesis is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Economics at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. I declare that this is my own work, except where acknowledged in the text, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.



David Campbell Francis

July 2023

List of figures

Figure 1: Location of the Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance Site (HDSS) 17
Figure 2: Market day in Agincourt, early August 2022 19
Figure 3: Gazankulu orientation map 34
Figure 4: Temporary migration in Agincourt 40
Figure 5: A feminist economics approach to understanding the economy 80
Figure 6: The interdependence of the paid and unpaid economies 82
Figure 7: The four income streams at three points of analysis (POA) 97
Figure 8: The relative value each income stream contributes to the mean income portfolio of the study population at the three POAs 99
Figure 9: Income-generating work in Agincourt, by age and gender (2012) 133
Figure 10: Gender distribution of unpaid work in Agincourt (2012) 139
Figure 11: Trading under a tree in Agincourt, July 2022 165
Figure 12: Two men selling bananas, Agincourt, August 2022 170

List of tables

Table 1: Contrasting qualitative and quantitative research 108
Table 2: Summary of sample villages according to size 113
Table 3: Sample size per village 114
Table 4: High-level breakdown of respondents' demographics 116
Table 5: Qualitative coding framework 119
Table 6: Occupational breakdown in Agincourt: Working age people 15–65 years old (2012) 128
Table 7: Occupational breakdown in Agincourt: Pensioners (2012) 131
Table 8: Total monthly household income between 2010 and 2014 134
Table 9: Household indicators for South Africa (2012) 137
Table 10: Gender differences in paid and unpaid work: All ages (2012) 140
Table 11: Number of households and individuals in the Sucses survey sample 148
Table 12: Household size in the Sucses survey sample (2010–2014) 148
Table 13: Average age distribution of individuals in the Sucses sample 2010–2014 150
Table 14: Household size, gender composition, structure of households in the Sucses sample (2012) 152
Table 15: Geographic dispersion: Migrants and residents in households in the Sucses sample (2012) 154
Table 16: Migration and permanent resident status of individuals in the Sucses sample (2010–2014) 155

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to those who have supported me during this research and contributed in many ways to making a long and difficult process easier. I am grateful, firstly, to my supervisor, Imraan Valodia, for his guidance, support and encouragement throughout. My sincere thanks to Stephanie Allais for her invaluable feedback on the draft of this thesis, for her wisdom and reassurance during the final phase, and for many brisk walks to clear my head.

I am grateful to Eddie Webster for his comments on this work, and his encouragement to find the puzzle. Thank you to Karen Hurt for her careful review and copy edit of the thesis. I would like to thank the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS) at Wits University for its financial and logistical support, and to all my colleagues for the many conversations which have shaped this work.

Thanks to Wayne Twine for making the Sucses data available to me and answering many questions which arose during its analysis. The data were central to this project and I am very grateful to have had access to it. Special thanks are due to Sizzy Ngobeni for her guidance and assistance with the fieldwork in Agincourt; without it the interviews would have been impossible. My thanks to all those at the Agincourt HDSS for their support, in particular, Palesa Mateboge and Xavier Gomez-Olive Casas. I am very grateful for the warm hospitality I have received at the Wits Rural Campus on my many visits, and for the peace and quiet it offers.

My heartfelt thanks go to my husband, Roberto Pombo, for his love and kindness during many grumpy moments, and to my family, for their love and support during this challenging process. To my friends, completing this thesis would not have been possible without our PhD writing group, countryside writing retreats, and balcony drinks.

And finally, my thanks to all those not mentioned here for the different ways they have supported me, and shaped the course of this research. I am truly grateful to you all.

Abstract

The South African rural economy, and its relationship to the industrial economic heartlands, has been the focus of study for many decades. In the 1970s, Harold Wolpe provided an incisive materialist analysis of apartheid. He argued that the rural economy served as a site of the reproduction of labour for capitalism in urban South Africa, thus ensuring a supply of cheap labour. His cheap labour thesis has formed the backbone of political economy analysis in South Africa ever since. But Wolpe, and other such as Mike Morris, who studied the relationship between the rural economy and the development of capitalism in South Africa, were largely unconcerned with the highly gendered nature of cheap labour, despite the fact that women were actively excluded from mining and the industrial economy by law, and played a critical role in the reproduction of life and labour in the Bantustans. Following the end of apartheid, the legal barriers preventing women from working in the main economy were dismantled, and women's labour force participation rose rapidly. But this legal equality has not translated into substantive equality: women in rural areas continue to be significantly worse off economically than men. Unemployment rates are significantly higher for women, and they earn lower wages than men, even where they do the same work. Women continue to undertake far more unpaid work than men, and girl and women-headed households are more likely to live in poverty. Furthermore, despite well-developed literature on South Africa's political economy, we know little about the productive and reproductive lives of rural women in contemporary South Africa.

This thesis critically re-examines Wolpe for the 21st century by providing a materialist, gendered analysis of the economy of Agincourt, Mpumalanga, an area which remains on South Africa's geographic and economic periphery. It shows how households in this part of rural South Africa are responding to the ways in which capitalism in South Africa has changed in the post-apartheid period. This thesis illuminates the important links between labour force participation, paid work, unpaid work, and livelihood strategies among households in the Agincourt area. It argues that focusing on the role of South Africa's rural areas as sites of the reproduction of labour, as per the cheap labour thesis, ignores the highly gendered nature of social reproduction and its contribution to the reproduction of both labour and life. This thesis further contends that the role of South Africa's rural areas cannot be investigated or theorised without a specifically gendered approach which includes women's work in the analysis. It adds to our knowledge about an area of South Africa which is important in its own right. And Agincourt is also emblematic of the conceptual and methodological challenges of studying rural areas and their relationship with the economic

heartlands of urban South Africa in a way that does not marginalise the economic lives of women. It further contributes methodologically and epistemologically to studying the intersection of paid and unpaid work. It draws on a mixed-methods approach – a household survey of 600 households and 24 in-depth interviews – to investigate women's economic lives in this marginalised place, and to re-examine the relationship between South Africa's economic core and its periphery from an explicitly gendered perspective.

Acronyms and abbreviations

CSG	child support grant
DUV	direct use value
GNP	gross national product
HCT	human capital theory
HDSS	Health and Demographic Surveillance Site
HIV/Aids	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
LFP	labour force participation
LFS	Labour Force Surveys
ILO	International Labour Organization
NGO	nongovernmental organisations
NIDS	National Income Dynamic Survey
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHS	October Household Survey
OPG	older persons grant
PALMS	Post-Apartheid Labour Market Series
POA	points of analysis
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SLM	segmented labour market
SNA	system of national accounts
SRT	social reproduction theory
Sucses	Sustainability in Communal Socio-Ecological Systems

Chapter One
Introduction: The paradox of busyness and unemployment in Agincourt

Introduction

On my first visit to the villages which comprise the Agincourt district, I was struck by an intriguing paradox. On the one hand, the data about work in the villages suggest a bleak picture: two-thirds of working-age women and more than one-third of working-age men are unemployed. However, the lack of paid work belies the magnitude of activity evident in the villages: most residents are very busy. The villages are, on any day of the week, a hive of activity, with residents occupied with industry, agriculture, education, retail, housework and gardening. Those who say they are unemployed or self-employed work are often preparing food, looking after children, or tending to the yards and gardens around each of the houses – the large, sandy gardens around each house requires daily tidying and sweeping. These villages are clearly very busy places. In this thesis, I unravel this conundrum by investigating the limits of the concepts of work, employment and labour force participation[1] as they are commonly used in mainstream economics. In particular, the notion of labour force participation hides the depth and complexity of women's role in the economy because it ignores the economically productive unpaid work women do. I argue that investigating the gendered nature of work in Agincourt and its households forces us to rethink these concepts in a way that illuminates the role of women in South Africa's political economy.

Women in the South African economy

Understanding women's position in the economy and society is a broad and contested subject in economics, and has been the focus of study in South Africa for several decades. Across the economy in South Africa and around the world, with few exceptions, women remain in a materially worse position than men. In South Africa, unemployment is higher for women than for men (Statistics South Africa, 2021a). When women do work, they occupy lower-paying, more precarious jobs than men, and are paid less even when they do the same work (Coovadia, 2019;

[1] The labour force participation rate is commonly defined as the proportion of a country's working-age population that is engaged in the labour market, either by working, or by looking for work. Unemployment is commonly defined as the state of not being employed and looking for employment.

Espi et al., 2019; Gradín, 2018; Mosomi, 2019a). Feminist economists have for many years been trying to understand why this is so, and why this phenomenon is so enduring.

One manifestation of women's disadvantage in the economy is that, for the majority of time since the industrial revolution, women's labour force participation, employment levels, and labour market returns have been substantially lower than those for men (Casale, 2003; Fine, 1992; Folbre, 1994). This is the result of an entrenched gendered division of labour, with men undertaking the majority of paid work, while women have been relegated to unpaid work, largely within the home (Bozzoli, 1983; Elson, 1993; Ferber and Nelson, 2009; Folbre, 1994). This entrenched division of labour changed rapidly in the course of the 20th century, beginning in the global North as early as the 1920s (Fine, 1992). The global South followed in the latter part of the century, with South Africa being no exception. Indeed, it is now clear that there has been a large and sustained increase in women's[2] labour force participation in South Africa in the last half century (Banerjee et al., 2007; Casale, 2004, 2003; Casale and Posel, 2002; Klasen and Woolard, 2000; Ntuli and Wittenberg, 2013; Posel, 2014; Standing et al., 1996). Beginning in the 1960s, this increase has been well-documented, and is evident in both national labour force surveys and localised data.

However, there remains significant inequality in income, access to employment and services, socioeconomic status, education and household resources both between women and men, and among women (Coovadia, 2019; Posel, 2014, p. 307). As Posel argues, "African women's access to resources has been limited both because of their gender and their race, and of all South Africans they face the highest risk of poverty" (Posel, 2014, p. 308). Posel and Rogan (2009) show how, in the post-apartheid period, the gender gap in poverty rates has widened, and women continue to have higher levels of unemployment and lower earnings (Francis, 2020)[3]. Historically, the South African labour market has been segmented both along gender and racial lines, with white men occupying highest-paying jobs (Espi et al., 2019; Gradín, 2018, 2017). The observed increase in

[2] Participation in the economy focuses on gender as a social and economic relation, and so I think it is correct to use the term "women" wherever possible. The Sucses survey upon which much of this analysis is based uses the term gender and not sex. In some instances, where children are involved, I use the terms male and female for the sake of clarity.

[3] Sections of Chapters 1 and 3 have appeared in Francis, D. 2020. Unemployment and the gendered economy in South Africa after Covid-19. *Transformation* 104, pp. 103-112. These have been referenced where appropriate.

women's labour force participation has benefited some women, particularly those in professional occupations, but, as Posel (2014) argues:

> ...a far larger part of the rise in women's employment derived from the growth in work typically associated with low earning and few opportunities for advancement. Of the 1.7 million additional jobs recorded amongst women from 1995 to 2007, almost 40 percent (or approximately 666,000 jobs) were in self-employment in the informal sector, employment that includes subsistence or survivalist activity and that typically is associated with very low and insecure earnings (Posel, 2014, p. 305).

Many other women have simply been unable to find work at all (Casale, 2004, 2003; Casale and Posel, 2002). Furthermore, despite rising women's labour force participation in many countries around the world, they continue to perform most of the unpaid labour of housework and childcare (Budlender, 2010; Folbre, 1994; Himmelweit, 2002). One of the aims of this study is to link changes in the sphere of reproduction – the household – to changes in the sphere of production – the labour market – so that we can better understand the causes and implications of the drastic and sustained change in women's labour force participation in South Africa. As argued by Fine (2013), the labour market is heavily influenced by a range of non-market factors and activities such as trade unions, the stage of economic development, and the social relations – political, ideological and workplace – that lie outside the standard neoclassical treatment of the labour market. Of particular interest are social relations both within and between households and the paid economy, and how they shape labour force participation. This has informed the research methods for this study.[4]

Much of the work examining the determinants of labour force participation in South Africa is implicitly rooted in the human capital models of the 1970s. These focus on the relationship between human capital and issues of labour force participation, employment and income. In general, the examination of women's labour force participation has focused on two areas. The first is identifying and quantifying the increase – an exercise comprehensively undertaken by Casale

[4] Social relations intersect in many different ways, and in post-apartheid South Africa, race is a central factor. This study, however, is primarily concerned with gender relations and how they shape households, the labour market and the economy more generally.

(2003), and explored by Casale (2003, 2004); Casale and Posel (2002); and Ntuli and Wittenberg (2013), among others. The second is careful and detailed work examining the outcomes of this trend vis a vis the gender pay gap, occupational segregation, and discrimination in the labour force (Espi et al., 2019; Gradín, 2018, 2017; Mosomi, 2019a, 2019b). This literature finds a persistent gender wage gap in South Africa which has not changed significantly in recent decades.

In her work from 2003, Casale raises the interesting point that the increase in women's labour force participation is likely to be caused by "factors on the supply side of the labour market", such as falling access to men's incomes in the household caused by lower marriage rates, among other determinants (Casale, 2003, p. 2). Much of the analysis on this topic has been based on nationally representative survey data which is of good quality and useful for identifying and interrogating overall trends. But some interesting questions remain. How have these changes in labour force participation affected and been affected by the distribution of unpaid work within the household? Who have been the winners and losers from these changes? How do households understand and respond to the process of macroeconomic change? Are these real changes, or are they capturing changes in the ways in which survey respondents understand concepts like work, employment and unemployment?

One of the limitations of some of the South African labour market analysis is its focus largely on the paid economy: paid work and monetary income. This is due to a relative paucity of data on the intra-household allocation of paid and unpaid work. National labour force surveys, which are the bedrock of economic analysis, do not generally gather the type of information on unpaid work which would help us understand these dynamics. Data is collected on time use, which provide important information on unpaid work, but it is not embedded in the labour market surveys, and is only collected at best once every decade.

Studying the Agincourt area brings the study research into the domain of the excellent political economy research which has examined rural labour markets and their articulation with the industrial core of the economy, a rich area of research which took off in the 1970s, with important contributions by Morris, Wolpe, Legassick and Lipton, among others (Legassick and Wolpe, 1976; Lipton, 1986; Morris, 1976; Wolpe, 1972). Wolpe's contribution to the literature on South Africa's labour market fundamentally altered the structural approach to thinking about the articulation between the main constituents of the South African labour market, namely its developed, capitalist core and its rural, pre-capitalist periphery (Wolpe, 1972). One of the major contributions of

Wolpe's approach is the argument that economic integration and participation in the market economy in South Africa is structurally determined. Wolpe was writing during the period of grand apartheid, an era of history which shaped areas like Agincourt in fundamental ways. His thesis provides a useful framework for examining the relationship between South Africa's formal and informal economies, and between its urban core and rural periphery. He essentially argued that the geographical and racial segregations of the apartheid system ensured a constant supply of cheap labour to the industrial core of South Africa because the reproduction of the labour force, the social reproduction, was in effect subsidised by the unpaid work of households in the Bantustans (Wolpe, 1972). His understanding of the significance of the dualism in South Africa's economy highlighted that economic development is not a teleological process from, in the case of his work, pre-capitalism to industrialisation.

However, there are notable limitations in Wolpe's approach to understanding the contemporary labour market. The first is that South Africa's labour market has changed in important ways since the 1970s. As Scully and Webster argue, "Wolpe's main utility today, therefore, is not to explain the relative price of labour, but as a methodological guide, which highlights the importance of the interface between the capitalist sector and nonwage economic activities or, more simply, between production and reproduction" (Scully and Webster, 2019, p. 33).

The second, and of most concern to this research, is that Wolpe's cheap labour thesis was largely blind to the pervasive gender inequalities which shaped and continue to shape South Africa's political economy. The highly gendered nature of cheap labour was not a focus of Wolpe's research, despite the fact that women were actively excluded from mining and the industrial economy by law, and played a critical role in the reproduction of life and labour in the Bantustans.

There have, of course, been important developments in the broader South African political economy since the writings of Morris, Wolpe and others, with the end of apartheid being the most significant. There have been other changes too, such as the increase in women's participation in the labour market, the increased casualisation in the formal sector, and the rise of the service economy. These changes call for a renewed structural examination of the South African labour market, moving from the work of Wolpe and others, grounded in the empirics of microeconomic data, but most importantly with an explicitly gendered lens. Scully and Webster have argued that our understanding of rural South Africa, and rural labour markets in particular, needs to be based on an appreciation of the major changes that have taken place over the last 40 years (Scully and

Webster, 2019). They identify four important changes which affect the relationship between the capitalist sector and the rural areas which continue to provide labour. These are globalisation,[5] financialisation, informalisation and democratisation (Scully and Webster, 2019). An understanding of the effects of each of these will be important in this research. They cite Bernstein's point that rural areas, unlike during apartheid, are no longer central to the reproduction of cheap labour, because of the rise of urbanisation and informality in the core areas of South Africa's economy. But rural areas are important for the reproduction of labour at the bottom of the wage labour market, and as a result, unpaid household labour, especially of rural women, remains essential to our understanding of how the economy works.

Overview of the research

This research shows how households in one part of rural South Africa are responding to how capitalism in South Africa has changed in the post-apartheid period. I contend that the role of South Africa's rural areas cannot be investigated or theorised without a specifically gendered approach which includes women's work in the analysis. My research adds to our understanding of the gendered nature of the South African labour market by illuminating links between paid work, labour force participation, unpaid work, and livelihood strategies. The findings highlight continued gender inequality in the distribution of paid and unpaid work, and how persistent gendered inequality shapes labour market participation and outcomes. My research uses social reproduction theory both as a theoretical tool and as a methodological guide to highlight these important linkages. Linking the paid and unpaid economies empirically requires adopting a feminist economics approach to understand the labour market in a broader sense, an approach that includes unpaid work in the domestic sphere. Methodologically, this requires data on the unpaid economy – not something traditionally collected in labour market surveys, such as South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS).

The work adds to our knowledge about Agincourt, an area of South Africa which is important in its own right. It is also emblematic of the conceptual and methodological challenges of thinking about rural areas and their relationship with the economic heartlands of urban South Africa in a way that does not marginalise women's economic lives. It draws on a mixed-methods approach –

[5] For an excellent example of the importance of globalisation, see the work by and debate between Kabeer (2004, 1997) and Staveren et al. (2007).

a household survey of 600 households, and 24 in-depth interviews – to investigate the economic lives of women in this marginal place, and to re-examine the relationship between South Africa's economic core and its periphery from an explicitly gendered perspective. The study is confined to the Agincourt area; it is not nationally representative. Clearly, the results should not be used to explain broader trends in the South African economy. The results are, however, useful for examining conceptual questions about the nature and extent of economic change in South Africa, women's place in the economy, and the limits of the concepts of work, employment and unemployment for making sense of political economy.

In rethinking Wolpe, I investigate the gendered nature of the political economy of work in Agincourt in the post-apartheid period. I argue that doing so requires examining the sphere of social reproduction from an economic perspective, and linking it to the sphere of production. Furthermore, it requires questioning the analytical separation of these two spheres, that is, examining the relationship between paid and unpaid work, both within and outside of the household. (Bhattacharya and Vogel, 2017; Bozzoli, 1983; Humphries and Rubery, 1984; O'Laughlin, 2021). This approach is informed by the structuralist school which is interested in how political economy shapes the economic lives of individuals. It is also informed by the feminist economics approach which sees labour supply and demand being determined by multiple factors beyond utility-optimising behaviour and the skills an individual possesses (Cassim, 1982; Heintz, 2019; Heintz and Lund, 2012; Peck, 1996).

The Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance Site

The village of Agincourt lies at the centre of a cluster of villages and hamlets on the eastern edge of the Bushbuckridge Municipality, in the north eastern region of South Africa (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Location of the Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance Site (HDSS)



Source: http://www.agincourt.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/map_sa_label.jpg

Further east, adjacent to the outer villages, is Sabi Sands, home to some of South Africa's most expensive safari lodges, and now part of the greater Kruger National Park. In fact, the larger area is located on a large square peninsular of residential land, surrounded on three sides by private game reserves and the Kruger National Park. The northern boundary of my study site is the bustling village of Thulamahashe, home to a new, large shopping mall with familiar retail outlets in South Africa, including Super Spar, Ackermans, Bradlows and BuiltIt. Across the street is a large Boxer Superstore. Dotted along the edges of the main roads are small shops sheltered under lean-tos constructed of wood and tin. Vendors sell bags of fruit and vegetables – mostly onions,

tomatoes and citrus – as well as enormous cabbages, bags and larger tubs of atchar, and assorted *amakipkip*, mostly popcorn, chips and biscuits.

From Thulamahashe, the main road winds south through Merry Pebble Stream and across a patch of uninhabited bushveld before arriving at Agincourt. The competition for the title of worst road is stiff in South Africa, but the 20-odd kilometres from Thulamahashe to Agincourt must be a top contender. So potholed is the road in some places that people drive their vehicles on the dirt on the sides of the road rather than attempting to drive on the actual road. At points along the road young men with wheelbarrows fill potholes with sand, asking for a few coins in return. The sorry state of the tarmac is offset by relentless construction of new, large houses which line the thoroughfare, all sporting the ubiquitous classical concrete columns which are part of the vernacular architecture across Bushbuckridge. Almost all new houses sport double garages, despite their being very few private cars to be seen.

In early August, in a year when the rains have been good, the mango and avocado trees which grow in the large yards surrounding each house are in full bloom – a harbinger of a good summer harvest. Most houses have small vegetable gardens growing a variety of leafy greens, mielies, and sweet potatoes called patatas. Without exception, the yards, which are largely very sandy, are neatly swept. Many yards sport topiarised bushes which were in fashion during my visits in the early 2020s.

About 25 minutes from Thulamahashe a line of rocky koppies – small hills – running west to east appears over the horizon, marking the northern boundary of the village of Agincourt A. Agincourt A is the home of the Wits University/Medical Research Council Health and Demographic Surveillance Site (Agincourt HDSS). On almost any day of the weeks it bustles with researchers, focus groups and fieldworkers. As a result, the Agincourt area must be one of the most intensively and extensively studied places in all of South Africa, with research running continually since 1992. Diagonally across the road from the HDSS head office is the Agincourt Clinic, which is the hub of the public health and medical research which forms the backbone of the HDSS.

Radiating from Agincourt A are a series of 22 villages which make up the HDSS in its entirety. While Agincourt is just one of 22 villages in the study site, it gives its name to the site as a whole. Throughout this research I will refer to the complex of villages as Agincourt. Many villages carry names from the time European settlers owned them as farms: to the northeast is Dumphries, to

the east is Newington, while Croquet Lawn A and B lie to the south. Further away are Lillydale, Cunningmore and Kildare, while Xanthia is to the far west. Each of these villages also has a name in Xitsonga, but their English names are more commonly used. If you continue east past the clinic, the road winds out of Agincourt and again into uninhabited scrubland. Further along this road, the village of Xhimungwe lies ten kilometres to the southeast of Agincourt. For the first few days of the month, the Xhimungwe Post Office becomes the centre of economic and social activity. Social grants, principally the Child Support Grant and the Older Persons Grant, are paid out from the first of each month. A long queue of caregivers and pensioners forms from the early hours of the morning. Outside the fence, surrounding the post office, is the "pension market", selling a range of goods from fresh fruit and vegetables, takeaway food, inside and outside brooms, as well as clothing, blankets and towels, as seen in Figure 2. On one of the days I visit in 2022, there is a slight anxiety among those in the queue – a few weeks earlier the post office, which pays out more than R500,000 in cash each day during the payout period, was the target of an armed robbery. This traumatised the post office and security staff as well as grant beneficiaries. The robbers made off with a large amount of cash.

Figure 2: Market day in Agincourt, early August 2022



Source: Author

The main intersection in each village is the economic hub with a mix of car washes, hair salons, fruit and vegetable traders, and spaza shops. Some villages, like Xhimungwe, have a formal supermarket, too. On the outskirts of each village are patches of common land. In years of good rainfall, these are planted with cabbages and sweet potatoes. In years of drought, they are barren and dusty. Some villages have piped water to each property, but in others, taps are at central points around the village. Residents use bakkies – small trucks – and wheelbarrows to fetch water in ubiquitous blue plastic drums.

On a first look, the Agincourt area appears full of contradictions. This is an undeniably economically marginalised place, with patchy or non-existent services, and high levels of poverty and unemployment. But at the same time, on some plots, vast double-story houses rise from dusty yards, and in many areas residential construction is booming. Headline unemployment statistics are shocking, but the villages are also hives of economic activity. Even to the casual observer, paid and unpaid activities are highly gendered, such as cattle herding, which young boys do; women collect water and do informal trading, and men do construction.

Over the past 30 years, research in the area has focused on questions of clinical and public health. Surprisingly, little has been published on the economy and the economic lives of residents. This research seeks to uncover economic lives in the villages, and in particular, women's economic lives, with the intention to illuminate new aspects of the political economy of South Africa in the 21st century. I first visited the Agincourt HDSS in November 2016 as part of a site visit to what was then called the Wits Rural Facility (WRF). The WRF, now the Wits Rural Campus, is located on the Orpen Road to the Kruger National Park. Much of the Orpen Road serves as a provincial boundary, dividing Limpopo on its northern side from Mpumalanga on its southern. During the apartheid period, the north side was white South Africa; it is still dominated by white-owned game farms. The southern edge of the road was the northern boundary of the Gazankulu Bantustan. While the political designation of the land has changed, satellite imagery shows the road cutting a stark divide between sparsely inhabited game farmland to the north, and the much more densely populated residential and subsistence agricultural land to the south.

On that first visit in 2016, I arrived in Agincourt during one of the worst droughts in recent decades. Around the country, livestock and crops had been devastated, and the lowveld was no exception. There was very little grass – it was a landscape of sand and trees, and very few crops were growing in people's yards. Long lines formed at each of the water standpipes in the villages,

with women and children rolling large blue drums for fresh water. In late 2018, good rains returned and ever since the lowveld has been far greener, even in the middle of the dry season. Thulamahashe is a larger village to the north of the Agincourt research area, and falls just outside the boundaries of the HDSS, but it is of course an integral part of the local economy. On my first visit I was struck by the rows of informal trading stalls along the main road through the village. Since then, a large new mall has been constructed in the centre of town, and the informal traders have disappeared or relocated.

Given the differences between the Agincourt village area and urban Johannesburg, several things struck me on my first few visits, which was when I observed the differences most starkly. One of the most striking things which confronts any visitor here is the spatial aspect of the villages. While the region has in the past been described as "deep rural", it presents very differently. Almost all housing is formal, and many houses are two or three stories high with driveways and garages but very few cars. The villages are near-universally electrified, and all houses are located on a substantial plot, most of which are fenced. This is a very different rural South Africa to much of the Eastern Cape, for example, or parts of northern KwaZulu-Natal. In fact, the area is different enough to prompts one to ask if it is rural at all, or some sort of peri-urban area detached spatially from its urban anchor.

Socioeconomically, too, there are several striking features. The official unemployment figures for the HDSS are extremely high for both women and men. I was interested, during my first visit, to notice very few men out and about in the village during a weekday. Women collected water, older women were looking after children at home or sweeping yards, and at the clinic there were many women with children requiring paediatric care; the vast majority of those visiting the clinic for their own wellbeing were women, too. There were very few men to be seen, except in the few informal business dotted around the villages. It was also very clear that most people were engaged in some sort of activity, either evidently paid or unpaid.

Focusing on economic activity, there are also some interesting observations. There are many car washes dotted all over the village, despite, or perhaps because most of the roads are dirt, and the area is exceedingly dry and dusty. At various larger intersections, small hubs of activity are located, mostly fruit and vegetable trading, haircuts, and some livestock sales of mostly chickens. As the houses in the area have grown in size and grandeur, local production of concrete columns has flourished, and local brickworks are also spread around the villages. There is evidence of the big

socioeconomic changes which have taken place, such as the large rollout of electricity provision in the area (Harris et al., 2017). Since my first visit, I have returned to Agincourt several times in the past six years, and have spent time with fieldworkers conducting the annual census across the HDSS. In 2019, I spent several days accompanying fieldworkers who were enumerating the 2019 iteration of the Sucses survey, and in June 2022, I conducted 24 in-depth interviews with respondents in Sucses households, and with a number of informal traders.

The Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance Site (HDSS) provides new and unexplored data which support a detailed study grounded in its historical and geographical context. The core of this data comes from the Sustainability in Communal Socio-Ecological Systems (Sucses) panel survey conducted in the Agincourt HDSS between 2010 and 2014. It provides important information on labour market activities, livelihoods, and on the division of care work and social reproduction activities in the household. This allowed me to see who performed unpaid care work in the household, how it has changed, and how it is linked with activity in the paid economy. Furthermore, the research site allowed me to combine quantitative and qualitative methods, an approach which is not usually viable when using large surveys.

Research questions

My overarching research question is: what is the gendered nature of the political economy of Agincourt, and what does this reveal about the relationship between South Africa's economic core and its periphery? This quest is supported by a set of related sub-questions, which are divided into two groups.

Group 1: Understanding the economic position of women

- In what ways does gender discrimination manifest in Agincourt, and why is it so persistent?
- What do the empirical findings illuminate about the position of women in the South African economy, and in society more broadly?
- To what extent do statistics showing rising women's labour force participation reflect changing perceptions of work compared to material changes in women's economic position?

Group 2: Revisiting Wolpe's cheap labour thesis

- What can researching these questions in Agincourt tell us about the position of women in the economy and society in South Africa today?
- How does a place like Agincourt help us understand the broader political economy of South Africa, particularly the persistent and high levels of unemployment and inequality?
- How do these findings help us rethink Wolpe for the 21st century from an explicitly gendered perspective?

These questions suggest a reflexive theoretical component: to what extent is theory useful in understanding these issues, and where does theory need to be updated in light of my research findings here?

Structure of this thesis

Following the introductory chapter, the remainder of the thesis is set out as follows: Chapter One and Chapter Three review the empirical and theoretical literature relating to my research. The overview of literature in Chapter Two shows that the contemporary economic lives of women in Agincourt have been shaped at the nexus of patriarchal family configurations and the colonial and apartheid state. I explain how Agincourt came to be in the 21st century, with its particular socioeconomic configuration replete with multiple contradictions. The chapter shows that locating Agincourt in the historical and developmental arc of rural South Africa highlights strong continuities and striking ruptures. South Africa's colonial past and the Bantustan period shaped and continue to shape the economic lives of residents in complex ways. The confluence of these forces has carved a place which, while recognisable as a typical part of South Africa, is scarred by colonialism and apartheid. This is reflected in the economic lives of women and men in Agincourt, and how they intersect and overlap. The history of the family and the state have shaped the political economy of the area and women's economic lives in important and surprising ways.

Chapter Three reviews the literature on approaches to understanding women's position in the economy and society. The literature review is divided into four sections. The first section surveys existing literature on the current state of women's labour force participation, and our understanding of its determinants. The second section focuses on the applicable theory, drawing on feminist economics and social reproduction theory, to locate the theoretical and methodological approach in which this study takes place. The third section engages in theoretical debates about the role of families in political economy. The fourth section reviews the rich body

of South African literature on articulations between the core and periphery from a gendered perspective.

The significant increase in women's labour force participation in post-apartheid South Africa, and indeed around the world in the latter part of the 20th century, has raised important and interrelated questions about how we understand the labour market and the broader political economy of work, and how we study these phenomena. These are the questions:

(1) How widespread and enduring is this change? This has been well-addressed in the literature, at least at the national level. Regional and local variations in this pattern have not been so well established.
(2) How has this change impacted women's economic lives, and their position in the South African economy?
(3) Perhaps the most interesting question is: why has this change has occurred? While we are clear that supply-side changes in the labour market are driving this phenomenon, there is more to be learnt about exactly what they are, and why they are so different for women and men. The feminist economics literature argues that understanding these questions requires linking paid and unpaid work, that is, the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction.

In Chapter Four, I examine different methodological approaches to studying women and women's work in the economy, and I outline the data and methods used in the study. The research questions outlined above require a different methodological approach to that taken in much of the labour market literature within economics. While much previous work is quantitative and deductive, in this study I take a mixed-methods approach, drawing on several key data sources to construct a holistic picture of the economic lives of women in Agincourt that is located firmly in the economic, historical and spatial context. In the first part of Chapter Four, I outline the differences between inductive and deductive reasoning, and argue for the use of both. In the second part of Chapter Four, I explore the mixed-methods approach – the use of qualitative and quantitative methods – in more detail. I argue that such an approach is needed to develop a holistic picture of the gendered economy.

Chapters five, six and seven consist of my main data and findings. In Chapter Five, I present an analysis of the data that provides an in-depth examination of the village over a five-year period

from 2010 to 2014. My analysis of the data from the Sucses survey reveals various aspects of the village itself and the broader South African labour market not evident from the larger, nationally representative surveys. My analysis starkly highlights the level of continuing economic deprivation in the Agincourt region, some development and improvements notwithstanding. The area has extremely high levels of unemployment; a large proportion of workers continue to live as migrant labourers; and economic gender inequality is high and persistent. I then use these data to provide detail on the political economy of the Agincourt region beyond the essential descriptive statistics of the labour market, taking a broader view of labour market participation, to include care work and other forms of unpaid work.

In Chapter Six, I analyse the household-level survey data to provide an in-depth examination of households in the Agincourt area. Drawing on Sen's work on the economics of households, I attempt to make sense of the structure of these households, and the distribution of paid and unpaid work within them. I find the distribution of paid and unpaid work within the household highly gendered, and women-headed households are materially worse off than those that men head. I argue that my empirical analysis confirms Sen's contention that households and the broader political economy co-constitute each other: the division of labour in the paid economy shapes the division of unpaid work within the household, and vice versa.

In Chapter Seven, I present the key findings which emerged from my fieldwork. I analyse the key concepts of work, the household, and political economy. First, I found that gender relations structure both the household and the economy in overlapping ways, but the effect is uneven. Second, the interviews revealed a perceived hierarchy of employment: work is a job, and self-employment and unpaid work are not regarded as work. Third, the interviews shed light on how respondents make sense of their economic activity in the context of extremely high unemployment, both in the Agincourt area and across the economy more broadly. Fourth, the interviews confirmed what has been found elsewhere in South Africa: households in Agincourt are stretched both geographically between rural and urban South Africa, and generationally. Fifth, the interviews shed light on the process of economic change in the Agincourt village. Respondents highlighted a general decline in the economic fortunes of Agincourt and the country more broadly. This shapes the relations of economic power between individuals, households, and the state. Understanding this helps make sense of Agincourt's place in the South African political economy.

In Chapter Eight, I reflect on my findings to examine how rural and peri-urban areas on South Africa's periphery have played an essential part in South Africa's political economy as sites of the reproduction of labour for the capitalist core. I argue firstly that households in Agincourt are sites of both economically productive and socially reproductive activity. Secondly, that both productive and reproductive work in Agincourt is highly gendered both within and outside of households. This is important for examining inequality in Agincourt. Thirdly, I argue that Wolpe's focus on rural households as the site of the reproduction of labour ignores their important roles as the site of broader social reproduction. Finally, I conclude that the combination of feminist economics, social reproduction theory, and economic theories of the household can be combined to rethink the cheap labour thesis for the 21st century in a way which illuminates the role of women in both production and social reproduction.

In Chapter Nine, I conclude that my research shows how households have responded to changes in the South African political economy in the context of a sustained absence of paid work. While these responses are heterogeneous, they are consistently gendered. The burden of unemployment falls largely on women, and women of all ages do more unpaid care work than men. Furthermore, I argue that my research has better located rural households in the broader South African political economy by investigating the gendered nature of production and social reproduction in Agincourt households. I show how the economy is still dependent on the unpaid work of women, both within households and in the wider community. Most importantly, I show that the role of rural households in the South African economy is far more varied, and more pervasively gendered, than was theorised by political economy scholars of the late 20th century.

Chapter Two
Continuity and disruption: A history of economic lives in Agincourt

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline how Agincourt's history has shaped the political economy of the area we can see today. Women's contemporary economic lives in Agincourt have been moulded at the nexus of patriarchal family configurations and the colonial and apartheid state. Locating Agincourt in the historical and developmental arc of rural South Africa highlights strong continuities and striking ruptures. South Africa's colonial past and the Bantustan period shaped, and continue to shape, residents' economic lives in complex ways. The confluence of these forces has carved a place which typifies the state of post-apartheid economic development in South Africa; one which reflects the deep scarring from colonial and apartheid legislation and economic policy.

Today, the Agincourt area is characterised by low investment in infrastructure, very poor or non-existent service delivery, low incomes, and limited opportunities for paid work. The result has been the drastic curtailment of residents' ability to develop resilient economic lives. This is particularly pronounced in the case of black women. Their economic freedom has been curtailed by patriarchal forces, the configuration of families, and historical legislative prohibitions. This has resulted in large economic inequalities between women and men: the unemployment rate for women is twice that for men, while half as many women as men report undertaking any sort of income-earning work. Unpaid work is distributed in a strikingly gendered fashion, with girls and women of all ages doing significantly more unpaid work than boys and men. There are also surprising contradictions. In many households the older persons grant (OPG), which is large relative to average household incomes, positions older women as the key economic agents in the household, an important continuity from the apartheid period. There is also evidence that the women of Agincourt are advancing – economic participation has increased, women are becoming successful economic migrants and their labour market incomes have increased. Agincourt has no white residents, even thirty years after apartheid. Neither, by the standards of metropolitan South Africa, is it very ethnically or culturally diverse. An analysis of contemporary data and the historical archive suggests there are important continuities and stark disruptions in the economic trajectory of Agincourt, especially where it concerns women. There are many villages similar to Agincourt spread across South Africa. Because of the way South Africa's history has shaped its socioeconomic

development, it is easy to lose sight of the unique configuration of South Africa's economic geography, which colonialism and apartheid have forcefully shaped.

This is highlighted in a close examination of two households in Agincourt by drawing on data from the Sucses survey. Household A had ten members in 2014: five children under the age of 18, and five adults aged between 20 and 58 years. The reported household head is a 58-year-old married man with a 40-year-old wife. They have five sons, two daughters, and the family lives with the wife of one of their sons. All the children are in school, except for the youngest, aged two. Of the adults, two are employed full-time, one is employed part-time, and two are unemployed. Both of those employed full-time are men, and both are temporary migrants who find work outside of Agincourt, although we don't know to which city they migrate.

Household A's income is comprised of R1,000 a month in remittances, R300 from trading and R1,550 from government grants (five child support grants of R310 each). This results in a total household income of R2,850 a month, and a per capita income of R285. The family reports spending R800 on groceries in the previous month, mostly on bread (R210), mielie meal (R300) and other vegetables. The family has savings of R12,000 in the bank. The house has a stove, a fridge, TV, DVD player and a cellphone. The family own a few chickens but no other livestock. They grow a wide variety of fruit and vegetables in the yard, including maize, pumpkin, *bambara* (a type of groundnut), peanuts, sweet potatoes, casava, bananas, guavas, spinach and sugar cane. The household also relies on the surrounding environment: they collect 1.5 bakkie-loads of firewood every six weeks, regularly collect and eat *makwakwa* (monkey orange), and regularly harvest wild jute for eating. Of those 11 years and older, both boys and men and girls and women report performing childcare in the household in the 30 days before the interview. While the family's men mostly do crop and livestock farming, the household head's wife is involved in these activities, too. Both women and men do the cooking, shopping and caring for sick and elderly relatives.

Household B had four members in 2014: the head of the household was a 53-year-old woman living with her daughter and two grandchildren – a young woman aged 18 years and a girl aged three. No member of the household reported undertaking income-earning activities, and the sole income from the household came from a disability grant of R1,350, and one child support grant of R310. This resulted in a total household income of R1,660 a month, and a per capita income of R415. The family had R2,400 invested in a local cooperative – a *stokvel*. They spent R140 a month on bread, R300 on mielie meal, and small amounts on other vegetables and basic foodstuffs. The

household had a stove, fridge, TV, DVD player and a cellphone. They owned no livestock but grew a variety of plants in the yard, including maize, *bambara*, sugar cane and pawpaw. This household, too, relied on the local environment. They collected 1.5 bakkie-loads of firewood every six weeks or so, and harvested wild jute for eating. Regarding unpaid household work, the eldest three women all reported doing childcare, crop farming, collecting water and wood, cleaning, cooking, shopping, and caring for household members when they were sick.

These contemporary dynamics – who does what work in the household and outside of it – have deep historical roots. As Bozzoli (1983) argues, the patriarchal character of pre-capitalist societies in South Africa is one important factor we must consider when examining and explaining the gendered migrant labour patterns I discuss below. Other factors, such as hierarchies of age and differences in property ownership, matter too. But she points to a more fundamental question about the relationships of men's domination which leads us to examine the "articulation of the modes of production" which, she argued, had not been systematically addressed from a gender perspective before (Bozzoli, 1983, p. 145). She argues that:

> ...the system of female oppression in South Africa has not been successfully explained. When female oppression is considered at all it has tended to be confined to rectification studies, to be reduced in an ahistorical manner to the requirements of capitalism; or to be encapsulated within structuralist and functionalist notions of production and reproduction, which are incapable of making visible to us the specificity of gender (Bozzoli, 1983, p. 144).

This critique, while advanced almost 40 years ago, remains true today of our understanding of women's economic lives, of women in the South African labour market, and most particularly, the economic lives of rural black women. There has been significant progress in describing women's economic situation, and sketching with increasing detail their position in the economy. But the South African literature has still not sufficiently addressed why men and the capitalist system continue to oppress women, and why this oppression takes particular forms.

In this chapter, I take a journey through Agincourt's history, identifying key moments of historical inflection in the region for part of the 19th and most of the 20th century. I focus on the ways in which the historical evolution of the state, in both its colonial and apartheid forms, and the

evolution of the family, have shaped women's economic lives, and how the Agincourt region has articulated with South Africa at large. In doing so, I examine:

- the process of colonial dispossession in South Africa;
- the rise and fall of the Bantustans;
- the evolution of the economic lives of women in South Africa and in Agincourt; and
- a broad overview of South Africa's economic history South Africa in the 20th and 21st centuries.

This multipronged approach provides a three-dimensional view of the nexus at which the black women of Agincourt are located. While this chapter is a conversation between the present and the past, it fills an important gap in the literature on Agincourt. While much of the contemporary research from the area makes some attempt to locate the investigation in historical context, this is usually telegraphic and simplified. Here I present a more nuanced view of the area's development, focusing on the ways the state, legislation, family, and the economy have changed over time to become the Agincourt we observe today.

A brief history of Gazankulu, Mhala and Agincourt

The colonial and apartheid periods: 1850–1990

Present-day Agincourt lies on the lowveld plain in north-eastern South Africa, in what is now the province of Mpumalanga. It sits below the northern extension of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg escarpment, and lies adjacent to the Kruger National Park. It is typical bushveld biome, with limited rainfall, high temperatures and poor agricultural potential (Buch and Beer, 1984; Ragie et al., 2020). While the creation of the Bantustans, and the incorporation of the Agincourt area into the Gazankulu Bantustan, were major forces shaping the economic and social history of the area, its history stretches back much further.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, this part of the lowveld was remarkably ethnically heterogeneous (Stadler, 1994). Xitsonga-speaking immigrants and refugees arrived from Mozambique as early as the mid-19th century. The earliest arrivals were refugees from the Gaza Civil War between 1858 and 1862. They were joined by refugees from the Luso-Gaza civil war in 1897. At the start of the 20th century, economic factors began to attract migrants, first to work on the mines at Pilgrim's Rest, Mpumalanga Province. These migrants settled next to Sesotho

chieftaincies at the base of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg escarpment. Relations in the early 20th century were characterised as harmonious by van Warmelo (1935).

By 1913, the year in which the South African government promulgated the Natives Land Act, most of the black African residents in the area of the lowveld – now named Bushbuckridge – lived either on Crown Land as tenants, or on mining companies' property. Tenants had widespread access to land for ploughing and grazing (Stadler, 1994). Despite the fact that black African residents were the majority of the population in the Pilgrim's Rest district, the Natives Land Act (1913) did not allocate any land to black African people in the area – although this was addressed somewhat in the 1936 Land Act (Fischer, 1987). By the 1930s, two main types of tenancy arrangements had emerged. On company-owned land, rent was charged for the right to settle and graze cattle. On white-owned farms, however, tenants worked for the farmer for up to six months a year in exchange for the right to settle, graze cattle and cultivate crops (Fischer, 1987; Stadler, 1994):

> In the lowveld (where Mhala [Agincourt] was eventually established), white interests could accommodate black needs, while whites could benefit at the same time. As few whites occupied or used their land, the land was mainly inhabited by black squatters, which enabled the owners to enjoy capital growth and income from rents. While white tenure and control did not threaten blacks' use of the land, it did guarantee white control of future use of the mining and irrigation potential of the land (Fischer, 1987, pp. 506–7).

White people's interests emerged victorious in the districts dominated by the demarcations in the 1936 Act, with the plateau areas being demarcated white areas to protect established farming and future forestry interests, and lowveld areas being demarcated for black African people (Fischer, 1987). This resulted in the relocation of Xitsonga-speaking people from the Lydenburg area to the lowveld, and the relocation of Sesotho speakers to the lowveld area immediately beneath the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg escarpment. "The greater concentration of seSotho-speaking people on the flats below the mountains brought about a greater ethnic heterogeneity, and eventually also conflict, between people who could only achieve control/use of the land on the grounds of ethnic identity" (Fischer, 1987, p. 507). Under the 1936 Native Land Act, lands owned by mining companies, Crown Land and white-owned farms were purchased by the South African Native

Trust and reserved for exclusive occupation of certain groups – a process which continued until the 1960s.

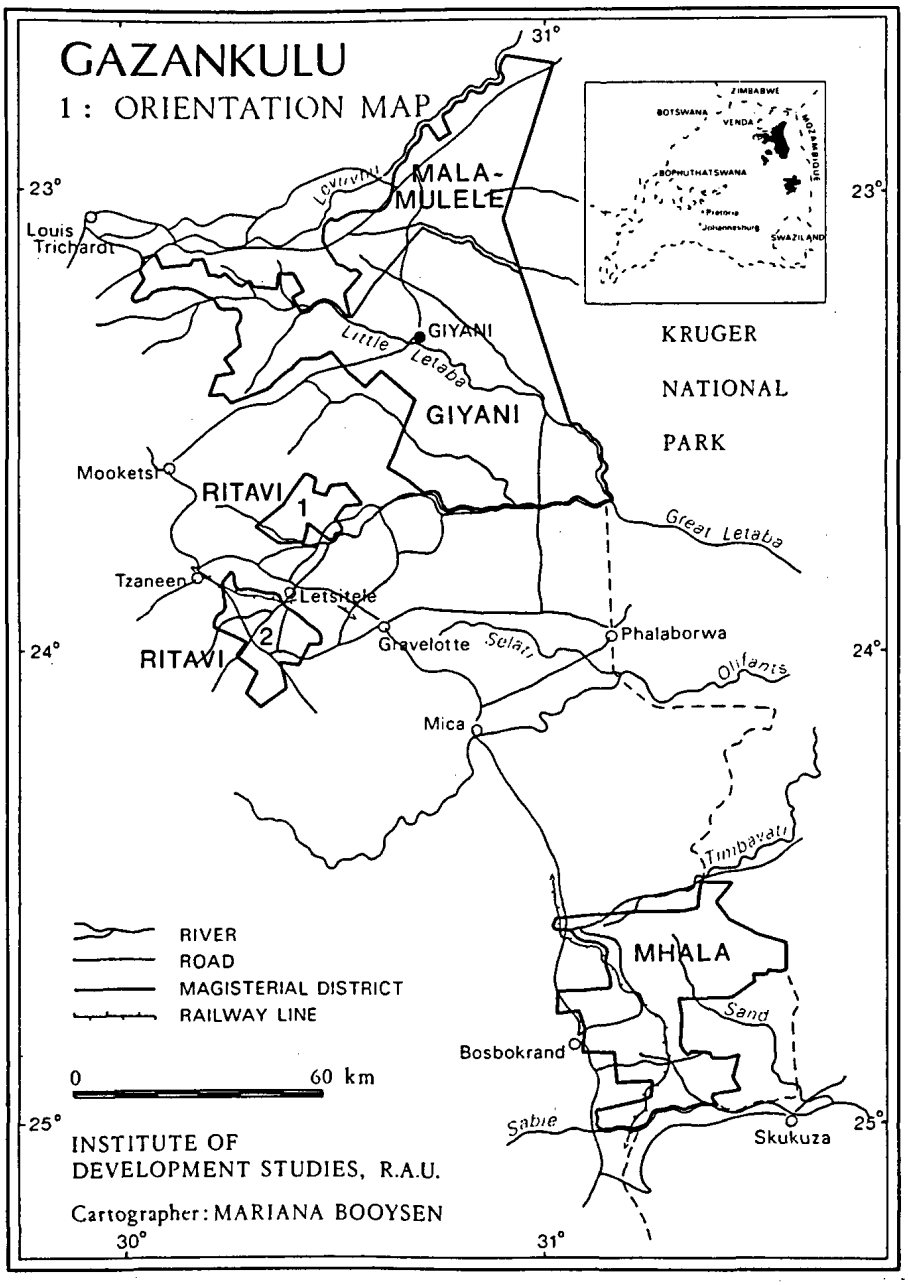
The demarcation released large areas of land on the lowveld for the Trust or private owners to purchase; the Act transferred all Crown Lands to the Trust, and the Trust made this land available to black African residents for settlement and development. Take-up was slow, largely due to the Second World War, with the result that by 1956 most black African residents were still living on white-owned property. However, from 1956, the Nationalist Government made a determined effort to buy up this released land as part of its implementation of apartheid. By 1973, almost all the land in what would then become Mhala had been purchased. Rapid population increases in these newly proclaimed Trust farms caused a marked change in conditions. Agricultural lands in the west were planted with forests, forcing thousands of black African former farm workers to move onto Trust farms (Niehaus, 1993). In response to the population increases, a series of "betterment" programmes were introduced across the lowveld Trust farms in the same decade. "Betterment" was an intervention in the agricultural and political life of rural Bantustans, with a particular focus on soil and environmental conservation ideology. There is more focus on betterment in the following section (Spiegel, 1988). Betterment had the effect of causing large-scale arable land loss, and generating within families an increased dependency on migrant labour. By the 1970s, all Trust land was converted to residential settlements and grazing and agricultural land (Stadler, 1994).

In parallel, the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act led to the granting of political rights to these areas. In 1972, the Gazankulu Legislative Assembly was established and Gazankulu was proclaimed a self-governing 'homeland' of the Xitsonga people in 1973 (Stadler, 1994). Gazankulu was, of course, part of the broader creation of Bantustans across South Africa, although a Xitsonga-speaking 'homeland' was not envisaged under the 1951 Act (Harries, 1991). It was only in 1959 that the Bantu Self-Government Act declared that the Xitsonga people constituted a 'national unit', and the government in Pretoria acceded to the wishes of Xitsonga chiefs for a separate 'homeland' (Harries, 1991). As a result, the Regional Authorities, which were dominated by Xitsonga speakers were carved out of ethnically diverse regional authorities in what was the northern and eastern Transvaal, and combined in 1962 to form the Matshangana Territorial Authority. This was followed seven years later by the installation of a Xitsonga commissioner-general in Giyani (Harries, 1991). This process of ethnic consolidation resulted in the large-scale forced removals in the Bushbuckridge area.

Starting in 1972, a process of "betterment" was applied to the Acornhoek area, today adjacent to Agincourt. During this process, residents were removed from homesteads on agricultural land and relocated to residential stands. The vast reductions of land available for agriculture, and changes in conditions of access to that land which remained available, had important implications for residents' livelihoods. In particular, it profoundly impacted domestic authority because these new restrictions undermined patriarchal dominance of men's control over the distribution of land and control over income (Stadler, 1994).

In a fascinating study of Seville, a small settlement in Mhala, Fischer examines the history of capitalist and state penetration in the lowveld through the actions of the South African Development Trust in the 1960s under the "betterment" policy (Fischer, 1987). He argues that the incorporation of Seville into the Gazankulu Bantustan accelerated the process of rural decline, which increased poverty and disempowered residents. He argues that: "the demands of production and reproduction in the context of poverty and powerlessness also require the diversification of social relations to maximise the possibilities the social environment as a resource provides" (Fischer, 1987, n.p.). One of the most profound and enduring changes precipitated by these removals was to shift the political economy of the area to an almost complete reliance on wage labour, as was the case in many other areas of South Africa (Bank et al., 2020a; Delius et al., 2017): "Senior men were forced to find permanent work as migrant labourers as this was the only way to ensure household survival. As an elderly resident remarked 'nowadays we buy everything'" (Stadler, 1994, p. 65). In this, the Mhala region was part of a far broader arc of migrant labour which has shaped South African society for centuries (Bank et al., 2020a). This had an important impact on power relations within households, with dependency moving from senior men to younger wage earners.

Figure 3: Gazankulu orientation map



Source: Fischer, 1987, p. 503

Gazankulu, as it was then proclaimed, consisted of four districts, which are shown in Figure 3: Mhala, now called Agincourt, Malamulele, Giyani and Ritavi. Gazankulu as a whole was administered from Giyani, the capital. Mhala itself comprised 144 964 hectares, out of Gazankulu's total land area of 700 000 hectares. High average temperatures and low rainfall, combined with high population density, made Gazankulu an area unfavourable for subsistence farming (Ralston et al., 2015). Even in a year of exceptional harvests, subsistence farming would not provide food

supplies for more than five months in a year (Buch and Beer, 1984). The new Bantustan faced socioeconomic difficulties from the beginning. As Harries notes:

> Gazankulu constitutes a geographically defined and poverty-stricken colony within the borders of South Africa. Influx control and resettlement schemes have caused a gross overcrowding: the average population density per square kilometre is 76 in Gazankulu and 17 in 'white' South Africa. As a result, only about 6 per cent of the population can make a bare living from agriculture. (Harries, 1991, p. 107).

Indeed, by 1982, Harries shows that there were twice as many 'citizens' of Gazankulu working outside the Bantustan as migrant labourers compared to wage labourers within the Bantustan: 40 000 versus 21 000. Following its proclamation as a 'homeland' was a rapid increase in the population of Mhala, which doubled between 1970 and 1990, reaching 183 372 by 1987 (Stadler, 1994). The population increase in Mhala was driven by a number of factors, as outlined by (Ritchken, 1995). Most important was the rapid formalisation of wage relationships. Men workers began to be housed in compounds on or near farms, while their families were relocated to the Bantustans. Women were often seasonally employed on farms but were required to return to the Bantustans each week. Furthermore, the relocation of residents from the townships near Sabie, Graskop and Pilgrims Rest under the Group Areas Act resulted in the influx of large numbers of new residents (Fischer, 1992). The establishment of game farms in the eastern parts of the district resulted in the relocation of tenants from these areas to Mhala. Lastly, the civil war in Mozambique in the mid-1980s resulted in an influx of thousands of refugees who settled in refugee camps in Mhala, many of whom were subsequently integrated into the community.

Despite this rapid increase in population, planners made no attempt to establish a viable agricultural base for Mhala residents during the 1970s and 1908s, the results of which are visible today (Ritchken, 1995). In Mhala itself, local employment opportunities were restricted to positions in the public sector, which were well-paid but scarce, and poorly-paid work in private enterprises; the industrial decentralisation policies of the late-apartheid period were never introduced in Mhala (Stadler, 1994). Then, as is true today, the only source of consistent income for older people was the state pension. In 1992 this was R170 per month, with women being eligible from 60 years old, and men from 65 (Stadler, 1994).

The post-apartheid period: 1990–2022

The fall of apartheid in the early 1990s led to rapid changes in the area, due both to the dismantling of pernicious legislation and the resulting change in economic tides. The end of the apartheid period coincided with the establishment of the Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance Site (HDSS) in 1992, and the resultant expansion in data on many aspects of development in the region. The baseline study in 1992 covered 57 600 people in 8 900 households, across 20 villages in the area (Kahn et al., 2012). By 2012, the HDSS area covered 420 square kilometres, including 27 villages with both traditional and elected leadership. While electricity was available in all villages, it was too expensive for many households, and its provision was not consistent (Harris et al., 2017). Even by 2012, there was no piped water to dwellings, and households experienced a number of problems with water connections, reliability and quality (Mathee et al., 2021). Each village had a primary school, and most had a high school, but education quality was poor and there were very few post-secondary education opportunities (Kahn et al., 2012).

The early post-apartheid period saw some important changes in the health and wellbeing of residents in the census area, and here the impact of the HIV/Aids epidemic is marked. Life expectancy fell for both men and women, from 72.7 years for women and 68.2 for men in 1994, to 64.4 and 55.7 respectively in 2009 (Kahn et al., 2012). The infant mortality rate increased from 24.7 per 1 000 live births in 1994 to 39.1 in 2009, and the total fertility rate declined from 3.71 to 2.34 (Kahn et al., 2012). Population-level health trends in the Agincourt area are an important component of the broader process of socioeconomic change in the region. The most notable of these trends is the epidemiological transition: the change from very high mortality rates concentrated amongst young people, caused by nutritional deficiencies and infectious diseases, to lower and more stable mortality concentrated among older persons and caused by noncommunicable diseases (Kabudula et al., 2017a). In Agincourt, the HIV/Aids epidemic reversed the progress of the epidemiological transition between the early 1990s and 2007. More recently, the transition has progressed once again but in most age groups the cause of death distribution has not yet reached the levels of the early 1990s.

There are interesting parallels between Mhala of the apartheid period and the Agincourt area today, particularly in the way it defies classification as either urban or rural. As Stadler notes, the appearance of the area approximates 'displaced urbanisation' as defined by Murray (1987). He argues that the Mhala area "challenges the classification of the village as particularly 'rural'. Younger informants often called it a 'location', but admitted that it was not the same as an 'urban'

township. There is a keen sense that the village lacks the basic infrastructure needs associated with an urban area" (Stadler, 1994, p. 34). My own experience of the area in the late-2010s and early 2020s is consistent with this characterisation.

The political economy of Agincourt

Migration and movement in Agincourt

Migrant labour was one of the defining socioeconomic forces of 19th and 20th century South Africa. Its effects continue to shape socioeconomic outcomes across the country, and are still noticeable in areas like Agincourt (Harries, 1994; Marks and Rathbone, 1982; Posel, 2020; Wilson, 1972). The migrant labour system started under the colonial administration, and has been extensively documented elsewhere (Delius, 2017). While Mhala/Agincourt is located in the historical arc of migrant labour in South Africa's development, it takes on a particular character given the area's remote location far from centres of economic importance; it is peripheral both geographically and economically. Not only are there important differences in the history and trajectory of the area compared to other oft-studied parts of rural South Africa, such as the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, but there are differences in the way historical challenges and contradictions have crystalised today.

Migrant labour has a complicated and intricate relationship with the questions being examined here. As Bozzoli argues, her examination of migrant labour and gender suggests that the rise of migrant labour has been accompanied by a change in the gendered division of labour within the household. This often takes the form of a diminished male contribution; often the assumption is that migrant labour itself has brought about this change. But, as she argues, this assumption needs far more complex and careful elaboration:

> Historically, it was not simply the men's absence that placed the burden of domestic and agricultural labour on the women; nor is it just that male tasks had been undermined by the destruction of the Bantustans; it was also that these societies possessed a capacity to subordinate women's labour. Indeed, one might even suggest that the giving up of migrant labour by these societies partly rested upon their capacity to subordinate women's labour; and that it is in this capacity, that the resilience of these systems to 'full proletarianization' may have rested (Bozzoli, 1983, pp. 129–130).

Migrant labour has played a central role in shaping South African workers' lives, and indeed the country's entire political economy. This is reflected in a long arc of 20th century scholarship which focuses on it. It is difficult to conceptualise any question about contemporary South Africa – the trajectory of its industrialisation, the nature of its urbanisation, the extent and distribution of unemployment – which is not determined in some part by the migrant labour system, which has developed and persisted over the last 150 years, if not longer (Francis, 2021). Many studies of the Mhala region and broader Gazankulu note the prevalence of migrant labour, and the importance of migrant labour remittances for supporting the political economy of Mhala during the apartheid period. These studies find that labour migration remains concentrated among men of working age, and in some instances those of retirement age, too. There is far less information about the destinations of these workers, the types of work they undertake and in what conditions, and their earnings. During the Bantustan period, women were prohibited from migrating for work, and so levels of women's migrancy were very low. The history of migration in Mhala/Agincourt illustrates the competing and contradictory nature of the forces which have shaped the area. While the colonial and apartheid state facilitated men's migrancy and allowed men to earn incomes which gave them power at home, at the same time it undermined men's authority in certain ways, and opened space for new configurations of the family.

Research work at Agincourt in the contemporary period consistently shows the prevalence of temporary migration, and the persistence of the two-way flow of workers, goods and money between Agincourt and larger urban areas, including Mbombela, Middelburg and Johannesburg (Collinson et al., 2016). This embodies the concept of "double-rootedness": despite migrant workers spending growing amounts of time in urban areas, either working or searching for work, they often maintain a strong rural connection (Bank et al., 2020a; Bekker, 2001). This is observed across South Africa; in the Agincourt region it remains evident today.

In the years after the end of apartheid, there was a school of thought – the modernist narrative – which suggested that the lifting of influx controls and other legislation restricting movement during the 1980s would lead to a decline in labour migration and the rise of the permanently urbanised worker. But research from around South Africa, including from the Agincourt region, suggests that the migration process and evolution are far more complex. New information on migration patterns suggest that it remains entrenched today, and is in fact expanding, despite the fact that its legislative origins have been dismantled (Posel, 2020).

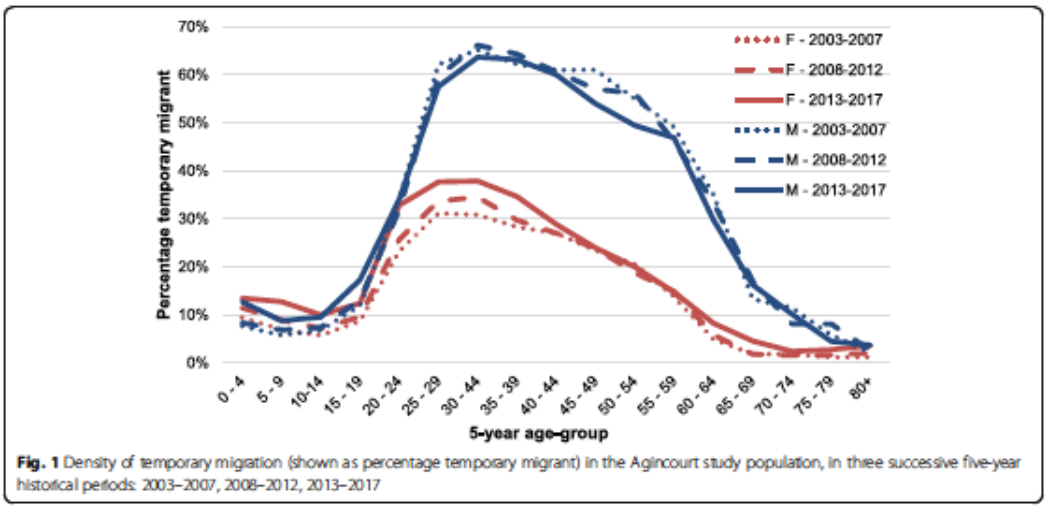
In contrast to the national census, which asks who slept in a particular house the night before the census, the Agincourt HDSS census uses a de jure household definition, allowing for the identification of temporary migrants who spend more than six months of the year away from home. Those who migrate for less than six months of the year are considered permanent residents. Here, there have been some important changes in migration from Agincourt, particularly in the gender distribution of temporary migration. Between 2000 and 2010, the likelihood of being a temporary migrant for women in the 25–35 age group increased significantly, from 24% to 36%. For men aged from 25 to 29 years, the increase was from 50% to 60%, and for those aged 30 to 34 years, from 59% to 67% (Collinson et al., 2016). This is an important change from the apartheid era, and is the driving force between many of the socioeconomic changes unpacked in the following chapters.

Recent research into current patterns of migration find that employment and job seeking continue to drive migration, but labour migration has changed in important ways. Young adults largely undertake internal migration, and while it is still predominantly men, it is becoming increasingly feminised, and this is a marked departure from the apartheid period. (Collinson et al., 2016; Ginsburg et al., 2021). This change is also evident in the national data in the form of the large scale increase in women's labour force participation over the last three decades (Casale, 2003). But recent evidence from Agincourt suggests that temporary labour migration for women remains significantly below that of men up to the mid-year of the Sucses sample in 2012, and even beyond to 2017 (Collinson et al., 2016). In the report on the Agincourt HDSS baseline study, Tollman et al. note that migrant labour was the primary determinant on household composition due to the impact of the loss of working-age adults from the physical household. For example, in 1992, single parenting was far more extensive in Agincourt when comparing the permanent population (i.e. permanent residents) to the total population. In the total population, 9% of households had only a single parent or caregiver, compared to 39% of households in the permanent population (Tollman et al., 1999).

The pervasiveness of migrant labour in Agincourt is clear from the baseline data. In 1992, more than 50% of all men between the ages of 25 and 59 were migrant workers, and this rose to 60% for those aged between 30 and 49 years. In contrast, only 14% of women aged between 30 and 49 years were migrant workers. Interestingly, the report notes: "although substantially fewer migrant workers have secondary or tertiary education, the overall patterns are not clear-cut. Many selection

biases are associated with both migration and education, and further investigation is needed" (Tollman et al., 1999, p. 862).

Figure 4: Temporary migration in Agincourt



Source: Ginsburg et al. (2021, p. 4)

Figure 4 shows the change over time of temporary migration by age cohort in Agincourt, drawing from the HDSS census between 2003 and 2017. Labour migration for men is significantly higher for all ages between the ages of 24 and 80. For adults within those ages, the proportion of men migrating is almost double that of women. What is striking, however, is how women's labour migration has increased between 2003 and 2017. For example, for women between the ages of 20 and 29, labour migration increased from 30% of all women to just under 40% in the space of 15 years. Similar results were found by Collinson et al. (2016). This is a small but significant increase in the share of women who migrate for work, and is indicative of important changes in the political economy of the area which are the subject of this research.

There are interesting dynamics for early school leavers between 15 and 19 years old. There is a rapid acceleration of labour migration for both men and women from the age of 15 – presumably when many leave school to pursue economic opportunities. Men and women track each other closely until their early 20s, when migration rates for women peak at about 38%, while for men they continue to climb into the mid-60 percents for those in their 30s. There is another interesting trend for men between ages 45 and 60. Here we see a notable decline in labour migration between 2003 and 2017. It is also interesting to note that temporary migration is still a factor for men over 60 years of age, with almost 30% of men aged between 60 and 65 reporting temporary migration,

compared to 10% of women of the same age. This literature shows important continuities: consistently high levels of labour migration, and important changes: rising women's labour migration in the Agincourt area. In Chapter Five, I examine in more detail how labour migration and gender intersect to shape households in Agincourt.

Migrant labour and social reproduction

While migration has shaped the economic movement of people, it also shaped livelihoods in rural areas in profound and lasting ways. The impact can be seen in the way work, both paid and unpaid, is distributed in areas on the economic periphery, even where they are changing rapidly. One example is household headship, and how peculiar it is that almost half of men household heads are not resident in the household. It also raises questions about the role of motherhood in families and households (Charman, 1990; Walker, 1995). This has implications for how we make use of theory to understand social and economic change in areas like Agincourt. The resurgence in social reproduction theory, for example, is largely based on empirical work in the global North, where the political economy of households is very different to South Africa, and indeed to much of the global South. Understanding the contemporary structure and dispersion of households in Agincourt is a prime example of the importance of a place's history to fully understand current economic structures.

During the colonial period, migrant labour was shaped by piecemeal interventions, often in response to low-wage labour shortages in particular sectors, such as mining, agriculture and heavy industry. But through the Bantustan system under apartheid, the government implemented the migrant labour system on a broad scale as a sweeping structural intervention which shaped the movement of people in almost all economic sectors – having profound impacts on people's social lives. The migrant labour system reached its zenith in the second half of the 20th century, under the apartheid system of movement control. The migrant labour system resulted in a large proportion of the population – almost exclusively consisting of men – oscillating between rural homesteads and urban places of work (Ginsburg et al., 2021). This dynamic of who left to work – mainly men of working age – shaped its corollary in who was left behind. Those who stayed were children, some in school, working-age women, and older men and women beyond the age of retirement.

This functioned to geographically remove the productive sphere from the reproductive sphere within households. While these are typically separated by social and cultural norms, and the

distribution of economic power, these activities often take place in the same dwelling. But under the migrant labour system, men, who were largely performing the productive labour, spent most of the year away from the household, with the main link being the steady flow of remittances back to the homestead. This was reflected in the work of mid-century scholars such as Wolpe and Legassick, who saw the Bantustans as areas of almost exclusive non-productive work, while the urban areas where seen as the site of economic activity.

Households in Agincourt: Continuity and change

Households are a key site of both economic and social reproduction, and of contestation over resources (Fine, 1992; Himmelweit et al., 2013). Across the world, households continue to change and evolve. This is true of the Mhala/Agincourt region, too. In the 20th century in Bushbuckridge, large multiple-family households were under the authority of a senior man, as characterised by Stadler (1994). These men were also often in positions of power outside the household: landowners appointed some as headmen, and on both privately-owned and company farms, these men directed family labour, with women and children working mainly in the gardens and fields of their family homes. Early household histories gathered by Stadler (1994) tell of a family life tightly controlled by senior men who allocated and controlled access to land and determined the flow of income and distribution of resources within the household.

But household structure and the power dynamics within households did not remain static; transformations were driven by changes in the balance of power between both generations and gender. These transformations were caused by the rise of migrant labour, the implementation of "betterment" in the region, and the rise in girls' schooling and women's labour force participation in the latter parts of the 20th century (Ritchken, 1995; Stadler, 1994). This fluidity means that the uneven and rapid transformations in household structures make it difficult for any generalised custom or culture governing household relationships to emerge. However, by the early 1980s, a typology of households had emerged in the Bushbuckridge area, of which Mhala/Agincourt is a part. Broadly, households could be categorised as simple two-generation households, with parents and children; simple three-generation households, where a married son and family remained in a household; extended three-generation households, where more than one married son and family remained; and complex three-generation households, where more distant relatives formed part of the household (Ritchken, 1995).

This discussion brings households in Agincourt into the broader literature on household dynamics and composition in South Africa. Murray (1987) has written about the dynamics of reproduction of households on the South African periphery, drawing together the literature on households with an examination of the structural relationship between core and periphery. Spiegel (1986) has written about the importance of understanding South African households as fluid, rather than static units, with changes in size and composition responding to broader social and economic changes. Sharp and Spiegel (1990) examined differing perceptions in gendered roles for work in the household and the local economy in the context of South Africa's Bantustans and migrant labour system.

Households have continued to change in the post-apartheid period. In the first eleven years of democracy, between 1992 and 2003, households in the Agincourt area changed in a number of important ways (Madhavan and Schatz, 2007). The total population increased from 56 765 in 1992 to 70 272 in 2003, while household sizes remained consistent: between 6.48 in 1992, and 6.02 in 2003. This means the number of households increased from 8 763 to 11 664 over the period. Population growth was due both to initial undercounting of Mozambican immigrants in the baseline HDSS study, and the establishment of a new settlement as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) – the first post-apartheid administration's flagship economic development policy (Kahn et al., 2012).

More recently, Wittenberg and Collinson (2020) find that the rapid formation of new households in the Agincourt district has resulted in a decline in household size between 1994 and 2012. They attribute this to two interlinked mechanisms: firstly, the provision of RDP households in the 1990s strongly induced household formation. Secondly, there has been a process of household reconstitution as households aim to access better services, for example by moving out of the 'refugee' villages.[6] These dynamics have also caused changes within households. The average standard dependency ratio, the average child dependency ratio, and the women-weighted dependency ratio all decreased between 1992 and 2003 (Madhavan and Schatz, 2007, p. 90). The percentage of girl/women-headed households also increased markedly, from 27.6% in 1992, to 30.3% in 1997, and to 35.9% by 2003. Multigenerational households are also very common, with

[6] Refugee areas were areas predominantly inhabited by refugees who had fled the Mozambican civil war.

85% of those over 60 years of age living in multigenerational households (Ralston et al., 2015). Such changes in households' configuration have important implications for the distribution of economic power and resources within the household. And they underscore that there has not been a linear process of household fragmentation or consolidation, but rather a messy and contradictory set of forces which have shaped households and families.

Economic lives in Agincourt

Gazankulu, the Carnegie Inquiry, and the Agincourt HDSS

Fortuitously, the Gazankulu Bantustan was the subject of focused study in the Carnegie Inquiry of 1984. The results provide an informative snapshot into the political economy of the area in the two decades before the collapse of apartheid. This work flowed out of the Health Services Development Unit in Gazankulu, which was a project of the Wits Department of Community Health (Buch and Beer, 1984). In one report, Moody and Golino interviewed 300 residents in Gazankulu, 200 of which were in Mhala. Their report provides a snapshot of a severely deprived area with little infrastructure, limited economic opportunities even in the primary sector, and very poor prospects for development. In 1975, the average per capita income was R93, while the median income was R57 (Moody and Golino, 1984). The Bantustan had very small secondary and tertiary sectors – a result of lack of investment in infrastructure, the distance from large commercial and manufacturing sectors, and competition with surrounding areas (Moody and Golino, 1984). Furthermore, the researchers found that the relatively small size of the economy resulted in as much as 85% of all income earned within Gazankulu being spent outside of the Bantustan, leading to an economic multiplier of only 1.18 in 1975. They argued that:

> The single most overriding spatial constraint to development in Gazankulu is the location of the region within the larger South African spatial system. The physical linkages between Gazankulu and the rest of the periphery are at present poorly developed. Apart from the Louis Trichard – Punda Maria road which runs along the part of the northern boundary of Gazankulu, there is only one other tarred road (linking Giyani to Duiwelskloof), and no railway connection except for that in the Mhala region and at Nkowankowa in Ritavi (Moody and Golino, 1984, p. 9).

In his report for the Inquiry, Harries noted that up to 75% of all families in Gazankulu were dependent on incomes from migrant labour, with the result that 53% of all working-age men

between 15 and 64 were continually absent, working in 'white' South Africa (Harries, 1984). In addition to migrant labour, old age pensions were a major source of income: by 1982, 45% of all steady income earners were pensioners. Pensions were paid every two months, and were R73 in 1982. Numerous studies of Mhala and broader Gazankulu noted the challenge of the provision of clean water. Harries noted that, at the time of the Inquiry, an average white South African used 200 litres of water a day, while an entire black family in a Bantustan used 50 litres a day. At the same time, the ratio of people per tap in Mhala was 833:1 (Harries, 1984).

What emerges from the various papers in the Carnegie Inquiry is a bleak picture of Mhala: a hot and dry region based on an artificial racial political construct, with very limited economic opportunities. Where economic opportunities existed, they were available almost exclusively to men migrant labourers. In numerous ways, as I argue in the following chapters, there are continuities in many of the important socioeconomic aspects between Mhala in the 1970s and 1980s, and the Agincourt region today. In the post-apartheid period, research in the area has been intensified by the creation of the Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance Site (HDSS) in the early 1990s.

The economic lives of women in the history of Agincourt

It is an enduring problem in the writing of South Africa's history that women are often invisible. Nowhere is this truer than in the analysis of the economic history of South Africa, and in particular its rural areas. While there have been attempts to rectify this (Bozzoli, 1983), this is not a straightforward matter, and it is more difficult in the case of economics, where a historic blindness to women's economic lives meant appropriate data were not gathered. This makes retrospective analysis all the more difficult. That is not to say there is no information; what information does exist can be usefully interpreted using the theoretical tools, such as social reproduction theory, which have been developed over the last few decades.

Stadler's 1994 thesis on the area provides insightful context into women's economic lives in Agincourt today. His work described the impact of the forced removals of the 1970s on domestic, and particularly gender relations. This history shows how a variety of tenancy arrangements which emerged across the South African countryside in the period leading up to the establishment of the Bantustans entrenched men's dominance in African households. This was because the terms of tenancy arrangements for access to agricultural land granted access only to men, rendering women

and children dependent on their husbands and fathers. As such, these men had almost complete control over economic resources in the household.

In the first half of the 20th century there were very few economic opportunities available to women on farms, and they were largely excluded from engaging in wage labour. This left women dependent on their men relatives' earnings for cash income (Stadler, 1994). Women's movement, particularly single women, was radically circumscribed by the Natives Act of 1952, which required black African women to carry reference books, and prevented single women from entering urban settlements. Well-paid, stable employment was not available to most women. Uneducated women were able to earn only very low wages in formal employment, which was restricted to domestic and farm labour, and menial jobs in local retail. Strategies for survival in the informal economy included brewing beer, hawking, and producing small home crafts. Indeed, Ritchken argues that the loss of agricultural land "severely undermined the economic position of uneducated and unemployed women" (Ritchken, 1995, p. 359). Where labour migrancy opportunities did exist for women, they were short-distance opportunities such as casual labour on nearby farms (Harries, 1984). Women spent much of their time engaged in time-consuming unpaid work, including agriculture, and household work, such as collecting water and firewood, cooking and cleaning, and caring for children and the elderly (Moore, 1984). Men's economic prospects were not much better. As part of their report for the Carnegie Inquiry in 1984, Moody and Golino argue that:

> ...the main structural problem in Gazankulu is that the economy cannot provide sufficient employment opportunities for the economically active population. There were 21,263 paid employment opportunities in Gazankulu in 1980, while 182,261 people were in the economically active age group…there are currently 62,000 families in Gazankulu. Of these 31,640 families have agricultural rights and 30,560 families are landless people living in rural areas (Moody and Golino, 1984, pp. 7–8).

While historical documents provide a useful insight into the evolution of the political economy in Mhala/Agincourt, my analysis is constrained by a lack of economic data for much of the historical period, particular during the decades of colonialism and apartheid. Some of this is due to a paucity of historical records, while some of it is due to enduring blindness to women in history, and particularly to the economic lives of black African women. What historical evidence is available to us suggests that the Mhala/Agincourt region, like most of rural South Africa, has been sculpted

by colonial and apartheid-era dispossession, large-scale population removals, and severe restrictions on land ownership. Women's lives were directed and constrained by pervasive restrictions on movement, work, and livelihoods, both legislatively and from within families, for much of the 19th and 20th centuries. But the evidence suggests, too, that these forces did not work in a unified manner, and often operated in contradictory ways. The upheaval of the post-apartheid period has intensified these contradictions, with important changes in the gendered dynamics of work and migration, and reconfigurations in household power dynamics due to the expansion of the social grants system.

Understanding women's economic lives during apartheid is not straightforward. While surveys showed very low economic participation of women in the Gazankulu Bantustan, Moore argues that much of these data rather reflect the preconceived notions of the enumerators about what constitutes economic activity. He notes that "their ideas of what women should be doing has come through very strongly in the data and has portrayed a situation very different to that which exists" (Moore, 1984, p. 71). The idea that changing labour force statistics might have reflected changes in meaning has been explored extensively in recent decades by theorists of social reproduction, who have expanded conceptions of what constitutes economic activity and work (Bhattacharya and Vogel, 2017). This raises the thorny issue of whether observed economic change in the area is due to the improvement of our statistical tools, or is reflecting real changes in the political economy – an issue I return to later in this research.

Older persons in Agincourt

It is typical across much of Africa that extended families and the community provide care for the elderly, in comparison to much of the developed world. The majority of older people in South Africa, particularly black older people, were excluded from employment during apartheid, and thus have no access to secure retirement benefits other than the old age pension. Most elderly people in South Africa also have no formal education (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Most of South Africa's older population live in large, multigenerational households dominated by girls/women (Lombard and Kruger, 2009). For the country as a whole, both the number and proportion of older persons aged 60 years and over rose between 1996 and 2011, compared with those people of 59 years and younger. The population share for those people 60 years and over rose from 7.1% in 1996 to 8% in 2011. The gender variation of older persons shows that the distribution is highly feminised (Statistics South Africa, 2014), with 66 elderly men to 100 elderly women in the 2011

Census. The same is true of the Agincourt area, as is outlined in the population figures in Chapter Five.

It is clear from the Sucses data that older people play several important roles in Agincourt households, from contributing income through the older persons grant, to providing unpaid labour for household and subsistence work. Understandably, older people are not often the focus of labour market investigations, but the information gathered from Agincourt should emphasise the importance of including them when examining the political economy of an area. In South Africa, most older black South Africans "age in place", particularly in rural areas where there is limited access to old age homes and nursing facilities (Schatz et al., 2015). What differentiates South Africa from other sub-Saharan countries is the widespread provision of a relatively large, in comparison to mean incomes, older persons grant (Case and Menendez, 2007; Ralston et al., 2015).

Those people who are 65 years and older account for slightly more than 4% of the total Sucses sample, which is on average across the five-year period. But they play a significant role in the political economy of the village. Schatz et al., (2015) find that older persons in the Agincourt HDSS live in large and complex multigenerational households, and that the share of households with productive older persons is growing. They argue that: "the reality in many emerging economies suggests that many older persons are taking on productive roles in their households and networks. This shifting position of older persons from 'dependent' to 'productive' necessitates a fundamental change in our approach to studying aging as a physiological and social phenomenon" (Schatz et al., 2015, p. 583).

The first wave of the Sucses survey coincides with the equalisation of the older persons grant for men and women at age 60, following a Constitutional Court case in 2010 (Schatz et al., 2015). As Ralston et al., (2015) correctly argue, the older persons grant plays a critical role in both the livelihoods and survival of older persons, and indeed households in general, in South Africa. The older persons grant is one of several factors which have contributed to a shift in the economic positioning of older people in South African households. As Madhavan et al., (2017) argue, while much existing research conceives of older persons as economically dependent – because they withdraw from the labour market – there is increasing evidence to challenge this view. New research in the Agincourt region finds both that older persons are not dependent in the traditional sense, and secondly that their social and economic positioning changes in important ways over time (Madhavan et al., 2017; Schatz et al., 2015).

Indeed, there is evidence that receipt of the older persons grant has positive effects for all members of a household, particularly if the older person is a woman. In one important study, Duflo (2003) found that the expansion of the older persons grant in South Africa led to a direct improvement in girls' nutrition and overall in the household, and that this effect was entirely due to pensions received by women (Duflo, 2003). Older persons grants (OPG) also play an important role in facilitating job search for working-age adults in the household (Ardington et al., 2009). In the broader HDSS study, a question on the receipt of the OPG was first included in 2010, and provides a useful counterpoint to the Sucses data, which also begins in 2010. Ralston et al., (2015) investigated OPG receipts in persons 60 years and older, and found that, on average, 70.1% of men and 81.6 of women in the Agincourt HDSS reported receiving it. Although these numbers are surprisingly low given the average incomes in the HDSS (the OPG is means tested), they do rise with age. From the subgroup of those 75 years and older, 80% of men and 84.6% of women report receiving an OPG. This is slightly lower than the national average of 90% of all age-eligible black older persons in South Africa (Schatz et al., 2015). My interviews included a number of older persons who were all receiving the OPG. It was clear that this grant was often the cornerstone of household finances and used to cover the necessities. Any money earned over and above the OPG was put towards expenditure that was less essential to the household.

There is the related question of the impact that South Africa's expansion of social protection through grants has had on households. This question has been addressed by economists in some detail, but not from a political economy perspective. It has been examined by looking at the returns to different family members from the receipt of social grant income. But how has the system of social protection shaped the political economy of households? Mosoetsa argued that: "older women have become central to the livelihood activities of households and communities at a time of massive job losses in the formal economy. This is largely the result of their traditional role as caregivers, the income that they derive from government pensions, and the incapacity, through ill health or income loss, of other family members" (Mosoetsa, 2011, p. 147). She points out the contradiction that older women are both one, if not the chief, income earners in households, due to the older persons grant, but that they also do most of the unpaid work within the household, a finding which is echoed in Agincourt, and discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Non-family groupings

A foundational paper on the Agincourt HDSS identifies three distinct communities in the Agincourt area in the early 1990s (Tollman et al., 1999). It is worth revisiting this to examine how

these have changed in the intervening years. The first group consisted of the women, children and elderly, along with adolescents and a minority of men who live in the village on a permanent basis. Historically, this has largely been the socially reproductive group, with some variation. The second group consisted of migrant workers, comprised of mostly economically active men, and a minority of economically active women. This was the economically active, productive group. The third group was Mozambican immigrants predominantly former refugees from the Mozambique civil war. But these three groupings have not remained static in the post-apartheid area. The proportion of women who work, and migrate for work, has risen rapidly, particularly since 2000 (Collinson et al., 2016, 2014), and the roll-out of the older persons grant has increased incomes for older people. There have also been important changes in the socially reproductive group. Agincourt is a rapidly transitioning society. Are these groupings accurate and appropriate twenty years later?

In the 1990s, it was perhaps sensible to group women, children and the elderly together. But there is increasing evidence that, analytically at least, we need to draw some important distinctions between and among members of this group because things have changed significantly in the last two decades. As I will show in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, despite many of these residents remaining at home, they are engaged in a wide variety of productive activities, even if some are not monetised. It is not accurate to conceptualise migrant work only as productive, and residential activities as socially reproductive.

There have also been important changes between age groups, genders and migrants. Collinson et al., (2014) highlight two transitions which help us understand changes in the Agincourt population over time: the epidemiological transition and the demographic transition. They consider the epidemiological transition – and its focus on the determinants of morbidity and mortality – to be embedded within a broader health transition which includes broader risk factors and other characteristics. Under their schema, the epidemiological transition is understood in its conventional sense: the transition from acute communicable diseases caused by poverty to chronic noncommunicable diseases of higher-income societies. Most simply stated, the demographic transition is a movement from a regime of high mortality and high fertility to one of low mortality and low fertility. The epidemiological transition is embedded in the demographic transition through the reduction of mortality. As Collinson et al. note:

> While the basic demographic transition is a highly structured paradigm, variations in the relationship between mortality and fertility trends across time

> and space have important implications for age structure and economic development, and it is linked to a number of other phenomena, including urbanisation (Collinson et al., 2014, p. 2).

This section has highlighted several important characteristics of the political economy of the Agincourt area, including the important roles played by women and older persons in the economy. In the following section, I turn to examine the ways in which the Agincourt area has historically articulated with the political economy of South Africa more broadly.

Rural-urban articulations in South Africa

Wolpe and the cheap labour thesis

An essential component in understanding the trajectory of the Mhala/Agincourt area is understanding how it has been incorporated into the broader political economy of South Africa. Here, the work of Harold Wolpe is central to investigating rural-urban articulations I examine in Chapter Eight. For several decades, Wolpe's cheap labour thesis has informed our understanding of the structure of South Africa's political economy, and in particular its labour market. In his seminar contribution published in 1972, Wolpe sketched essentially a dualist view of the South African economy: a developed industrial and urban core, where productive economy work takes place; and a rural periphery, where reproductive work occurs. Wolpe argued that the reproductive labour carried out in the periphery – first in the colonial labour reserves and then the apartheid Bantustans – subsidised capital's cost of the reproduction of labour, thereby reducing wages and increasing profitability (Wolpe, 1972). In doing so, he linked the racist political ideology of colonialism and apartheid to the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production in South Africa.

This geographic dualism was underpinned by an economic dualism, where two modes of production[7] existed simultaneously but were interdependent: the capitalist mode of production, where labourers sell their labour power to those who own the capitalist means of production, and the mode of production in the reserves and then the Bantustans, which he characterised as

[7] Mafeje was critical of Wolpe's characterisation of the "African redistributive economies" as a mode of production, rather than a site (Mafeje, 1981). Mafeje argued that this characterisation obscured contradictory processes of class formation within the reserves and Bantustans, which perhaps now we would label intra-area inequalities.

"African redistributive economies" (Wolpe, 1972, p. 432). These he described as economies in which:

> (i) land is held communally by the community and worked by social units based on kinship (the enlarged or extended family) and (ii) the product of labour is distributed, not by exchange, but directly by means of an allocation through the kinship units in accordance with certain rules of distribution…African redistributive economies constituted the predominant mode of rural existence for a substantial (for much of the period, a majority), but continuously decreasing number of people (Wolpe, 1972, p. 432).

This was a strikingly simple and revelatory explanation for the way the South African political economy worked during apartheid. This fundamentally altered the structural approach to thinking about the articulation between the main constituents of South Africa's economy, namely its developed, capitalist core and its rural, pre-capitalist periphery (Wolpe, 1972). But under Wolpe's dualist theory, the socially reproductive sphere – rural South Africa – was left unexplored, as a black box in which social reproduction took place.

He argued that the preservation of the cheap labour economy required that the means of subsistence – social reproduction is the term now used to describe this process, although Wolpe did not use it – must continue to be produced in the "African redistributive economies", and these means must be available to migrant workers. But, as he argues, "this requires both the retention of the pre-capitalist mode of production, at least insofar as this guarantees the allocation of productive land to all members of the community, and the maintenance of certain levels of production", both of which raise two important problems for capitalism (Wolpe, 1972, p. 436).

The first, he argues, is the tendency under capitalism for the concentration of assets, in this case land, which would give rise to a class of landless workers unable to meet their economic reproductive needs. The second is related, and it is the necessity of the rural areas to maintain reproduction "at a level which, while not too low to contribute to the reproduction of migrant workers as a class, is not yet high enough to remove the economic imperatives of migration" (Wolpe, 1972, p. 437). If both requirements are met, it is still necessary that the product of these areas is available to all families, particularly those connected to migrant workers.

The cheap labour thesis and social reproduction

In the contemporary literature on social reproduction theory, a lot of attention is paid to the crisis of social reproduction, but little effort is made to define the nature, location and extent of the crisis. In his paper, Wolpe neatly identifies the crisis of social reproduction in mid-20th century South Africa – although he terms it the "corrosion of the social and economic basis of cheap migrant labour-power" (Wolpe, 1972, p. 439) – as arising from the fact that production in the Reserves provided a declining fraction of migrant workers' total subsistence.

This was driven by two processes: an overall decline in production led to a per capita decrease in output, in some cases to zero, because families lost the means of production. The second is that, even where there is production, it is no longer available to migrant workers because of a "termination of the reciprocal social obligations of support between migrant and his kin in the Reserve" (Wolpe, 1972, p. 443). Wolpe's thesis was grounded historically, and while it is applicable both to the colonial period (the Reserves) and the apartheid period (the Bantustans), he identified important aspects of continuity and change between the two periods. He argued that in the colonial period the declining output in the Reserves reduced the rate of surplus value, which in turn caused profit rates in the capitalist sector to fall.

> The solution, for capital, to this problem must take account of the complementary effect of the erosion of the economic foundations of cheap migrant labour-power upon both the African rural societies and the urbanised industrial proletariat….the system of producing a cheap migrant labour force generated rural impoverishment, while at the same time it enabled extremely low wages to be paid to Africans in the capitalist sector. But increasing rural impoverishment, since it removes that portion of the industrial workers' subsistence which is produced and consumed in the Reserves, also intensifies urban poverty. This twofold effect of capitalist development tends to generate conflict, not only about wages, but about all aspects of urban and rural life and to bring into question the structure of the whole society (Wolpe, 1972, p. 444).

Wolpe argued that the intensification of this conflict was met by the political measures of increased repression, which found their ultimate expression with the introduction of apartheid in 1948: what was at stake "was nothing less than the reproduction of the labour force, not in general, but in a specific form, in the form of cheap labour-power" (Wolpe, 1972, p. 446). While the overall

structure of the cheap labour system remained in place under apartheid, it was maintained by a heightened level of political coercion.

> …the practice and policy of Separate Development must be seen as the attempt to retain, in a modified form, the structure of the 'traditional' societies, not, as in the past, for the purpose of ensuring an economic supplement to the wages of the migrant labour force, but for the purposes of reproducing and exercising control of a cheap African industrial labour force in or near the 'homelands', not by means of preserving the precapitalist mode of production but by the political, social, economic and ideological enforcement of low levels of subsistence (Wolpe, 1972, p. 450).

The conundrum which faces South Africa's political economy scholars today is to what extent the type of thinking which guided Wolpe's cheap labour thesis is helpful for understanding contemporary South Africa. With the demise of apartheid, and fundamental changes in the structure of the economy driven by local political and global economic changes, how important are rural-urban articulations, and how does the cheap labour thesis guide our understanding of the country's political economy? In answering this, it is useful first to examine what Wolpe's cheap thesis did not do. The macro approach of the cheap labour thesis meant it did not illuminate the micro activities taking place within the Bantustans and the reserves of colonial and apartheid South Africa, although Wolpe did look at this in other work. We have a growing body of evidence, of which this research is one part, that the activities in the rural periphery – if that is even the appropriate term anymore – were and are varied and heterogeneous, and certainly not limited only to socially reproductive activities. This was forcefully argued by other researchers at the time, including Morris and Legassick (Legassick, 1974; Legassick and Wolpe, 1976; Morris, 1976). In the mid-1970s, drawing from his doctoral research, Mike Morris examined the development of capitalism in the South African countryside (Morris, 1976). His superb materialist analysis examines the transformation of the capitalist mode of production in South African agriculture, and its links to apartheid. He provides a useful definition of mode of production: "the principal characterisation of a mode of production refers not to the manner in which products are exchanged but the manner in which they are produced and the form in which the surplus labour embodied in them is appropriated" (Morris, 1976, p. 296). He argued persuasively that by the mid-20th century, capitalism was the dominant mode of production in South African agriculture,

replacing the feudal mode of production. His contention was that labour tenancy, as seen on South African farms, was a variant of the capitalist mode of production.

On the one hand were the Marxist structuralists who were concerned with super-structures and overarching processes. On the other hand were micro-historians, such as Beinart and others from the History Workshop, who argued that micro-studies would illuminate these structures. Morris was very critical about a lack of theoretical rigour linking the micro to the macro – a caution worth heeding in this research. He argued that "whilst it is clear that this approach [micro-historical] attempts to locate itself in a sympathetic relationship to 'the masses', this does not necessarily mean that it thereby poses a genuinely Marxist alternative which reveals and explains the process of exploitation and oppression characterising their daily lives" (Morris, 1988, p. 61). He contested that micro-studies were essential to Marxist analyses of South Africa, but that it was essential that studies of a local context were informed by a clear theoretical understanding of "wider structural relations and social forces characterising the society so that the unique manner in which these wider social relations are concretised and played out in the particular local context can be grasped" (Morris, 1988, p. 63). Freund argued that:

> …most Marxists have become dissatisfied with the tendency in this group, sometimes marked by considerable crudeness, to collapse local production relations into a simplified world-system grid as well as their inability to provide a systematic explanation for historically distinctive and "deviant" trajectories…why and how did non-capitalist modes of production, for one major instance, survive into the twentieth century? (Freund, 1985, p. 25).

Returning to Morris's contribution to thinking about modes of production and resultant class conflict, he argued that:

> The concept of a mode of production does not ensure the conditions of its own existence – its survival, or transformation. A mode of production cannot effect its reproduction/transformation in and of itself. This can only be ensured as the outcome of specific class struggles conducted within those very conditions. The class struggle in social formations is the only site in which the existence/reproduction of a mode of production can take place (Morris, 1976, p. 308).

Methodologically, he argued:

> The discarding of Marxist structural explanation has also resulted in the abandonment of the Marxist critique of liberalism. Notwithstanding the many references to class in these texts, the inability, indeed refusal, to theorise these concepts means that we are back with a primary dependence on 'race', 'white supremacy' and 'racist farmers' as our major explanatory variables (Morris, 1988, p. 66).

Martin Legassick was interested in the links between capital accumulation in South Africa and its authoritarian state. In particular, he examined the contradictions this gave rise to: between the capitalist mode of production and the dependent societies which it had both preserved and created (Legassick, 1974). The structural work undertaken by Wolpe, Legassick and Morris among others, which showed the relationship between rural South Africa and capital accumulation at its core, was in direct opposition to the liberal school. The liberal school, as exemplified by Lipton, argued that apartheid and capitalism were inimical to each other, and that capitalism's constant need for accumulation would undermine and eventually lead to the end of apartheid (Lipton, 1986). The issue has been picked up recently, although more indirectly, by Nattrass and Seekings. They have sought to explain what they identify as a persistent dualism in the South African labour market (Nattrass and Seekings, 2019). But it is clear that none of this analysis viewed the gendered basis of social reproduction in peripheral South Africa as a primary, or even secondary, concern. The analysis prioritised class relations over gender relations, resulting in a blindness to the central role women played, and continued to play, in economic and social reproduction.

While Wolpe was penning his cheap labour thesis, and other Marxists were concerned with class relations in rural South Africa, social reproduction theory (SRT) was emerging in academic debates, primarily in the global North, to address just the kind of dualism underpinning Wolpe's work. Social reproduction theory is interested in understanding the role of unpaid work, including care work, as part of the broader economic system. In Wolpe's thesis the dualism took the form of a conceptual distinction between productive and unproductive labour and was popular with Marxists and classical political economists. It was concerned with the origins of surplus value – productive labour produces surplus value while unproductive labour does not. There has been renewed interest in these issues, popularised by the rise of social reproduction theory, and applied specifically to South Africa by Bridget O'Laughlin in a recent paper (O'Laughlin, 2021). Here she

makes the important point that labour does not reproduce itself for capital – labour reproduces itself as part of a central struggle of life. This, of course, is instrumental for capital, but her analysis emphasises the importance of not reducing social reproduction to something entirely functional to capital. The empirical evidence from Agincourt supports this argument. O'Laughlin argues that the dualism which underpins Wolpe is reproduced in SRT, and she is critical of the analytical distinction which arises in SRT of the domains of production and social reproduction. This dualism is clear in the work of Bhattacharya and others in their recent book on social reproduction theory.

> The question of separate spheres and why they are historical forms of appearance is an important one, and we will reflect upon it at length in this volume. One understanding of social reproduction is that it is about two separate spaces and two separate processes of production: the economic and the social – often understood as the workplace and home. In this understanding, the worker produces surplus value at work and hence is part of the production of the total wealth of society. At the end of the workday, because the worker is "free" under capitalism, capital must relinquish control over the process of regeneration of the worker and hence the reproduction of the workforce. The corpus of social relations involving regeneration – birth, death, social communication, and so on – is most commonly referred to in scholarly as well as policy literature as care or social care (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 9).

Gaps and limitation of the cheap labour thesis

Residents in Agincourt today undertake a wide range of economically productive activities, including waged work, self-employment, subsistence activities and a breadth of unpaid care work. The historical evidence is that this was the case in the 20th century too. This omission is in part because Wolpe treated the reproduction of labour in the Bantustans as a black box – he was interested in the relationship of Bantustans and the households within them to the overall capitalist system, and he did not pay much attention to what was going on within households. Indeed, he did not use the term social reproduction: he was interested specifically in the reproduction of labour for capital, not the social reproduction of life more broadly. His focus was on the relationship between production and reproduction, rather than the complexities and contradictions within the sphere of reproduction (O'Laughlin, 2021).

Furthermore, he did not envisage the situation which has now come to pass: a large and sustained rise in women's labour force participation and women's labour migration (Casale, 2003; Casale and Posel, 2002; Collinson et al., 2016). Wolpe's cheap labour thesis was focused on the implications of men's migration from the pre-capitalist economies to the industrial core. The increase in women's participation in the economy in the 1990s raises several interesting questions. In what ways does women's participation in the economy differs from men's participation, if at all? Given the persistence of a gendered distribution of labour, both domestically and in the workplace, how does this increase in women's participation work? How do women's migrant patterns differ from men's? His approach also did not consider that rural households could be the site of both unpaid reproductive work and economically productive work, done both by men and women.

Looking forward and backwards: Moments of continuity and change

The post-apartheid period offers a wealth of data from the Agincourt HDSS, unlike the colonial and apartheid eras. These new data illuminate a process of rapid economic and social change in the former Bantustan. There has been a marked rise in women's labour force participation and economic migrancy in recent years (Collinson et al., 2016), which has followed the broader trend in South Africa in the 1990s. This has been accompanied by a rise in girl/women-headed households, and the further fragmentation of households themselves as economic forces drive a process of new household formation. The expansion of the social grants system has provided stable income to those households with older residents, the majority of whom are women, as well as those households with children. But there are many continuities, too. Overall, large economic inequalities persist between men and women. Unemployment remains far higher among women, and their economic mobility is still constrained. Many households continue to eke out economically contingent livelihoods, with limited opportunities for formal work, subsistence agriculture, or higher education. Infrastructure and the provision of public goods remains poor and uneven. While there are no longer legislatives barriers to movement, economic constraints are often equally rigid impediments.

A lot has been written about the enduring disadvantages black South Africans inherited in contrast to whites. But less has been said about the inequalities within rural black South Africans' lives. What has also been missing from the literature is a gendered analysis. It is this particular intersection of race and gender which is an underexplored corner of the South African economy. That the colonial and apartheid state shaped the South African economy to the detriment of

women, and black women in particular, is no new finding. What is striking from a close study of Agincourt is the extent to which the economic scars of history are still visible on the contemporary economy, and particularly on black African women's economic lives. While Agincourt is unique, it shares its history of colonial and apartheid dispossession and relocation, and the pervasive patriarchal family with large swathes of South Africans. This offers the tantalising possibility that making sense of Agincourt provides deeper insights into the South African economy today. It may also allow us to expand upon the theoretical questions outlined later in this research.

The Agincourt we observe today – impoverished, unequal, dynamic and confusing – has been shaped by the colonial and apartheid state, and by the evolution of the family. The force and impact they have had has been dynamic and uneven, and messy and uncoordinated. While there are many instances where the state has reinforced patriarchal power within families, there are important moments where the state has undermined this power, too. The provision of the older persons grant, in both the apartheid and post-apartheid era, is one important example of this. The expansion of the reach of the grant, and the increase in its value, has elevated the economic status of older women within households, with consequences for the distribution of household power.

Chapter Three
Studying the economic lives of women in South Africa: Literature and theory

Introduction

In Chapter Two, I reviewed the literature on the history of Agincourt and its contemporary political economy. I argued that the work of Harold Wolpe and others is critical to analysing the role of rural South Africa. In this chapter, I turn to the empirical literature on women's economic and labour force participation, and the theoretical tools of feminist economics and social reproduction which help make sense of the rapid apparent changes that have been observed in women's economic participation. The methodological implications of this theoretical approach are discussed in Chapter Four. Women's position and participation in the economy is a broad and varied area of study in economics. As outlined in Chapter One, women continue to be worse off than men in almost every aspect of the economy and labour market, around the world and in South Africa. Investigating the question has precipitated a number of theoretical and methodological approaches, and generated a host of empirical studies. In this research I am interested in the changing nature of the political economy of women's labour force participation in a remote part of rural South Africa, and its links with the wider economy of the country.

The marked apparent rise in women's labour force participation in post-apartheid South Africa has raised a number of conceptual, methodological and empirical concerns and questions about the labour market and the broader political economy of work. Some of these have been examined in the literature, and others remain underexplored. The first issue is how widespread and enduring the increase in women's labour force participation is, and this has been well addressed in the literature (Casale, 2004, 2003; Casale and Posel, 2002). It is clear from this detailed empirical work that the rise in women's labour force participation is widespread and enduring across most of the world, and in the South African labour market across the post-apartheid period. While women's labour market participation rose in the two decades after the end of Apartheid, it has plateaued more recently. The second issue is what impact this has had on the economic position of women in the South African economy. One of the most important effects of increasing women's labour supply has been to increase women's unemployment, a striking finding in itself, and one which suggests that the increase must largely be driven by changes on the supply side (Casale, 2004; Kingdon and Knight, 2007). As recently as 2018, the broad unemployment rate was 40.3% for women compared with 32.9% for men, and this gap has persisted throughout much of the post-

apartheid period (Coovadia, 2019). This leads to the third question: does this increase in labour force participation, then, reflect a material change in the economic circumstances of women, or does it reflect the changing ways in which women and researchers understand work, labour force participation, and economic participation? While conceptual issues of what constitutes work and economic activity have been a central concern of feminist economists, there are some important gaps in the application of this to labour force participation.

The fourth imperative is the question of why researchers have observed such a marked and sustained rise in women's labour force participation? And here the literature is equivocal. As this review will show, while researchers are confident that supply-side changes in the labour market are a large driver of this transformation, there is more to be learnt about exactly what these changes are, and indeed, whether they are material or statistical artefacts; and why they are so different for men and women. The fifth is the issue of how this dynamic has played out in South Africa in ways that are similar and different to the rest of the world. As discussed below, rising women's labour force participation is a global phenomenon, but the particularities of South Africa's history – colonialism, apartheid and the post-apartheid growth trajectory – have shaped women's economic participation in particular ways. There is robust literature on the causes and effects of rising women's labour force participation in the country as a whole, but less is known about local dynamics, particularly in rural areas such as Agincourt. The sixth: examining these questions in South Africa raises the issue of informality and the informal economy. In many other developing countries, where informal work makes up most employment, rising women's labour force participation has been accompanied by rising informality. But this has largely not been the case in South Africa, due to its political economy characterised by industrial concentration, persistent inequalities in economic power, and the enduring spatial legacy of apartheid (Francis and Valodia, 2022). What do these differences illuminate about the gendered political economy of the South African labour market?

It is important to understand what has caused the increase in women's labour force participation, and why is has been so pronounced, especially given the fact that it cannot be accounted for by looking only at demand-side changes in the labour market. In this chapter, I argue that investigating these issues requires a particular combination of theoretical and methodological tools which place the productive and reproductive lives of women at the centre of the analysis. One of the limitations of much of the empirical work on labour markets and labour force participation is the dichotomy between paid and unpaid work, and the isolation of the causes of labour force participation to

characteristics that are closely related to work, such as education and experience, with less attention paid to the configuration of the household, and the distribution of unpaid work.

The feminist economics literature reviewed here argues that understanding these questions requires linking the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction, and examining the relationship between unpaid and care work and paid labour, and how the allocation of work, both paid and unpaid, in the household impacts labour supply for the broader economy. This research draws on diverse but related theory including segmented labour market theory and social reproduction theory. This is necessary to link the sphere of production, that is, the labour market, and the sphere of social reproduction, that is, the household. As Peck argues, "the labour market must be understood as an institutionalised and politicised arena which is systematically structured by social relations of production and reproduction and by immanent institutional forces" (Peck, 1996, pp. 261–262).

The literature review is divided into three sections. The first surveys the existing literature on the current state of women's labour force participation, and our understanding of its determinants. The second focuses on the applicable theory, drawing on feminist economics and social reproduction theory, to locate the theoretical and methodological approach this study takes in its appropriate context. The third engages in theoretical debates about the role of families in political economy, reviewing if and how Sen's model of cooperative conflict can help us understand gender dynamics within households. In doing so, I identify theoretical and empirical gaps in our understanding of women's economic participation in rural South Africa, which I go on to discuss in more detail below.

Reviewing the literature on women's labour force participation

Women's labour force participation around the world

One of the main changes in the global political economy of labour markets in the 20th century has been the marked and sustained rise of women's labour force participation (Fine, 1992). This has, however, been uneven around the world, and between 1995 and 2015, women's labour force participation actually decreased slightly (as did labour force participation for men) (International Labour Organisation, 2016). By 2015, there remained significant gendered gaps in labour force participation rates around the world, with the most striking being in the Arab States, Northern Africa, and Southern Asia (International Labour Organisation, 2016). In the more developed world, the determinants of women's labour force participation have received substantial attention.

The work has largely focused on the changing characteristics of women, inter alia their rising levels of education, falling fertility, and, to a lesser extent, changing household structure. Much of this research is concerned with the proximate causes of rising women's labour force participation. Chevalier & Viitanen, (2002) examine whether there is a causal effect between the availability of childcare and women's labour force participation, using data from the United Kingdom for the period 1992–1999. They find a strong causal effect between the provision of childcare and the participation of women in the labour force. Jaumotte, (2003), reviews 17 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries between 1985 and 1999, and shows that more neutral tax treatment of second earners, tax incentives to share work between spouses, and childcare subsidies all increased women's labour force participation. But the review noted that cultural attitudes continue to have a determinative role in women's labour force participation. Vlasblom & Schippers (2004) examine rising women's labour force participation in six European countries between 1992 and 1999. They find that increases in labour force participation rates cannot be explained by either increasing education nor the number and timing of children. Instead, they find that women's labour force participation rates are primarily explained by behavioural differences between generations – "we come to the conclusion that norms and values in society changed in such a way that the working wife and gradually also the working mother has become more and more the standard in all European countries" (Vlasblom and Schippers, 2004, p. 391). Focusing on the Dutch labour market, Euwals et al., (2011) find that increasing education and declining fertility have increased labour force participation for women born between 1925 and 1986, over the period 1992 to 2004.

Thevenon (2013) examines the drivers of women's labour force participation in the OECD countries. Broadly, he finds that trends in their participation are influenced by the structure of the labour market; the institutional setting that determined work-life balance; and an improvement in women's education (Thevenon, 2013). Specifically, he finds that the growth of the services sector and increasing availability of part-time work has supported women's labour force participation. These are changes on the demand side of the labour market. In a recent paper, Altuzarra et al., (2019) investigate the relationship between women's labour force participation and economic development in the European Union between 1990 and 2016. Their findings support the U-shaped hypothesis that proposes a fall in women's labour force participation in the early stages of economic development, and then an increase as economies become more service-based. They found that education had a positive effect on women's labour force participation, while the fertility

rate was negatively correlated – although neither was statistically significant. In the developed world, much of the focus has been at the nexus of labour force participation and the design of the tax system, investigating to what extent women's labour force participation is shaped by tax regimes (Hartmann and Milli, 2021; Humphries and Sarasua, 2021).

The question has received less focused attention in low and middle-income countries, but there are certain important country studies investigating women's labour force participation. In an early paper, Anker (1982) raises some important conceptual and methodological considerations for examining women's labour force participation in the developing world. Here he draws attention to the importance of unpaid work in understanding labour market activity, noting the often arbitrary division between "labour force" and "non-labour force" activities. Allowing for a broader definition of labour market activities means that "many of the numerous economic activities performed by women can be taken into account" (Anker, 1982, p. 720). This is an important issue, and one which I return to in the analytical work of this thesis as it is a central part of the feminist economics approach to labour market research.

In a review of the Ghanaian economy from 1991 to 1998, Sackey (2005) finds that declining fertility and increasing educational attainment both matter for women's labour force participation. He argues that the implication of this is that "as more females get educated and acquire more skills, they will increase their employability in the formal labour market, with favourable impacts on their perceptions of ideal family size and fertility preference" (Sackey, 2005, p. 36). While individual characteristics matter, household structure is also important. For Nigeria, Fadayomi & Olurinola, (2014) find that both household size and the household head play a determinative role in women's labour force participation. When women are the household head, they have higher participation rates. In a study of the labour market in Cameroon, Che & Sundjo (2018) find a number of factors related to women's labour force participation. They find that the presence of other women in the household (for care work), the presence of a non-working husband, and increasing age are all associated with higher women's labour force participation. Conversely, the presence of young children decreases participation.

More recently, there is at least one important outlier in the global rise in women's labour force participation: India. Even though the level of participation is relatively low on the subcontinent, it has been falling significantly in the 21st century. In a review, Sorsa et al. (2015) find that in India, unlike in other developing countries, education and incomes are negatively correlated with

women's labour force participation. They argue that "social and cultural factors remain the principal driving factors of keeping women outside the labour force" (Sorsa et al., 2015, p. 27). Kapsos et al. (2014) find that the effects of increased education and higher household consumption accounts for 38% of the total decline in women's labour force participation between 1994 and 2010. Importantly, they find that a general lack of employment opportunities for women was the largest driver of the decline, accounting for 62% of the total decline over the period. This is in marked contrast to the South African experience, which, despite a chronic lack of employment opportunities, has seen women's labour force participation rates climb and then stabilise. Focusing on rural India, Sanghi et al., (2015), highlight that despite rising education and income levels, and declining fertility, rural women's labour force participation is decreasing. They highlight the importance of understanding the structural transformation of the Indian economy in making sense of these seemingly contradictory changes.

The Indian experiences raises important questions about how causal relationships driving economic participation are conceptualised and tested in the literature. It also points to an issue I turn to later in this review: how work and economic participation are themselves conceptualised. Much of the empirical work discussed so far is based on a distinction between paid and unpaid work, or economically productive and unproductive activity. This dichotomy has been challenged by feminist economists, and I discuss their approach in detail later in this chapter. What is important to draw out here is that the observed changes in labour force status capture both actual changes in economic status, and movement between conceptual categories researchers use, which are based on notions of what constitutes economic activity, and what does not.

This review of the key international literature highlights that while we have a reasonably good understanding of changes in women's labour force participation around the globe, there are many unanswered questions. Crucially, it suggests that observed patterns of women's participation are heavily determined by how researchers understand concepts such as work, employment, and labour force participation. Excluding unpaid work from the definition of employment has material consequences for the results and the analysis of causal relationships. To take one example, the finding by Che & Sundjo, (2018) that the presence of young children decreases women's labour force participation only holds when unpaid childcare is not considered as an economic activity, something which is contested by feminist economists and social reproduction theorists. Furthermore, the Indian experience suggests that the dynamics are far more complicated than a mechanical causal relationship between rising education, falling fertility, and labour force

participation. In the next section, I review the South African literature on women's labour force participation, followed by a review of the various theoretical frameworks which can help us better understand women's participation in the economy.

Women's labour force participation in South Africa

The most important work on increasing women's labour supply in South Africa is by Daniela Casale (2003). She meticulously documented the increase in women's labour supply in post-apartheid South Africa in the period between 1995 and 2001. She found that the increase has translated mainly into increased unemployment for women, and raises the question of why so many women have 'chosen' to enter the labour market. Some of the reasons proposed include supply-side factors which have pushed women into the labour market, including falling access to income support in the household, and the rise in the number of girl/women-headed households. This has happened at a time of demographic transition in South Africa, which, as Moultrie has argued, will have limited benefit to South Africa because of the enduring legacy of apartheid on the demographic and economic structure of the economy (Moultrie, 2017). Casale's work also raises the question of what it actually means to be active in the labour force. Under an expanded definition of economic activity which includes unpaid work, many of the women whose status changes from 'not active' to 'active' in the labour force continue to undertake economic activity, but they are now regarded as unemployed. This suggests some limitations of conceptual categories like the labour force, employment, unemployment, and work, and how these limitations circumscribe the ability of research to explain people's economic lives. This, of course, is not a critique of Casale's work, but of the conceptual apparatus which is in common use.

Casale finds there were two different types of changes which supported the feminisation of the labour force. The first relates to the characteristics of women themselves. Rising education levels, the decline in the number of working-age men living with women, and the reduction in access to household income combined to push women into the labour market. Secondly, Casale argues there were "large structural changes in the functional relationship determining female labour force participation" (Casale, 2003, p. 213), but that there is still scope for additional work to understand what these structural changes are, and exactly how they influence labour supply. Ntuli (2007), in one of the first multi-year studies of this question for South Africa, investigated the determinants of women's labour force participation in South Africa between 1995 and 2004. She finds that education is the primary driver of their participation, based on "an underlying theoretical

framework of utility maximisation and labour-leisure choice" consistent with an approach informed by human capital theory (Ntuli, 2007, p. 37).

Eyal and Woolard (2011) find that the child support grant (CSG) has a significantly positive effect on women's labour force participation and the probability of employment, with the results particularly pronounced among younger women, although they do not explore these effects in much detail. More recent empirical work on women's labour supply has been undertaken by Ntuli and Wittenberg (2013). They consider changes in black women's labour force participation in South Africa between 1995 and 2004. They use individual data from the October Household Surveys (OHS) and the Labour Force Surveys (LFS) to, firstly, identify determinants of labour force participation, and then they use a decomposition analysis to explain the observed increase in women's labour force participation. The authors find that changes in returns to labour market characteristics explain 93% of the increase in black women's labour force participation over the period in question. Education and urban residence are two of the most important characteristics. They argue that "this result suggests that the increase [in labour force participation] was mainly explained by improvements in labour-market opportunities for black women" (Ntuli and Wittenberg, 2013, p. 349). This is contradictory to the findings by Casale (2004) that rising labour force participation has led to higher women's unemployment. This points to the limits of a labour market analysis which is focused on the supply side of the labour market. Furthermore, while the study looks at the changes in labour market characteristics, it does not examine household characteristics and how these changes might impact labour supply.

Some work has already been done in this area, particularly linking social assistance and social policy to labour supply. Three studies examine the role of the older persons grant in South Africa, and how it impacts on the configuration of care work and labour supply within the household (Ardington et al., 2009; Burns et al., 2005; Posel et al., 2006). Posel, Fairburn and Lund, and Ardington, Case and Hosegood show in their fascinating studies how the provision of an older persons grant to a pensioner in a household increases labour supply of the working-age adults in that household because it provides job-search funding. Burns, Keswell and Leibbrandt (2005) look at the distributional and poverty alleviating impacts of the older persons grant, and find that it has a strongly gendered impact. There are similar findings, too, for the child support grant. These studies are important because they highlight, with careful empirical work, the linkages between the domestic sphere and the labour market, and the direct links between care work and labour supply.

Four points are clear from the literature. Firstly, the increase in women's labour force participation cannot be explained by demand-side factors alone. Secondly, the feminisation of the labour force does not correspond entirely with women's increased mobility in the labour market. Thirdly, "the biggest changes observed for women are in unemployment and in self-employment in the informal sector, where women are likely to be engaged in low-paying survivalist activities" (Casale and Posel, 2002, p. 18). Furthermore, this feminisation has raised important questions about the way in which work itself is changing (Standing, 1999); the resultant changes in family structure (Budlender and Lund, 2011); and the burden of unpaid work (Fakier, 2010). Fourthly, the limits of the conceptual categories which underpin much of the labour market analysis, such as work, employment and unemployment, become clear.

One important area where the literature has engaged in these questions is with regards to time use in unpaid care work. South Africa has conducted two time-use surveys in the post-apartheid period, one in 2000 and another in 2010. At the time of writing, there was discussion about a third wave in 2022/23. There has been much written about the 2000 survey (see Esquivel et al. 2008; Budlender 2010; Floro and Komatsu 2011) and these studies are very useful for understanding the allocation of unpaid work in the households. They show that women spend far more time than men on unpaid work activities in the household. Wittenberg (2009) used a household bargaining model to understand the distribution of paid and unpaid work in the household, and usefully, used a definition of work which includes unpaid work. There has been comparatively less written about the 2010 survey, with some notable exceptions. Posel and Grapsa (2017) used time-use data to explore the roles elderly men and women play in South African households. They found that their time use follows traditional gender divisions of labour, with women spending over two hours a day more than men on domestic and unpaid care activities.

In the global South in particular, in addition to thinking about links between paid and unpaid work, it is important to look at informality, and the triangle of paid formal work, paid informal work and unpaid work. The literature on informality is vast and well-developed, and there have been important contributions to the debate from South Africa. In particular, Valodia and Devey (2012, 2011) have addressed the argument that the formal and informal economies in South Africa are separated, and argued that there is a high level of interaction between formal and informal work. Later in this chapter I examine how, taken together, social reproduction theory and segmented labour market theory can help make sense of this triangle.

Gaps and limitations in the labour force participation literature

The literature points to a large and unequivocal increase in women's labour force participation in South Africa in recent decades. This has been very well-described, and its general causes are understood. However, the literature on women's participation does raise an interesting puzzle. How much of the observed change in women's participation is due to material changes in the economy and in the way women spend their time, and how much of it is definitional, based on how respondents and researchers conceptualise work, employment, and unemployment, and how they delineate economic and non-economic activity?

Consider the following thought experiment. The year is 1975. A fieldworker interviews a black women about employment and labour market participation. Due to apartheid legislation, the respondent is not able to travel to urban areas to work. Her primary occupation is social reproduction housework, including cooking and cleaning, for the broader household. Asked if she worked for money, the answer would be no; and asked if she was looking for a job, the answer would also be no, for the reasons highlighted above. This respondent would be marked as not economically active. Jump forward 30 years to 2005. The same respondent could be in exactly the same material position, but now she is able to look for work. She would respond that while she was not working for pay, she was looking for a job. This means she is now both an active member of the labour market – raising the women's labour force participation rate, and she is now unemployed – raising the unemployment rate. Here, the change in labour force participation is driven by the changing legal dispensation which allowed women to work and to look for work, and not by an underlying change in the economy, to the extent that these are separable.

We can think about this more systematically by examining labour force statistics. National statistical systems divide work, broadly defined, between activities which are included in the system of national accounts (SNA), and those which are not (non-SNA). The latter includes activities which are traditionally seen to fall outside of economic activity, such as care work. Within SNA activities, there are two categories: paid and unpaid. For example, subsistence agriculture would be unpaid SNA work. It could either be for own production and consumption, or exchange, or both – as most activities in effect are. In many pre-capitalist economies in places like rural Africa, women would have, in fact, done almost all SNA work, while men would have been responsible for safety and security, such as fighting wars and protecting territory. For decades and centuries, women did most of, if not all, what we would now consider SNA work (both paid and unpaid).

Apartheid legislation drew a sharp line between paid and unpaid SNA work, allowing only men to participate in the former, and restricting women's economic activity to the latter. The ending of apartheid has dismantled this barrier, and allowed women to participate in paid SNA work, but its scars, and those of patriarchy, still shape the labour force.

This thought experiment, while simplistic, makes an important point. Historically, African economies, and, in particular, rural African economies, developed very differently to the western economies on which much of the literature on women's labour force participation is modelled and analysed. Understanding which components of the increase in women's participation witnessed in South Africa are statistical artefacts, and which are the result of material changes in the economy, requires careful empirical work, including case studies and qualitative research. There is scope to expand our understanding of this important issue by linking these changes in the paid economy – the labour market – with the unpaid economy. Doing so requires us to use theoretical tools which conceptualise the economy as a totality of all work, both paid and unpaid.

In the next section, I examine the theoretical tools economists used to understand and analyse labour markets and labour force participation. Much of the literature discussed above is based, explicitly or implicitly, on human capital theory (HCT). Understanding the contribution and limits of HCT is an essential starting point. I then turn to analyse segmented labour market (SLM) theory, feminist economics, and social reproduction theory (SRT) to better understand how they can address some of the shortcomings I identify in labour market theory based on HCT.

Theoretical approaches to understanding labour force participation

Human capital theory and labour markets

Human capital theory (HCT) and its critique are at heart of any investigation into labour market access and labour market returns. HCT's ascendance in the late 20th century means that it has become the dominant theoretical framework for understanding the labour market; this despite that it focuses almost exclusively on the supply side of the labour market. Models based on the relationship between labour market characteristics and labour market returns or access, are human capital models. Most of the explanatory models use HCT, whether explicitly or not. As Brown et al. (2020) argue, HCT, as outlined by Becker, has an almost exclusive supply-side focus, one which assumes that differences in earnings are caused by differences in how much workers had 'invested' in their skills and knowledge, their human capital. But, as they argue, this approach has driven a larger wedge between human capital theory and classical political economy, which was also

interested in *what* people do for work more broadly defined, not just *how much* they earn, or expect to earn, by doing it. HCT came to dominate the economic approach to labour market questions.

The economic approach is generally based on three pillars, namely utility-maximising behaviour, stable preferences, and market equilibrium (Brown et al., 2020). This rationality framework is useful for identifying causation, but makes it difficult to examine the labour market in its real-world complexities. Indeed, HCT:

> …rested on the assumption that women with the same educational qualifications as men could receive a lower wage than men only if they were less productive. He [Becker] then looked for why women might be less productive and came up with the conclusion that women were less productive in paid work than men because they had multiple roles to fulfil outside of work, whereas men did not. But even at the time when Becker was developing his approach there was a resurgent feminism that he and his colleagues chose to ignore, showing how powerful these as if assumptions are because they close the world to alternative interpretations. For Becker and other orthodox theorists, the explanation for these inequalities had to be found in the individual, not in social institutions or economic structures of inequality (Brown et al., 2020, p. 27).

The traditional theoretical approach to empirical investigations of the determinants of labour force participation is outlined clearly by Ntuli and Wittenberg (2013). Their theoretical framework is a conventional utility maximisation model of consumer theory and time allocation, arising from neoclassical theory of labour supply[8] based on work by Blundell and McCurdy (1999), Killingsworth and Heckman (2000) and Sprague (1994). It is worth examining this theory is more detail here. Concisely, the theory suggests that:

> ...a woman's decision to participate in the labour market is based on a comparison of her expected market wage offer Wi and her reservation wage Wr (value of time in non-market activities). The decision rule is that she participates, if the expected market wage offer is greater than the reservation

[8] This theory states that individuals participate in the labour market if and only if the market wage offered exceeds their reservation wage (Sprague, 1994, p. 660).

> wage Wi>Wr. Thus, factors raising Wi (Wr) would increase (decrease) LFP (Ntuli and Wittenberg, 2013, p. 351).

The crux of the theory is outlined by Sprague (1994) who argues that the reservation wage reflects the marginal rate of substitution between consumption and leisure, and depends on non-labour income, personal characteristics, such as ages of children, and, most importantly for work, tastes. This leads to a model specification "Wi = W*(Mi, ni) where Wi is the reservation wage, Mi is the observable/observed characteristics, and ni is an unobservable parameter summarising tastes" (Sprague, 1994, p. 660). The market wage on offer depends on personal and human capital characteristics such as school, age, and experience. This is a model closely related to that used in human capital theory, although it is concerned more with decisions to participate in the labour market, rather than only labour market returns; the two are of course inextricably linked, because HCT predicts the expected wage for an individual. The theoretical predictions of this model are as follows, drawing from Ntuli and Wittenberg (2013):

- Education: a positive relationship is expected because education increases a woman's earning capacity, simultaneously increasing the opportunity cost of unpaid work or leisure. The authors note, however, that higher levels of education can in fact raise the value of non-market time, although they assume this effect to be relatively small.
- Non-labour income: other sources of income – a common example in the literature is a husband's earnings – increase reservation wages and lower labour force participation.
- Fertility: the model anticipates a negative relationship between the number of young children and women's labour force participation due to the high opportunity cost of market time arising from childcare and raising children.
- Age: the theory suggests an inverted-U relationship between age and LFP because, in general, there is a U-shaped relationship between age and the price of non-market time.
- Marital status: the authors proffer that "in the case of a married women, intrahousehold decision-making may be such as to make her less likely to participate due to non-market responsibilities" (Ntuli and Wittenberg, 2013, p. 352).

These are all important determinants of labour force participation, but the model has some limitations. First, it is based on a narrow understanding of what constitutes work and economic activity. Second, it does not allow us to consider social reproduction and link it to labour force participation and the sphere of production, or to consider how different configurations of the

family impact on labour supply. Furthermore, it does not suggest reasons for why we may observe the opposite case, as in the Indian example. Indeed, the Indian case raises important questions about the causal assumptions built into HCT models of labour force participation. Nor does HCT allow us to fully explore the impact of other important factors, for example, the way apartheid has shaped economic and social relations. As a result, the model does not adequately explain why women's labour force participation has been so low historically; and more importantly, it does not illuminate the changes within the household – either their causes or effects – that both precipitate changes in labour force participation and are affected by them.

Coovadia argues that "placing an individual job seeker within their social context means considering their relationships to the people who surround them, such as families, peers and broader communities" (Coovadia, 2019, p. 23). She notes that across the South African literature on this question, the factors influencing women's labour force participation are seldom examined in relation to the gender dynamics of others within the household. This is in large part due to methodological constraints, such as how to use survey data to examine social relations (Coovadia, 2019), but it is also due to the limited application of well-developed theoretical tools to understand the question. Ben Fine summarises some of the issues at stake clearly:

> Within the orthodox neoclassical view, it [the rise in women's labour force participation] is a matter of individual optimisation around the time available, taking account of potential family earnings, desire for, and costs of, children, productivity within the household and the incentive to work created by the level of wages. In charting the increase in women's participation rates in the labour market over the post-war period, the conclusion is reached that the incentive for women to work due to higher levels of wages has heavily outweighed the disincentive effect of the higher wages of their husbands in providing sufficient household income. As observed previously, this is little more than a tautology for, if the history of female labour participation had been different, so it would have been 'explained' by a different balance of incentive and disincentive effects (Fine, 1992, p. 145).

Fine (1992) argued that, in response to the phenomenon of rising women's labour force participation from the mid-20th century, orthodox labour market economics merely extended its original theoretical and methodological approach:

> ...as if it were only accidental and of no significance that previous models had been totally independent of consideration of the sexual division of labour…the reason for this is that whilst economics develops an analysis of equilibrium supply and demand through the mechanism of the market, the principles of doing so are perceived to be sufficiently elastic to extend to most, if not all, areas of life (Fine, 1992, p. 87).

Within the orthodox view, then, increasing women's labour force participation is about rational optimisation of time available balanced with family earnings, the costs of childcare, and other members' productivity in the household. This work has led to the conclusion that the incentive for women to work due to higher levels of wages has heavily outweighed the disincentive effect of their husbands' higher wages in providing sufficient household income. It is also problematic because it assumes that working-age women have husbands.

HCT is clearly useful and important for understanding the relationship between skills, experience, wages, and economic participation. But as I have argued, it is limited by its assumptions about what constitutes economic and non-economic activity. Furthermore, the theory lacks historical specificity, and cannot, in all instances, account for differences in the political economy between countries. Importantly, HCT is premised on the existence of a single labour market in which individuals choose to participate or not. This unitary view of labour markets has been challenged by segmented labour market (SLM) theory, which posits the parallel existence of a number of different labour markets within one economy, in an attempt to better reflect the complexity we observe in labour market participation. In the next section, I provide a brief overview of SLM theory, and explain how it can be useful for addressing some of the important questions raised in this research.

Segmented labour market theory

Segmented labour market theory has its origins in the dual labour market work of the 1970s (Fine, 2013). It achieved coherence under the Cambridge School, which distilled four key features of segmented labour markets relevant to this study. The first feature is that supply and demand-side factors interact, and should be seen in terms of class conflict rather than a harmonious intersection of market forces – a state of affairs which HCT models often assume. The second feature is that there is interpenetration and mutual conditioning of economic and social forces. This blurs the distinction between what is considered economic and not economic, a point very clearly articulated

by Peck (1996). The third feature is that the interaction of demand and supply must be viewed as an interaction of economic and social forces which give rise to definite structures, institutions and processes that have definite links between them. The fourth and important feature is that the exact structuring of the labour markets depends on a combination of factors whose presence, strength and effects needs to be uncovered empirically (Fine, 2013). The segmentation of the labour market arises from underlying socioeconomic processes which, in the words of Fine:

> ...give rise to, and reproduce, specific and historically contingent labour market structures…each labour market segment does not only incorporate and combine socioeconomic factors that set it apart from other segments, the structuring itself is different from one segment to another (Fine, 2013, p. 108).

The relevance of labour market segmentation to understanding the way gender shapes labour markets is captured by Humphries and Rubery when they argue that:

> Probably the most important characteristic of the neoclassical approach to the analysis of inequality in the labour market is the assumption that the economic system is neutral in the creation and maintenance of low-paid work. For example, women's low pay is explained by lower productivity (caused either by less human capital investment or innately lower productivity), by imperfect mobility, or by discrimination which distorts the profit maximisation process. It is argued that the economic system has no vested interest in such practices; indeed, efficiency would be improved by their elimination. It is this neutrality that was challenged by the labour market segmentation literature (Humphries and Rubery, 1984, p. 335).

Segmented labour market theory, so conceived, is therefore based on a triple analytical structure: the industrial structure, the labour market structure, and the relationships between the economy and society – characterised by education, racism and sexism, trade unions, migration, and a host of other factors (Fine, 2013). Cassim (1982) was an early adopter of the theory of labour market segmentation in South Africa. More recently, Fields has greatly advanced the theory in his work on multi-sector labour models (Fields, 2004), as has Peck (1996) in his work drawing on the sociology of segmented labour markets; Heintz and Lund (2012) in their work on segmented labour markets and social policy; and Heintz (2019) in his recent work looking at the implications

of gender segmentation for gender inequalities in the context of women's rising labour force participation.

It is important to be clear about the difference between labour market differentiation and labour market segmentation. The former can be identified through empirical work, but differentiation is not indicative of segmentation (Fine, 2013). Identifying the latter requires careful theoretical work which provides the analytical tools to identify both how and why labour markets might be segmented. An additional important distinction is between vertical and horizontal segmentation. As Fine (2013) argues, these different segmentations interact to form lattice-type labour market segments and it is important that we do not focus only on one type or the other. This is not to say that SLM is without its limitations. Fine argues that: "SLM theory adopts a 'middle-range' methodological stance…consequently, SLM theory tends at one and the same time to be eclectic and to provide a structured narrative, or description, of labour-market segments rather than a causal explanation of them" (Fine, 1992, p. 47). It is relatively uncontroversial that the labour market in South Africa is segmented in various ways. This study will not focus on quantifying the segmentation but rather on understanding how and why particular types of segmentation persist.

There are two interrelated segmentations in the South African labour market which are relevant to this research. The first is gender segmentation, which has resulted in the reproduction of inequality between men and women in the labour market in the post-apartheid era. For example, Posel (2014) notes that earlier work by Rospabe (2001) found that more than half of the gender pay gap of 25% "could not be explained by gender differences in observable characteristics that affect productivity, providing some indication of the extent of gender discrimination in the labour market" (Posel, 2014, p. 306). A decade later, Muller (2010), found that this gap had fallen below 20% by 2006, and that this was driven by a decrease in this unexplained portion of the gender wage gap. However, Posel and Rogan (2009) find that the gender pay gap grew between 1997 and 2006. A more recent study points to the extent of low pay amongst women in South Africa, with women accounting for over 80% of all domestic workers (Valodia and Francis 2016). The most comprehensive analysis of the gender pay gap has been undertaken by Mosomi (2019a). At the highest level, she finds that the gender wage gap in terms of median wages remains high – between 23% and 25%, and importantly, that this difference is not explained by differences in human capital characteristics between men and women workers.

The second important segmentation is between the formal and the informal economy. The informal economy is central to a gendered analysis of labour force participation. There are two strands of the literature on the informal sector that consider the relationship between the formal and informal sector. The first is concerned with defining the informal sector, often in relation to formal sector enterprises. The informal sector has low barriers to entry, and generally is comprised of smaller enterprises. Workers are less skilled, and regulation is lower. Secondly, the literature is concerned with how the informal sector articulates with the rest of the economy. This has progressed from a concern in the 1970s about whether or not the informal economy constituted a reserve army of labour, or instead if it was largely the site of petty commodity production (Valodia and Devey, 2012). More recently, the literature has focused on issues of regulation (Maloney, 2004).

There is also a vibrant literature exploring the linkages between the formal and informal economies in South Africa, as highlighted in the detailed discussion on the idea of the "two economies" in the special edition of *Africanus*, in particular papers by Hunter (2007); Hart (2007); Sitas (2007); and Perelman (2007). The informal and formal economies in South Africa are structurally interlinked and Philip (2010) argues we need to understand marginalisation in the informal economy as directly linked to the structure of the economy as a whole. Following from this, the focus turns to the exact characteristics of articulation between the economies. Valodia and Devey (2012) suggest two important characteristics of formal-informal linkages. The first is that the data suggest high levels of churning between formal and informal employment, over a short period of time, particularly at the low-wage end of the labour market (Kerr, 2018; Kerr et al., 2014). This suggests that low-waged workers are unlikely to benefit significantly from shifting between formal and informal work, or vice versa (Valodia and Devey 2012). The second observations it that the South African informal economy operates very differently from many Latin American countries where evidence suggests that workers choose to operate in the informal sector to escape onerous legislative and compliance requirements in the formal sector (Maloney, 2004). In South Africa, by contrast, there are important structural determinants to informality. This is an important observation, and is contrary to the assumption that individuals choose either to operate in the formal or informal economy based on a cost-benefit analysis. Research in South Africa suggests that women workers see formal waged jobs as superior to self-employment or informal employment (Sender, 2002). The issue of South Africa's sustained high levels of unemployment has long been the focus of study by economists. As discussed by Kingdon and Knight, (2004) one

of the central questions is: is South Africa's unemployment largely voluntary or involuntary? Put another way, does the standard economic view of the causes of unemployment apply to South Africa? The authors find that there is little evidence to support the hypothesis that unemployed people "choose" to be unemployed. The unemployed are not absorbed by the informal sector due to non-trivial barriers to entry.

The South African case is also interesting because, unlike in many other developing economies with a persistent labour surplus, the informal economy has only recently – that is, in the post-apartheid period – provided income-earning opportunities for women (Bank et al., 2020a). Apartheid and its restrictions on labour market migration effectively kept most women outside of both the formal and informal labour markets, with only a few exceptions. But with the end of apartheid, South Africa has witnessed a large rise in women's labour supply and concomitant growth in the informal economy. One of the aims of this thesis is to better understand how this labour market segmentation, discussed above, and social reproduction, discussed below, are linked. As Fine argues:

> …there is an immediate connection between social reproduction and segmented labour markets once it is acknowledged that social reproduction can itself differentiate the work-force or the population more generally. One way in which labour has been rendered heterogeneous, and hence segmented, is to differentiate it by the skills with which it is reproduced (Fine, 2013, p. 187).

Segmented labour market theory is useful for conceptualising and interrogating the complexities of labour markets which are observed in an economy such as South Africa's. It suggests a conceptualisation of labour markets which is based on an understanding that there are important linkages between paid and unpaid work, and economic and non-economic activity. These questions are a focus of feminist economists' work, and of social reproduction theory. In the next section, I examine how feminist economists have approached questions of the economic participation of women, and I interrogate social reproduction theory as a key theoretical tool for understanding women's economic lives.

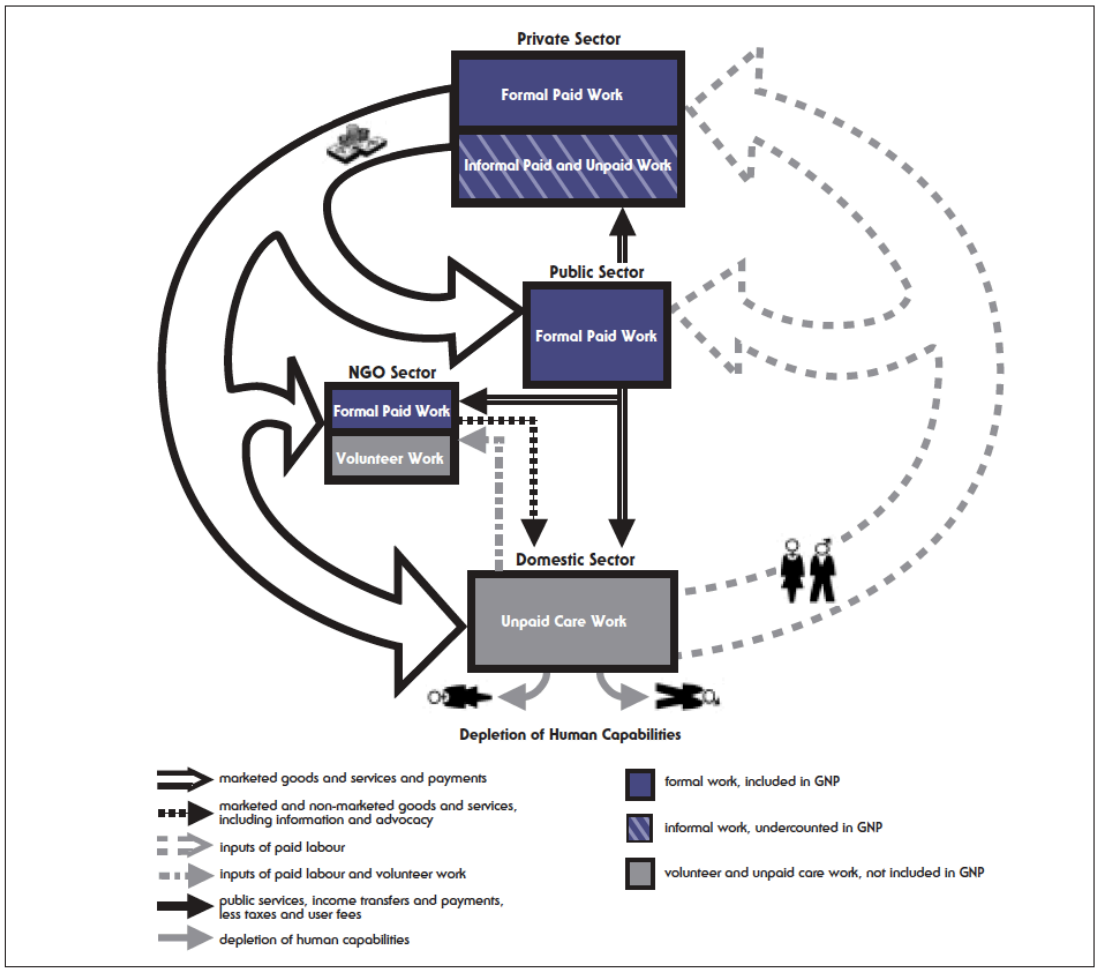
Feminist economics and social reproduction theory

The feminist economics approach regarding the labour market is very usefully outlined by Elson (2000). A central tenant of this approach is the need to understand gender discrimination both in

the paid labour market, in the form of unpaid work in the household, and as a larger social relation. Using this approach allows us to understand how women's participation in the paid economy interacts with social reproduction, the labour market, and the wider questions of gender as a social relation (Francis, 2020). Elson argues that "conventional conceptions of the way in which economies operate offer limited guidance for policies to promote women's empowerment and ways to combine gender justice with economic justice. This because they leave out much of the work that women do, especially the unpaid care work that women do for their families and communities" (Elson, 2000, p. 7). Furthermore, these conventional approaches do not always examine the ways in which unpaid work relates to the market and the state (Folbre, 1994). As a result, they treat labour as "if it were like land – an input that exists without having to be produced, a 'primary factor of production'" (Elson, 2000, p. 24).

One of the central features of the feminist economics approach is to interrogate the ways in which what we think of as neutral may in fact be gendered (Francis, 2020). Figure 5, from Elson shows the economy drawn from a woman's perspective. It foregrounds the domestic care sector (the realm of social reproduction), and makes clear the links between the public and private sectors, the nongovernmental organisation (NGO) sector, and the domestic sector. Elson emphasises that these sectors are linked both by market and non-market mechanisms. It shows how the functioning of both the formal and informal parts of the economy are dependent both on paid and unpaid work, but the latter is excluded from calculations of gross national product.

Figure 5: A feminist economics approach to understanding the economy



Source: Elson (2000, p. 24)

According to this approach, the domestic sector supplies people to work in the other three sectors. The private sector sells goods and services to all other sectors, and the public sector institutes taxes and transfers the revenue to other sectors, in addition to providing public services. Finally, the NGO sector provides health, education and social, recreational and cultural services to the domestic sector. What is most important to understand is that while women and men work in all four sectors, there are systematic variations in the gender division of labour which arise out of the ways gender shapes society. The private, public and NGO sectors are all men-dominated areas of the economy, while unpaid care work, volunteer work and informal paid and unpaid work continue to be more women-intensive. A gendered approach produces a different analysis of the economic status quo, and any apparent progress, because it allows us to view, in economic terms, costs – real costs, in terms of people's time and effort – that are not monetised (Elson, 2000).

One of the most important departure points for feminist economics is that the economy should be far more broadly conceived and should not be limited to an analysis of paid work in the productive sector. It is important to acknowledge that "in capitalist societies the majority of people subsist by combining paid employment and unpaid domestic labour to maintain themselves…this version of social reproduction analyses the ways in which both labours are part of the same socio-economic process" (Bezanson and Luxton, 2006, p. 37). The issue of unpaid work has been approached in different ways over time. Mitchell (1966) usefully differentiates women's condition into four separate structures: production, reproduction, socialisation and sexuality. She argues that each of these develops separately and thus requires its own analysis, but together they constitute women's position (Mitchell, 1966). Thus if we are to endogenise the determinants of labour force participation, we need to have a much better understanding of the work done across these different structures. We need to understand social reproduction from an economic perspective, and, most importantly, the link between social reproduction and production in the economy itself:

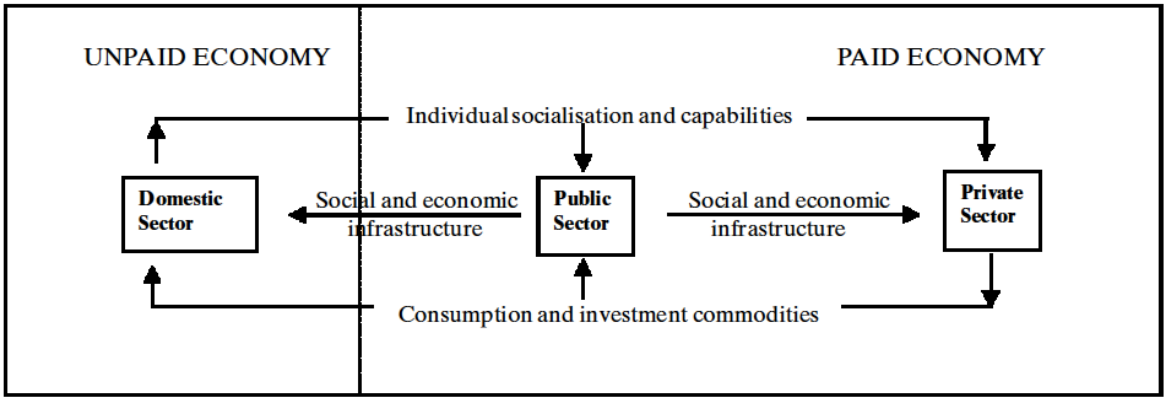
> Neoclassical economics has failed to provide a satisfactory framework for analysing labour supply conditions, and the impact of labour supply on the demand side structure of the economy. Changes in labour force participation cannot be neatly divided between demand-side changes (price and income variables) and supply-side changes (change in tastes). This is because the supply-side structure is not 'exogenously determined' but responds to changes in the economy (Humphries and Rubery, 1984, p. 335).

The study of social reproduction is concerned with thinking how these structures, or spheres, are interconnected and interrelated. Social reproduction theory has its roots in the publication *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Dalla Costa and James, 1975), and has come to focus on the intersection of the reproduction of life and capitalist relations at the same time (Mezzadri, 2019). As an analytical concept, social reproduction was invoked as a way to theoretically link women's oppression and the (predominantly Marxist) analysis of production and class struggle (Vogel, 2013) which, up to that point, had been concerned with capitalist exploitation, and necessarily focused on sites of the production of surplus value (the productive economy). This is important because the dominance of the individual optimising agent which forms the basis of much neoclassic economic theory is not able to fully explain what are, essentially, social processes. As O'Laughlin has argued, social reproduction theory has become influential in feminist political economy because it has "replaced the null-space of unproductive

labour with the importance of women's domestic work for the reproduction of life itself, and empirically it has inspired thick descriptions of women's working lives" (O'Laughlin, 2021, p. 2).

Elson and Himmelweit, separately, provide an economic framework for thinking about social reproduction (Elson, 1993; Himmelweit, 2002). Himmelweit argues that the economy does not depend solely on paid work, but is equally dependent on unpaid care activities carried out in the domestic sector, as illustrated in Figure 6. The work done in the domestic sector is vital to "individual socialisation and to the production and maintenance of human capabilities on which economic life depends" (Himmelweit, 2002, p. 52), and we must find ways to incorporate it in our economic analysis (Francis, 2020). Figure 6 shows how unpaid work in the domestic sector is critical to the functioning of the paid economy. Treating the two as conceptually distinct – unpaid work as non-economic activity and paid work as economic activity – is a false dichotomy which distorts economic analysis and leads to a partial conceptualisation of what constitutes the economy.

Figure 6: The interdependence of the paid and unpaid economies



Source: Himmelweit (2002), modified from Elson (1997).

The unpaid care work which takes place in the domestic sector produces and maintains the labour force – this is social reproduction. Mohandesi and Teitelman put it succinctly:

> Under the capitalist mode of production, social reproduction, whether waged or unwaged, refers to the totality of those activities required to create, maintain, and restore the commodity labour power…socially reproductive activities have overwhelmingly taken place in and around households, making the home one

> of the most vital institutions in the reproduction of capitalist relations as a whole (Mohandesi and Teitelman, 2017, p. 39).

In an important contribution to the feminist economics literature, Humphries and Rubery (1984) identify two dominant methodologies for analysis: the relationships between the spheres of production and reproduction, which they term absolute autonomy; and the relative autonomy approach. The former treats social reproduction as independent of the system of production – an approach taken by some orthodox economic theory – while the relative autonomy approach views social reproduction as an integrated and adaptable part of the large system of production, and therefore one that should be analysed within the same organising theoretical framework (Francis, 2020). They argue:

> The methodology employed in some of the seminal works on labour supply within the neoclassical tradition prevents any distinction between influences which stem from the system of family organisation and those which stem from changes on the demand side, and as a result most authors choose to place their emphasis either on one side or the other and ignore the interaction between the two spheres…if these differences are in fact endogenously determined by, for example, different current opportunities for market work and differences in family organisation resulting from historical differences in income earning opportunities, then labour supply cannot be taken as independent of demand-side variables and an historical and interactive analysis of the relationship between production and social reproduction must be undertaken (Humphries and Rubery, 1984, p. 334).

The dominant approach underlying economic theory has led to a divergence from political economy approaches, which rely on a historical materialist approach, to building theory (Francis, 2020). Humphries and Rubery argue that we must proceed from the understanding that social reproduction develops, in all cases, in response to the productive system, but, importantly, that "the form of this response must be understood historically. It is neither predetermined nor smoothly accommodating to the demands of the productive system, but depends on the dynamics of social reproduction" (Humphries and Rubery, 1984, p. 332). Bridenthal wrote that "the relationship between production and reproduction is a dialectic within a larger historical dialectic. That is, changes in the mode of production give rise to changes in the mode of reproduction"

(Bridenthal, 1976, p. 5). Edholm, Harris and Young (1978) distinguish three levels of analysis: social reproduction, that is, the reproduction of the conditions of production; reproduction of the labour force; and biological reproduction (Vogel, 2013).

Families and households are therefore central to the social reproduction approach. Morton (1971) sees the family "as a unit whose function is the maintenance and reproduction of labour power" and the task of the family is "to maintain the present work force and provide the next generation of workers, fitted with the skills and values necessary for them to be productive members of the workforce" (Morton, 1971, pp. 215–6). More recently, Battacharya (2017), in an important contribution to social reproduction theory, highlights two ways in which we can utilise it to answer the questions we posed. She argues that "it is a *methodology* to explore labour and labour power under capitalism and is best suited to offer a rich and variegated map of capital as a social relation; further, that this is a methodology that privileges process, or, to use Lukacs's words, we believe that the 'developing tendencies of history constitute a higher reality that the empirical facts'" (Bhattacharya, 2017, pp. 4–5). She contends that social reproduction theory privileges processes over visible facts and "is an approach that is not content to accept what seems like a visible finished entity – in this case, our worker at the gates of her workplace – but interrogates the complex network of social processes and human relations that produces the conditions of existence for that entity" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 2). It is important in this regard, as Ferguson and McNally (2013) argue, to approach the analytical categories of labour, the economy and households as processes rather than static objects of study, which "opens up the possibility of a more genuinely historical materialist reading of the social relations of power, one that identifies the conditions under which race, gender, sexuality, and class are (co-)reproduced" (Ferguson and McNally, 2013, p. XXXVII).

As outlined above, one of the central questions in this research is how the spheres of production and social reproduction articulate, and the impact this has on the labour market. There is a wealth of economic literature on the sphere of production but less work, theoretical or empirical, has been done on the sphere of reproduction, particularly in South Africa, and particularly within economics. In conducting this work, there is an excellent theoretical tradition on which to draw. One example in the international literature is the important debate between Meillassoux (1981), O'Laughlin (1977) and Edholm, Harris, and Young (1978). Meillassoux argued that social relations based on the family retain such importance within the capitalist system because, firstly, capitalism extracts extra surplus from pre-capitalist modes of production in the household (consonant with Wolpe's thesis on South Africa), and secondly, because the family continues to be the site for the

reproduction of labour: families continue to produce and sustain workers across the economy. O'Laughlin contended that the fundamental weakness in Meillassoux's approach is an ambiguous conceptualisation of the relationship between production and reproduction, while Edholm et al. took issue with what they argue is Meillassoux's imprecise use of Marxists concepts. Taken together, the readings provide rich theoretical material for thinking about the relations between the spheres of production and reproduction.

As discussed above, in more orthodox economics changes in labour force participation are often explained, at least in part, by changes in preferences for work. But in some ways these explanations ignore some interesting labour market questions. These important labour market changes should not be considered in an axiomatic, ahistorical fashion. As McNally and Ferguson argue, we need to understand "women's oppression as grounded in socio-material relations intrinsic to capitalism, rather than as simple products of attitudes, ideologies, and behaviours" (Ferguson and McNally, 2013, p. XXXVII). Mezzadri has argued that social reproduction analysis initially focused on housework and wagelessness more generally. This analysis led to the emergence of a robust critique of the Marxist approach which saw value-generation lying exclusively within the productive sphere, and this led to the eliding of 'productive' and 'paid' labour as one and the same (Mezzadri, 2019). More recently, social reproduction theory has deployed the concept of social reproduction to examine "how labour is regenerated daily and inter-generationally through private and public institutions in contemporary contexts" (Mezzadri, 2019, p. 33).

Social reproduction theory is, of course, not without its critiques. One of the most important is that, while it gives content to the domain of reproduction, it reproduces a dualism between the productive and reproductive spheres. As O'Laughlin argues, "relabelling domestic work as reproductive rather than unproductive labour gives it a morally positive value, but does not per se establish how we are to conceptualise the relation between the two spheres within a unitary whole" (O'Laughlin, 2021, p. 2). O'Laughlin charts three important ways in which social reproduction theory revises Marx, and identifies challenges associated with each, which are important to consider in this research. Firstly, she argues that the opposition between spheres of production and reproduction violates Marx's emphasis on the unity of the processes of production and reproduction. She argues that the case for this separation has not been convincingly made by social reproduction theorists: "Confining the reproduction of labour power to a sphere of domestic work also overlooks the frequent interdependence of wage-work and household work in the reproduction of living labour" (O'Laughlin, 2021, p. 3). Secondly, functionally, capital does not

respect the need for a sphere of social reproduction: "the accumulation of capital depends on the productivity of labour, not the quantity of labour power available…capital's concern is not the reproduction of labour in general, but having the right kind of labour-power when needed" (O'Laughlin, 2021, p. 4). Importantly, she notes that struggles over social reproduction mean that capital does not always get its way: in the global North in particular, capital has assumed some of the burden of social reproduction. Thirdly, she argues that social reproduction theorists have dropped the (important to Marx) distinction between living labour and labour-power, instead focusing on the reproduction of labour power:

> ...the terms of labour-power's commodification…are a relevant concern for labour struggles, but not the only one. In direct confrontation with capital, workers dispute not only wages, but also the conditions of work that determine the value extracted from living labour. The material basis for a unitary approach to labour is that both wage-workers and those who produce only for their immediate consumption are living labour (O'Laughlin, 2021, p. 4).

O'Laughlin is correct that social reproduction theory has reproduced a conceptual separation of the spheres of production and reproduction. But this separation is not essential to SRT. In fact, social reproduction theory offers the possibility of a converse approach. It allows for us to link the realms of production and reproduction, which may or may not be separate analytical or spatial spheres, and to think about how paid and unpaid work are incorporated – or not – into capitalism. While this dualism is not intrinsic to SRT, I agree with O'Laughlin that the way Wolpe, and many others since, have deployed it does perpetuate a dualism which posits the capital and domestic spheres in opposition to each other.

Fine has written about this from a slightly different angle. He has argued that to progress, economic debates about domestic labour need to think carefully about two black boxes: firstly, domestic labour itself, and secondly, the shifts between domestic and non-domestic provision. He argued that domestic labour is a heterogeneous activity:

> ...open to interpretation either as an endless multiplicity of detailed tasks or, gathering these together, as a more abstract feature (of capitalism) centring on social reproduction…particularly important was the neglect of childcare,

> although it straddles both detailed tasks, encompassing most aspects of housework, and social reproduction of the workforce (Fine, 1992, p. 17).

In terms of the shifting boundaries of provision, he argued that, in recent times, the state has driven the expansion of non-domestic provision, and this often escapes analysis which focuses on the productive economy. The changing natures of state, and capital provision, also complicates our understanding of where social reproduction occurs. Primarily:

> ...increases in capitalist production across a wide range of products has, at times, had the effect of *enhancing*, and not undermining, the viability of domestic production…as in mass production of cheap domestic inputs, such as flour and textiles, quite apart from 'capital' equipment, such as baking tins, ovens and sewing machines…this points to a tension in the tendencies created by mass production, which does not just create unimpeded and unambiguous trends…at the more abstract level, these issues suggest that it is inappropriate to take the family or household as an invariant analytical building block, undertaking more or less the functions of social reproduction through domestic labour (Fine, 1992, p. 17).

This section has highlighted the importance of a feminist economics approach, deploying social reproduction theory to think holistically about the labour market and the economy; and the implications of this approach for analysing changes in women's labour force participation and their economy activity. Feminist economics is a broad conceptual approach which suggests a holistic way of conceptualising and investigating the economy. Social reproduction theory is complementary, and emphasises the importance of thinking about paid and unpaid work, and the spheres in which they occur. Taken together, they expand the economy to include productive and reproductive activity. This, then, positions households as key sites of economy activity and analysis. The literature on women's labour force participation discussed above is concerned with the distribution of employment, unemployment, and labour force participation between men and women on an aggregate level. But the work reviewed above does not engage with the role of households explicitly as the location of both economic activity and socially reproductive work. In the following section, I turn to the household as a key site of economic activity, and economic contestation.

Theoretical approaches to thinking about the role of households in the economy

Households and families are at the centre of the political economy analysis of labour markets, compared to the individual analysis which underscores some of the more orthodox labour market analysis. In this section I review feminist economics contribution to the analysis of households as economic units and sites of economic activity. I then turn to the pioneering work of Amartya Sen which theorises the linkages between households and the broader economy. I examine its applicability and usefulness to my study of Agincourt.

Feminist economics has developed theoretical tools for examining how decisions are made at the household level. In particular, the literature emphasises that possibly conflicting interests may shape household decision making, and the intra-household allocation of resources. In their review of the literature, Himmelweit et al. (2013) identify three main economic models for understanding household-level decision making. In unitary models, households make decisions about resource allocation by maximising a single utility function. This model of the household was first proposed by Becker (1998) who offered a joint household welfare function "which either reflects an altruistic consensus within the household, based on interdependent utility functions, or else an absolute but benevolent dictator who heads the household and ensures altruistic decision-making incomes" (Kabeer, 1997, p. 263). In this conception, household income is pooled by all members, and then the household head re-allocates it to jointly maximise the household welfare.

But evidence has shown that how money is spent in the household is closely linked to who earns it, and the absence of any theory of power is a constraint in unitary models. Indeed, under the Beckerian model, an increase in women's wages would be expected to increase their share of household resources, because of the welfare returns to the household for such a reallocation. But it would not be expected to increase women's decision-making capacity or standing (Kabeer, 1997). Household bargaining models add complexity through the inclusion of game theory to analyse how choices are made when there is more than one decision maker. As a result, these models allow for both cooperation and conflict within the household, as theorised most notably by Amartya Sen (Sen, 1987). He conceptualised a family as a bargaining unit where interactions between members of the family are characterised by both cooperation and conflict (Agarwal, 2009). One of the most important aspects of Sen's model of cooperation and conflict is the incorporation of social technology. He argued:

> The making of things involves not merely the relationship between, say, raw materials and final products, but also the social organisation that permits the use of specific techniques of production in factories or workshops, or on land. The so-called 'productive' activities may be parasitic on other work being done, e.g. housework and food preparation, the looking after of children, bringing food to the field where cultivators are working. Technology is not only about equipment and its operational characteristics, but also about social arrangements that permit the equipment to be used and the so-called productive processes to be carried on (Sen, 1987, p. 11).

He argues it is important to take an integrated approach to the pattern of activities both within the household as well as outside it which, together, make up the production process, both in 'traditional' as well as modern societies. Gender relations are conditioned by the different ways these activities sustain and support each other as they jointly contribute to the household's prosperity. Importantly, his approach allows us to link what appear to be social arrangements, such as the gendered division of unpaid work within the household, to the arrangement of technology and production. In this regard, he makes four key points. Firstly, it is necessary to examine the productive aspects of what are often treated purely as 'cultural' phenomena, and to interrogate productive contributions to the household that are made by labour expended in activities which are not seen as productive. Secondly, such an approach illuminates why the unequal gendered division of labour can survive in such a stable fashion. Thirdly, he argues that the conceptual division of labour into paid and unpaid, in the broader context of productive arrangements, brings in systematic biases in our perception of who is producing what, and who is earning what. These biases are key to understanding why women continue to be in an inferior economic position in both 'traditional' and modern societies.

Fourth, he argues that gendered divisions of work outside the household partly reflect traditional divisions of labour within the household. These themselves influence the cultivation of skills, and sustain the asymmetry of opportunities for acquiring skills which are rewarded in the labour marketplace: "In understanding the inferior economic position of women inside and outside the household in most societies, the hold of these social arrangements has to be clearly identified and analysed" (Sen, 1987, p. 14). Sen terms this broad concept "social technology" and argues that it is a central determinant in "relating production and earnings to the distribution of that earning between men and women and to gender divisions of work and resources" (Sen, 1987, p. 15).

Relating this to the household, he says that such unequal divisional arrangements might at the same time ensure the economic survival and wellbeing of the household, *and* may maintain an unequal division of paid and unpaid labour both within the household and outside it.

According to Kabeer (1997), Sen's approach highlights three intrahousehold and extra-environmental features which are likely to influence both bargaining power and allocational outcomes within the household. The first is the perceived economic contribution of each household member, with those considered to be making the most substantial contribution enjoying the greatest bargaining power. She notes that in Sen's approach it is not the actual value of the contribution, but its perceived value which matters, as well as its orientation: (was it earned in market exchange, or is it subsistence consumption?); its form (earnings in cash, or in kind?), and the location where it is produced (inside the household or outside the household, in the marketplace?). The second feature is each household member's fall-back positions; that is, the relative levels of wellbeing in the event of a breakdown in cooperation. In Sen's model, the person who would end up worse off in such an event is considered less able to secure a favourable bargaining outcome. Thirdly, and most difficult, is the 'perceived interest response'. Here, Sen argues that it is possible for an individual within the household to subordinate their own welfare to serve their long-term interests, but doing so reduces their bargaining power and resulting allocative outcomes: "Sen's framework thus reverses the positive association implicit within the Beckerian household between power and altruism – exemplified in the unlikely concept of the 'benevolent dictator' – and offers the intuitively more plausible hypothesis that apparently altruistic behaviour within the household is likely to be associated with a lack, rather than a monopoly, of decision-making power" (Kabeer, 1997, p. 264). Sen's precise conception of perceived interest is contested by Agarwal, who argues that:

> …the idea that women tend not to have a clear perception of their individual interests in societies such as India – that is, that they may suffer from a form of "false consciousness", in effect making them complicit in perpetuating their unequal position – is interesting, but debatable. The empirical evidence that can be culled points more to the contrary. For a start, it is difficult to infer from simply observing people's overt behaviour whether they are conforming to an unequal order because they accept its legitimacy, or because they are afraid to challenge it, or because they lack exit options (Agarwal, 2009, p. 165).

Sen highlights two factors which determine a person's power to determine outcomes in household bargaining: endowments, such as what a person owns or can command (labour power, assets), and what he calls exchange entitlement mapping "the exchange possibilities that exist through production and trade, and which determine the consumption set available to a person with given endowments" (Agarwal, 2009, p. 159). Agarwal notes that the most important endowments for rural families, such as those in the Agincourt area, are access to arable land, and the ability to labour. To this she adds three endowments which do not derive from private ownership or market exchange: traditional rights in communal resources, traditional social support systems, and support from the state and civil society. There are two additional endowments: "social norms which embody accepted notions about the division of labour and resources, and social perceptions about contributions, needs and abilities (and therefore about who deserves what)" (Agarwal, 2009, pp. 159–160). These come together in a conception of the family which suggest that the greater an individual's ability to survive outside the household, the greater will be their bargaining power[9] within the household in terms of the division of subsistence.

Kabeer (1997) undertook one of the most important empirical applications of Sen's framework. She examined the question of whether women's access to income-earning opportunities had any implications for gender relations within the household. Departing from the premise that economic dependency is one of the main factors which structure gender inequalities, Kabeer examines how access to work in a rapidly globalising Bangladesh in the late 1980s impacted gender relations within households. To do so, she draws together economic and sociological approaches to examining intrahousehold relations.

She argues that sociological analyses of the relationship between women's income and their power within the household vary – as they do in economics – between those who subscribe more narrowly to an understanding of power which is rooted in resources, and those who look more broadly to include ideology, and interest in processes of household bargaining and contestation. She argues that economic studies generally focus on the empirical relationship between power within the household and bargaining outcomes – "power as decision-making"– where little

[9] Agarwal argues that it is important to understand that the bargaining framework does not require an explicit bargaining process. "Social norms that limit women's work mobility, education, or property access, or which otherwise undermine her capabilities and functions, can give men considerable power even without explicit discussion" (Agarwal, 2009, p. 160).

attention is paid to the actual processes which result in different outcomes "so that we are left none the wiser about the substantive character of power and its manifestation and management in the daily lives of women and men in different householding systems and different patriarchal regimes" (Kabeer, 1997, p. 266). Drawing on a set of qualitative interviews, Kabeer constructs a complicated picture of different configurations of power relations within families and households. In her conclusion, she argues persuasively that:

> ...models of the household which focus purely on issues of access, management and control of resources may see only power and conflict where there may be cooperation and choice. Households are not inhabited by managers, workers, shareholders and directors but by mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons and daughters who often love each other. People who define themselves in terms of such familial identities may still exercise or experience power, but they will do so very differently from workers and managers. It is this complex interweaving of self-interest and altruism, cooperation and conflict which makes the operation of power within the household – and the effect of women's wages on it – so elusive and so difficult to track down (Kabeer, 1997, p. 300).

Drawing out from this complexity, she identifies two levels at which new opportunities for waged employment has transformed women's lives. The first is structurally – among others, in the arrangement of labour markets, households and patterns of migration – each of which has made the social landscape more diverse. The second is at the level of the individual, and is evident in the ways women in Bangladesh responded to new opportunities:

> ...some have used them [new work opportunities] to secure a more central place within existing domestic relationships; some to ensure a better life for their children; some to invest in their dreams; some to renegotiate the terms of unsatisfactory relationships and still others to walk out of, or not enter into, relationships which were undermining their agency in unacceptable ways (Kabeer, 1997, p. 301).

The literature on household-level bargaining and contestation has highlighted both the distribution of paid and unpaid work at the level of the individual, and at the level of the household. Doing so required data reflecting the distribution of work broadly defined, and a careful understanding of

the meaning of concepts such as work, employment and economic participation. In Chapter Four, I discuss my methodological approach to gathering data to investigate these questions.

Studying the household in South Africa

South Africa has a rich and varied literature examining households. It is beyond the scope of this review to address the literature systematically. But it is important to discuss several aspects which emerge in the South African literature in relation to the theoretical concepts I have discussed above. In particular, these relate to the concept of households as sites of both reproduction and production, and the conceptualisation of households and the economy as endogenously linked.

It has been well established that access to economic means gives women more power within households (Ardington et al., 2009; Case and Menendez, 2007; Kabeer, 1997). Kabeer (1997) showed the interesting and contradictory ways in which access to work and incomes shaped households in urban Bangladesh in the 1980s, during the rapid growth of globalisation. Here, an abundance of job opportunities made finding work possible for those women who wanted it – in effect this was a demand-side change to the labour market. Similar studies in South Africa and Agincourt, including (Ardington et al., 2009; Case and Menendez, 2007) have found similar effects. But there is a fundamental difference between Bangladesh and South Africa in the late 20th and early 21st century: South Africa is a job-scarce economy, with high and growing levels of unemployment. Here, as it has been well established, increased labour force participation, particularly among women, has been driven by supply-side changes in the labour force (Casale, 2003; Casale and Posel, 2002).

There is a rich ethnographic and qualitative literature on how households in South Africa have responded to these large socioeconomic changes in the post-apartheid period. Sarah Mosoetsa, for example, has written compellingly about how trade liberalisation has affected households involved in footwear manufacturing in Pietermaritzburg (Mosoetsa, 2011). She argues that "households are not just places of consumption and leisure, but significant places of production and services" (Mosoetsa, 2011, p. 17). This research continues this tradition, but brings together both qualitative and quantitative data to examine how households are responding to the changing socioeconomic context in South Africa. There is evidence that changes in both the demand and the supply side of the South African economy have delivered benefits for women. For example, among women, overall employment has increased in the post-apartheid period (Casale, 2004). But as has been made very clear in preceding chapters, these changes have also been complex and contradictory.

As research from Agincourt shows, there is ample evidence that paid and unpaid work remain structured along gendered lines even well into the 21st century. Agincourt is also different in a number of important ways, both from other areas of South Africa, and particularly from areas in the global North upon which much of the recent work on social reproduction have been based, as highlighted in earlier chapters. These make it an interesting site of study for these sorts of questions.

Households as sites of production and reproduction

Sarah Mosoetsa has written in great detail about how households in South Africa have become sites of both production and reproduction in the face of the crisis of social reproduction. Through her research in Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle in KwaZulu-Natal, she argued that the poor have "retreated to the household and adopted diverse socio-economic livelihood activities" in the absence of wage employment and an effective welfare state (Mosoetsa, 2011, p. 147). Her work found that households gather income from various sources, both monetary income from work, trading and social grants, and non-monetary income from unpaid work within and around the household, such as growing crops. Importantly, she argued that socially reproductive work has become one of, if not the, central area of work within households as labour market income becomes increasingly scarce.

Her research argued that the economic position of men within the economy reinforced their role within both households and the community. But there was also a contradiction in South Africa: high levels of unemployment have also undermined men's economic position within the household. Conversely, the combination of rising unemployment for men and the provision of social grants has reinforced women's position in households, locating them as managers within, particularly, the care economy. She argues that this has reinforced conflict within the household, too (Mosoetsa, 2011).[10] She makes the important argument that the gendered structuring of households is determined not only by external economic factors, but by cultural factors too.

> The unequal division of labour in households is socio-culturally sanctioned. Most women accept that it is normal and natural for them to do all the household chores, regardless of how busy they are. Household conflicts usually

[10] Importantly, Mosoetsa also argues that conflicts within the household arise inter-generationally, too.

> involve disputes about the distribution of income rather than complaints about unpaid household work and the unfair allocation of time. (Mosoetsa, 2011, p. 17).

In her PhD thesis, Fakier examined social reproduction in different classes of migrant households in a town in northern KwaZulu-Natal called Emnambithi. Her research focused on the intersection of the gendered nature of social reproduction, and the class-stratification of households in post-apartheid South Africa. She found important differences in the nature of social reproduction between different classes of households (Fakier, 2010; Fakier and Cock, 2009).

These findings emerge in contrast to much theoretical and empirical work on social reproduction based in the global North, which conceptualises households as the site of reproductive work, and the broader economy as the site of production. The South African empirical literature shows clearly that this is not the case.

Household trends in South Africa

Recent work by Posel and Hall (2021) examines the economics of households in South Africa at a national level, and trends in household formation. In the post-apartheid period, they identify a number of important trends: a decline in average household size and an increase in single-person households, which has accompanied an increase in household formation, a relative decline in the share of households which contain a heterosexual couple, and considerable growth in households where the adults are either only men or only women. They also highlight the persistence of stretched households, which include members who are mostly not physically resident in the household. They highlight the complexity in household structure and composition in South Africa, which has been shaped by migrant labour, apartheid, and a tradition of household formation based on "a consanguineal and specifically patrilineal system of descent" (Posel and Hall, 2021, p. 801).

Households and the economy as endogenously linked

In the theoretical literature, Sen makes the point that households and the broader economy are co-determined, and that it is necessary to conceptualise households and the economy as endogenously linked. Recent empirical work in South Africa corroborates this claim. In her recent PhD thesis, Thornton meticulously investigates changing patterns of household formation in South Africa between 1995 and 2011. She finds that household size has decreased significantly in the post-apartheid period – driven in large part by the formation of single-person households –

and that patterns of household formation are highly gendered, and "modulated by men and women's differential access to labour market and grant income, over the life cycle" (Thornton, 2021, p. vii). She notes that while declining household size is a global trend, it is shaped by South Africa's distinct history of labour migration, high unemployment, and the enduring effect of apartheid spatial engineering. Her most important finding is that nationally, high unemployment among men has undermined the gendered division of labour within households, as women in heterosexual relationships are less able to rely on their partners as a source of income. As a result, women have adapted their household formation strategies, leading to higher rates of girl and women-headed households, and an increasing number of men who live alone. She notes that this has reinforced the double burden on women, as they are increasingly required to provide economically for their households, while continuing to undertake the majority of socially reproductive work.

Households in Agincourt

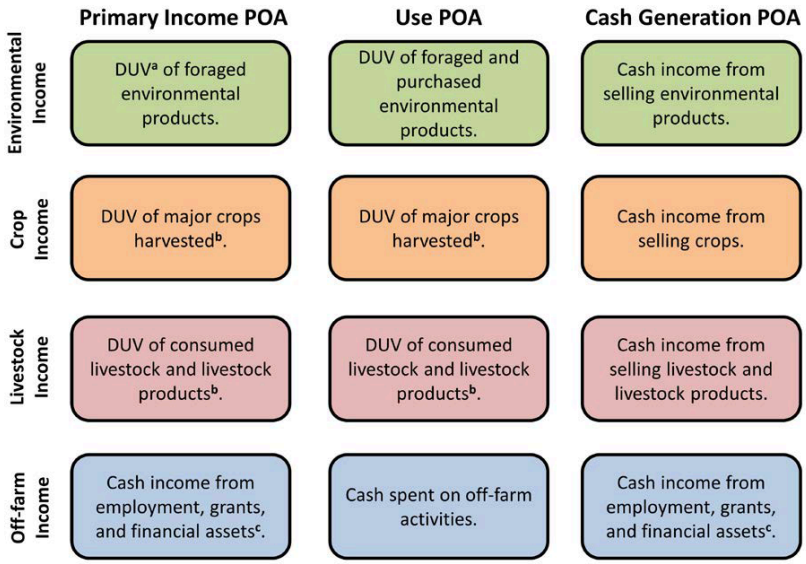
This literature finds that households in Agincourt are far from fully commodified. They rely on a portfolio of resources, including paid incomes, subsistence work, social grants, and unpaid labour, to generate household livelihoods. This is very different from the situation in much of the global North, which informs recent work on social reproduction. In high income countries, households are commodified to a far greater extent than the evidence from South Africa suggests. This is important for understanding the ways in which paid and unpaid labour intersect.

Limits to commodification in South African households

The agrarian debate has a long and ongoing history in South Africa. Much of it focuses on the extent to which rural households have shifted from an income and livelihoods strategy based on land to one based on markets. The literature from Agincourt finds high levels of households' reliance on the natural environment. There are three main land use types in the Agincourt area: subsistence farming, livestock grazing, and natural resource use. The land is part of communal land tenure, and each village is divided into areas for residential use, farming, grazing and resource harvesting (Mbiba et al., 2019). A recent paper by Ragie et al. (2020) examined the portfolio composition of incomes and livelihoods in Agincourt using data from the 2019 Sucses wave. They note that a homestead "typically features dwellings, animal pens and home garden in which crops such as maize, squash, and ground nuts are cultivated. Rangelands are used for grazing livestock and foraging for environmental products" (Ragie et al., 2020, p. 2).

The study found that households in the sample drew primarily on four main income streams: off-farm incomes, environmental income, crop income and livestock income. For the last three, income includes in-kind and direct use of these products, as well as cash from the sale of produce and livestock. Off-farm income, in contrast, is comprised exclusively of income from labour market activities, remittances, and savings and loans. Using three points of analysis (POA) and direct use value (DUV), the authors calculated income streams from these four sources (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: The four income streams at three points of analysis (POA)



Source: Ragie et al. (2020, p. 3)

The results suggest that the natural environment is a key source of income for livelihoods of the residents of the Agincourt area. Key findings are that:

- 97.3% of all households in the sample foraged for their own products, to an average annual value of R4,383.
- While a small number of households (8.5%) sold these products, generating an average income of R12,956 per household per year, most households made negligible income from selling environmental products.
- Approximately half of all households bought environmental products to the value of R4,545 per year. Most common were insects (bought by 35.1% of households) and firewood (17.6%).

Cropping is also an important livelihood activity. Almost every household (94.6%) grew maize; also popular were peanuts (85.0%), pumpkin leaves (77.4%), pumpkins (66.2%), bambara beans (63.4%), mango (59.0%), cowpea (58.2%), and spinach (52.4%). But cash sales of crops generates very little cash income for households, at an average of R327 per household per year. In-kind value is also low, at about R615 consumption value per household per year.

In comparison to near universal cropping, livestock ownership is much more limited, with only 18.5% of households reporting owning livestock (mainly cattle and goats). However, the small share of households which do own livestock enjoy a cash-equivalent on average of R37,444 per household per year from consuming livestock and livestock products.

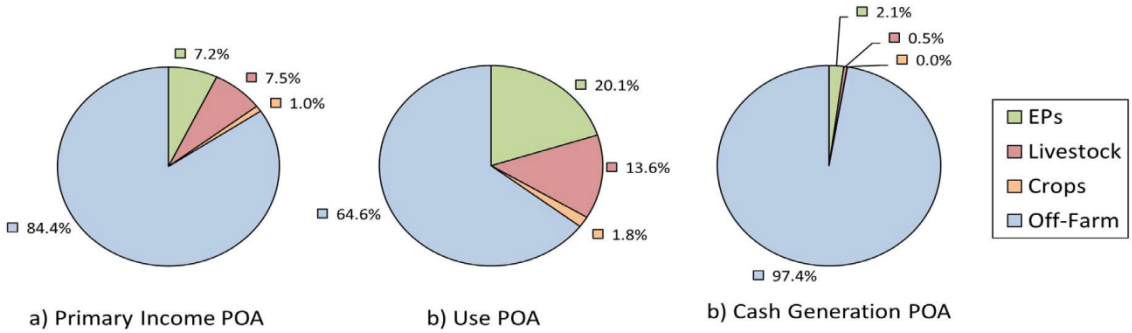
Off-farm incomes are near-universal among sample households, with 99.3% of households reporting off-farm income. The main sources of off-farm income are social grants (84.2% of households), savings and loans (82.0%), and wage employment (73.1%). The annual average household off-farm income of R50,514 translates to an annual average monthly income of R4,209.50 which is broadly in line with my own calculations. When these amounts are combined, several interesting findings emerge. The first, and perhaps most important, is that in terms of use values, residents are making use of a portfolio of income sources. While off-farm incomes contribute the main source at around two-thirds, environmental products and livestock are significant sources, too.

> Although the vast majority of households in our study used environmental products such as fuelwood, wild vegetables/herbs and insects, few of the households generated sizeable profits from selling environmental products. This finding is consistent with…findings elsewhere in South Africa and suggests that the direct use of environmental products is for fuelwood and basic food security (Ragie et al., 2020, p. 6).

The second finding is rather surprising, and is the very limited cash-equivalent contribution made to livelihoods from crops. Only 1.8% of income is generated by crops, and almost no actual cash is generated by the sale of crops (see Figure 8). This is very different to findings from elsewhere in Africa, where cropping and environmental incomes are often equal (Ragie et al., 2020). These findings are very interesting indeed. The broader South African literature suggests that there has been a sustained process of de-agrarianisation in South Africa, as either, or both, labour market

and social grant incomes have supplanted agricultural activities in the composition of livelihoods (Daniels et al., 2013; Hajdu et al., 2020). But the findings from the Sucses study suggest that agricultural and environmental activities remain an important component of rural livelihood creation. However, being limited to a single year, one of the limits of this analysis is that it is cross-sectional. It does not provide much insight into how things have changed in the area across a period of time.

Figure 8: The relative value each income stream contributes to the mean income portfolio of the study population at the three POAs



Source: Ragie et al. (2020, p. 6)

The importance of the natural environment is underscored by the response to economic shocks. Mbiba et al. (2019) find that negative shocks result in greater use of natural resources in the study site. They isolate two key findings.

1) Negative shocks result in significant increases in all dimensions of natural resource use: that is, the number of resources used, intensity of use, and quantity used.
2) After controlling for household assets, natural resource use is still higher in response to shocks compared to the absence of shocks (Mbiba et al., 2019).

Comparisons of livelihood portfolios with other former Bantustans can be enlightening. Hajdu, Neves and Granlund (2020) examine changes in the composition of livelihoods between 2002 and 2016 in the rural Eastern Cape. They find a marked change across the period. In 2002, local employment was the most important livelihood activity, but by 2016 this has been supplanted by the social grant income. Indeed, social grant receipts rose by over 250% to become the largest

source of income. As I discuss in the following chapter, social grant income is a large and rising share of total household cash income for residents of the Agincourt area, too.

While the livelihoods approach has many benefits, its application is also limited by a number of weaknesses. The first is that in much of the literature, rural areas are, implicitly, conceived of as disconnected from the mainstream economy – thus we talk about rural livelihoods rather than labour markets. Of course, all labour market activities are part of the labour market. While segmentation does occur, it does not make sense to think of these as disconnected from the broader labour market trends. The second is that for much of the South African literature, gender is not considered as a primary component of livelihoods. Indeed, the studies by Ragie and Mbiba et al. do not contain an explicit gender analysis. My own research detailed in Chapter Five highlights how women continue to undertake the majority of own production and foraging work in Agincourt. As a result, the economic contribution of women, when defined to include non-waged work, is larger than is suggested by the income figures reflected in the survey. This is unsurprising as women's work is systematically under-counted and undervalued. My results in Chapter Five suggest that women are major economic contributors to households in Agincourt. While women's labour market income is lower than men, their contribution in own production and foraging is significant.

Conclusion

This review emphasises that despite a well-developed literature on South Africa's political economy, we know relatively little about the productive and reproductive lives of rural women in contemporary South Africa. The significant observed increase in women's labour force participation in post-apartheid South Africa, and indeed around the world in the latter part of the 20th century, has raised important and inter-related questions about how we understand the labour market and the broader political economy of work, and how we study these phenomena. The increase prompts us to ask if changes in labour force participation of such magnitude have altered the fundamentally gendered nature of South Africa's political economy in significant ways, or if they reflect the changing ways in which people understand these important concepts. It is indeed clear from this literature review that there has been a significant and sustained rise in women's labour force participation both around the world and in South Africa. While this increase has been well described, it raises a number of important issues that are not well understood. I have therefore re-examined key concepts such as economic activity, labour force participation, and the distinction between paid and unpaid work in the South African context. Much of the literature is based on a

theoretical world view in which human capital is the primary determinant of economic activity and labour force participation.

My review shows that while human capital theory is useful for examining some important aspects of labour market participation, such as links between skills, employment, and earnings, its inherent dichotomy between paid and unpaid work means it is of limited use in understanding an economy comprised of both economically productive and socially reproductive activities. I have shown how the theoretical and methodological advances of feminist economics, segmented labour market theory, and social reproduction theory, can be useful in interrogating an economy which is conceptualised to include both spheres of paid and unpaid work. Social reproduction theory locates the household as an important site of productive and reproductive activity. I have reviewed how feminist economists have responded with conceptual and methodological innovations which allow us to peer inside households and understand how they function as economic units. I have argued that Sen's work on cooperative conflict is an important theoretical tool for examining economic contestation within households. I deploy his theory in Chapter Five to make sense of the persistent gendered inequalities evident within and between households in Agincourt.

Chapter Four
Making sense of the South African labour market: Methodological approaches

Introduction

Chapter Three highlighted the rich literature examining women in the South African economy in the context of rising women's labour force participation. The main research question I have outlined – how rising women's labour force participation is shaping rural-urban articulations in the South African political economy – necessitates a different methodological approach to that taken in much of the labour market literature. Much labour market work, certainly within economics, is largely, and necessarily, quantitative and deductive. It uses national representative surveys to identify and track changes in the composition of the labour force, labour force participation, earnings and occupations, and to isolate causal mechanisms. Deductive research based on quantitative data is the mainstay of labour market economics, both in South Africa and more broadly in neo-classical approaches to labour market analysis.

My research is a political economy investigation into the gendered labour market and economy of the Agincourt area. Such an analysis requires a particular mix of theoretical and methodological approaches, which I set out in this chapter. I first outline the key concepts which emerged from the literature review in Chapter Two and Chapter Three that are central to the analysis in the rest of this thesis. I then briefly outline the traditional approach to the labour market research, noting its strengths and weaknesses. From there, I discuss in detail my methodological approach. In many important ways this is intertwined with the feminist economics theoretical approaches outlined in Chapter Three, but here I focus on the methodological considerations, where they are separable.

This research uses mixed research methods – a combination of quantitative and qualitative data – to investigate the gendered economy of Agincourt. The quantitative component is an analysis of the Sustainability in Communal Socio-Ecological Systems (Sucses) survey to investigate the key concepts of the gendered nature of work and households in Agincourt. The qualitative component consists of 24 in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Epistemologically, my research uses an inductive approach to knowledge creation. This chapter presents the rationale for this methodological and epistemological approach, and details the data sources and data collection methods used. In the first part of this chapter, I outline the differences

between inductive and deductive reasoning, and argue for the use of both in this research. In the second part, I explore the mixed-methods approach in more detail. I argue that such an approach is needed to develop a holistic picture of the gendered economy. This combination of data and methods allows for new insights into the important issues of women's work and the gendered economy.

Key concepts for the analysis

The literature review highlighted several key concepts which are central to the empirical data collection and analytical work which follows in this thesis. There are three concepts which are particularly relevant to informing the methodological approach I have adopted. The first is the concept of work, which as I have argued, includes both paid and unpaid work, and the importance of problematising the use of the terms economically productive and unproductive work. It emerges clearly from the analysis in Chapter Two and Chapter Three that a broader definition of work, and by implication, of the economy, is essential to interrogate the research question: what is the gendered nature of the political economy of Agincourt, and what does this reveal about the relationship between South Africa's economic core and its periphery? Feminist economics and social reproduction theory are the key analytical tools I use to understand this concept in the context of Agincourt.

The second concept is that of the household, both as a physical site of productive and reproductive activity, and as an analytical tool. Households are important for understanding both how and where paid and unpaid work intersect, and are a key location of economic contestation. Of particular relevance is Sen's theoretical approach to households as sites of cooperative conflict. They are also sites of the production and reproduction of gender relations and gender inequalities, which is highlighted by social reproduction theory and the literature on feminist economics. The theoretical tools developed by feminist economists for thinking about households, particularly that households are the site of both productive and reproductive activities, and Sen's model of cooperative conflict, are key to understanding the role and position of households.

The third concept, discussed in Chapter Two, is political economy – an essential tool for analysing how individuals and economic structures intersect and articulate. The concept of political economy is used to think about the ways in which individuals, households and the broader economy interact with each other, and produce and reproduce the persistent gender inequalities which are evident in the literature review. Here, the world of Wolpe, and his cheap labour thesis, as well as the work

of Bozzoli, Morris and others is of central importance to understanding the location of Agincourt, and its individuals and households, in the broader South African economy.

These three concepts inform the conceptual and methodological approach, and the data sources I selected to underpin my research. These concepts and theoretical tools inform the selection of my methodological approach, data sources, and research instruments, which I discuss in detail next.

Outline of the methodological approach

The literature surveyed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three highlight the importance of taking a broad conceptualisation of work, which includes paid and unpaid work, and examines the different ways in which both researchers and respondents understand them. In this section, I explain the rationale for my epistemological and methodological approach. There are several important methodological components which I utilise in this research – namely quantitative and qualitative methods, and deductive and inductive reasoning – and they require further interrogation and explanation. The first part of this chapter discusses the differences between inductive and deductive reasoning and argues for the merits of using both in this research. In the second part, I explore the mixed-methods approach, with the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Covadia (2019) recently used this approach in her examination of the gendered constraints for job-seeking among black South African women. In the third part, I outline the data sources used in this research.

I use the framework outlined here to develop a holistic picture of women's economic lives in the Agincourt area. How I engage with the data (the methodological as opposed to the theoretical approach) is an important point which I turn to now. The availability of the Health and Democratic Surveillance Site (HDSS) data allows for a study which is both geographically and historically located. As Winders and Smith argue, "social reproduction, in its material manifestations and conceptual formulations, is a profoundly spatial phenomenon. As many scholars have demonstrated, its historical emergence as a spatially distinct ensemble of social activities is an artefact of the birth of capitalism itself, which 'freed up' labour power to assume commodity form and be sold for wages" (Winders and Smith, 2018, p. 2). With reference to labour markets in particular, spatial issues are important (Peck, 1996), and the location contextually and geographically of Agincourt matters, as I have argued in Chapter Two.

My methodology draws on the feminist economics theory, outlined in Chapter Three, to select, gather and analyse the data with which to examine women's economic lives from a different perspective. The broader approach to understanding the economy which feminist economics advocates translates into selecting a wider range of variables from the data. This includes those which are not usually part of a labour market analysis, and employing different methodological approaches. As discussed below, I use the Sucses data to examine how factors in the sphere of reproduction, such as unpaid work in and around the household, for example, collecting firewood, preparing food, and caring for the sick and elderly (see question two in Appendix A), shape economic lives, as indicated in both the HDSS and Sucses datasets, and how these change between 2010 and 2014. This, consistent with Elson's approach (2000), will start to link the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction in a more holistic way, and hopefully provide us with new insights into the determinants of labour force participation in the Agincourt area. Methodologically, the scepticism which is embedded in the feminist economics approach means that the inclusion of inductive reasoning in addition to deductive reasoning is appropriate.

Inductive and deductive epistemologies

Distinct from the methodological approaches (quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods) is the approach to reasoning which is employed by the study. In this section, I outline the contributions of inductive and deductive reasoning in economics, and argue for the merits of using both in this research. The debate about the appropriateness of deductive or inductive reasoning is part of a long debate in economic approaches which dates to the classical political economists. Milonakis and Fine provide a helpful definition of the two approaches (Milonakis and Fine, 2009). Deduction is the development of theory from a set of given assumptions, premises and axioms. Through the application of logic, we move from these assumptions to a set of conclusions which are, of course, determined by the founding premises. Pheby outlines some of the advantages of the deductive approach:

> ...logical arguments are not concerned with the truth or falsity of conclusions, instead, such reasoning is interested in the correctness, or validity, or the argument…a notable feature of inductive reasoning: it is ampliative. This is because the conclusions drawn from such arguments go beyond the information contained in the premises…deductive arguments tend to move

> from general to particular statements…induction involves reasoning from particular statements towards more general ones (Pheby, 1988, p. 2).

Deductivism is the mainstay of economic approaches, even though it is often not explicitly named. In labour market questions in South Africa, it has been used by Casale, 2004; Posel, Fairburn and Lund, 2006; Ntuli and Wittenberg, 2013, among others. In this research, a set of axioms about the way women make labour market decisions (which are drawn from human capital theory) is tested against the data. In contrast, the inductive approach involves moving from the specific, or, in Marx's words, the concrete, to the general (or abstract); from "observed facts to theoretical generalisations, but identifying the characteristics of a specific phenomenon or situation and transposing it to the totality of similar phenomena or situations" (Milonakis and Fine, 2009, pp. 15–16). According to Pheby, "inductivism is a general approach that emphasises observation and systematic empirical work as the major means of attaining knowledge" (Pheby, 1988, p. 3).

There is a vast literature detailing the evolution of deductivism and inductivism, and the ways in which they are complimentary and oppositional (see Milonakis and Fine, 2009). And there is an ongoing debate about how the historical and economic intersect, and how much emphasis we should place on each when approaching a particular research question. That is, how much weight should we give to historical specificity against theoretical generality? (Milonakis and Fine, 2009). My aim here is not to weigh up the merits of each approach, but rather to understand which components of each are useful for the research questions at hand.

The inductive approach in labour market economics was supported by Cassim in early work in this area in South Africa, when he argued that "as noted by Gordon (with reference to orthodox theory), 'that which cannot be precisely modelled is often relegated to a secondary or qualifying tier of the analysis. These methodological inclinations lead to static analyses. They also place a heavy burden on the analyst's ability to hold enough about the world 'constant' to permit model formulation'" (Cassim, 1982, p. 9). This is a different approach from that usually taken in the literature, which is to test the model of labour force supply against a particular sample in order to answer a particular question (this approach is taken by Ntuli and Wittenberg, 2013). Here, I will

use the data to see how and in what ways the model, broadly defined, itself can be nuanced and improved.[11]

This approach shifts the aim of the research from predicting to explaining, and was adopted early on by institutional economics (Johnson, 1996). Of course, this approach has its weaknesses. Most notably, it is not as experimentally rigorous as the deductive approach, but as Johnson argues, it is not meant to be. Furthermore, it doesn't have the same predictive power of the deductive approach. Instead, the process of theorising using the inductive method involves moving from the concrete to the abstract, and then back to the concrete,[12] and in this research involves moving backwards and forwards between theory and data so that we can better describe the South African labour force, and explain how it operates. I am looking at changing patterns in the distribution of unpaid work within the household, and how these changes link to participation in the paid spheres. Whereas previous work in this area, outside of economics, has used an ethnographic approach, here I explore these changes using quantitative and qualitative data from the Agincourt HDSS.

A mixed-methods approach

The use of qualitative data in economics is not unprecedented, but it is still unusual, and warrants some further explanation. Mahoney and Goertz (2006) identify ten areas which are central to the research process. They use these to think through the key differences in qualitative and quantitative approaches. These are outlined in Table 1, and are useful for thinking first about *what* it is we want to do, and secondly, *how* we want to do it, identifying the main differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches.

[11] In the words of Geoffrey Hodgson, the heterodox approach comprises a "set of varied attempts to come to grips with real-world phenomena relating to the economy" (Johnson, 1996, p. 288).

[12] Bhattacharya (2017) usefully explains this distinction: the abstract is the level of analysis "where we forge our conceptual equipment", and the concrete level of analysis is "the historical reality where we apply our tools" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 3).

Table 1: Contrasting qualitative and quantitative research

Section	Criterion	Qualitative	Quantitative
1	Approaches to explanation	Explain individual cases: causes-of-effects approach	Estimate average effect of independent variables: effects-of-causes approach
2	Conceptions of causation	Necessary and sufficient causes: mathematical logic	Correlational causes: probability/statistical theory
3	Multivariate explanations	INUS[13] causation: occasional individual effects	Additive causation: occasional interaction terms
4	Equifinality	Core concept: few causal paths	Absent concept: implicitly large number of causal paths
5	Scope and causal generalisations	Adopts a narrow scope to avoid causal heterogeneity	Adopt a broad scope to maximise statistical leverage and generalisation
6	Case selection practices	Oriented towards positive cases on dependent variable	Random selection (ideally) on independent variables: all cases analysed
7	Weighting observations	Theory evaluation sensitive to individual observations: one misfit can have an important impact	All observations are a priori equally important: overall pattern of fit is crucial
8	Substantively important cases	Substantively important cases must be explained	Substantively important cases not given specific attention
9	Lack of fit	Nonconforming cases are examined closely and explained	Non-systematic causal factors are treated as error
10	Concepts and measurement	Concepts centre of attention: error leads to concept revisions	Measurement and indicators centre of attention: error is modelled and/or new indicators identified

Source: Mahoney and Goertz (2006, p. 229)

In essence, they argue that one of the main aims of qualitative research is the explanation of outcomes in individual cases. Methodologically, this requires identifying the causes of these outcomes for each case that falls within the theory under investigation – starting with the cases and then moving to the causes – the "causes-of-effects" approach. In contrast, quantitative methods generally follow an "effects-of-causes" approach, which seeks to estimate the average effect of one or more causes across the entire population of cases. With this approach, by default, specific outcomes of particular cases are not the central focus of the research (Mahoney and

[13] INUS: insufficient, but necessary part of an unnecessary but sufficient condition.

Goertz, 2006). They argue that both qualitative and quantitative approaches are valuable for research, and can be complimentary if used carefully.

> Ideally, an explanation of an outcome in one or a small number of cases leads one to wonder if the same factors are at work when a broader understanding of scope is adopted, stimulating a larger-N analysis in which the goal is less to explain particular cases and more to estimate average effects. Likewise, when statistical results about the effects of causes are reported, it seems natural to ask if these results make sense in terms of the history of individual cases; one wishes to try to locate the effects in specific cases (Mahoney and Goertz, 2006, p. 231).

It is important to note that despite the substantive and methodological differences, both qualitative and quantitative approaches have an important role to play in research, and can work in a complementary fashion – a point emphasised by much of the literature (see for example Mahoney and Goertz, 2006; Posel, 2017). As Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016) argue, it is entirely possible to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, but one must take great care to ensure that the theory behind each method is compatible, and that the methods are being employed appropriately. The methods can be used in sequence – moving from quantitative to qualitative, or vice versa – or in parallel, where the dominant approach is enriched with the alternative method in some subset of the study. There is the important distinction between corroboration (that is, hoping for a similar outcome from both methods), elaboration (using qualitative data to enrich the interpretation of quantitative data, or the applicability of theory to particular cases), and complementarity (where using the different approaches generates complementary insights or contradictions).

In this study, the use of targeted key-informant in-depth interviews, as opposed to survey interviews, to augment the random sample of the broader data set needs further discussion. Weiss (1995) makes the distinction between survey interviewing and qualitative interviewing. Qualitative interviewing departs from the uniformity of a standard schedule of questions to achieve fuller development of information. He argues that the appropriate analysis of qualitative interviews relies on interpretation, summary and interrogation, and less on counting and correlating. "[I]f we depart from the survey approach in the direction of tailoring our interview to each respondent, we gain in the coherence, depth, and density of the material each respondent provides. (Weiss, 1995, p. 3).

Posel (2017) has argued convincingly for the value of interdisciplinary approaches, and the inclusions of qualitative approaches in economics. She locates the dominance of statistical approaches in South African economics in context, arguing that South African economists have, in recent decades, embraced statistical methods as superior to qualitative approaches. As a result:

> ...a good identification strategy trumps all, while description and classification are 'lightweight'. With a focus on techniques and causality, economics has become more dismissive of approached or disciplines that use qualitative data and 'soft' methods – data and methods which are not seen to be reliable, rigorous, or representative. The consequence is that there is little methodological pluralism in the work of empirical economists in South Africa (Posel, 2017, p. 124).

This is to the detriment of economics, as the two approaches can work in a complimentary fashion. Qualitative data can assist us to think more carefully about the formulation of definitions, and the questions used in surveys, and to enrich our understanding of the social and historical context. Quantitative data can help us better situate qualitative findings, which are often localised in time and place (Posel, 2017).

This research, then, brings together epistemological and methodological approaches widely used in economic and sociological research to apply to the research question at hand. Where appropriate, I have used both inductive and deductive reasoning to interrogate the research questions. In terms of methodological approaches, mixed methods are used, based on a number of data sets, which I turn to now.

Quantitative data sources

The research site: The Agincourt HDSS

This research draws on two quantitative data sets. The first is the Wits Rural Health Facility Agincourt Health and Socio-Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) database. Secondly, I use the Sustainability in Communal Socio-Ecological Systems (Sucses) database, which is a panel study nested within the Agincourt HDSS. The Sucses database is the key dataset for this study, as is explained below. My selection of these data sets has been informed by the feminist economic literature which highlights the importance of data on paid and unpaid work for political analysis. To a provide broad framing of the political economy of Agincourt, I use the census and survey

data from the HDSS, which has gathered socioeconomic data for the population of the Agincourt village for over two decades. Agincourt makes for a fascinating site of study for researchers interested in political economy. Formerly part of the Gazankulu Bantustan in the apartheid era, it was the destination for many Mozambican migrants fleeing the civil war across the border. Now it is an area that in some respects defies classification.

It is not rural in the way that one might expect to see in a remote part of the country. Most residents live in formal concrete or brick houses, on neat plots of Traditional Authority land. Due to the climate – it is extremely hot and generally very dry throughout the year – there is very little subsistence agriculture. In some ways, the area resembles the suburban areas that surround South Africa's largest cities. But what is remarkable is that Bushbuckridge and Agincourt do not abut a large city. Agincourt is over 100 kilometres from Mbombela, the provincial capital of Mpumalanga. An annual health and demographic census is conducted every year in the Agincourt village, and has been since 1992. The census records key health and demographic data, including births, deaths, temporary and permanent migrations, resident status, and years of education. Household status is determined through self-identification, so migrants living outside the village bounds are tracked as part of the household for as long as they are considered members. This is very useful because it allows for household members to be tracked when they have migrated for work. This baseline census data also helps us understand how household composition has changed over time (Madhavan and Schatz, 2007). Because of their structure and focus, these data allow for insights into labour market and economic participation at a depth not possible in the national data sets. Most importantly, the data allow us to situate the analysis within an understanding of developments in the domestic realm, the sphere of social reproduction, and link them to the paid economy. Understanding this is a central concern which emerges from the literature review.

The Agincourt area is historically located in the rural periphery, as theorised by Wolpe (Wolpe, 1972), and discussed in more detail by Wilson, who characterises the economic situation in homelands under apartheid as "one of acute poverty, alleviated to some degree by the movement, predominantly by men of working age, of oscillating migrants who go to the cities" (Wilson, 1972, p. 104). Of course, since the end of apartheid, the former Bantustans have changed in many important ways. One of the aims of this research has been to present, in Chapter Two, an economic history of Agincourt so that the research is in its proper historical construct.

The rich data generated by the Agincourt HDSS have supported detailed empirical work, largely in the broad area of public health (see Kabudula et al. 2017b; Kahn et al. 2012; Tollman et al. 1999; Collinson et al. 2016 for selected examples). But it is necessary to note that there is important writing on the labour market of the area, too. Recent work by Collinson and others has confirmed that Agincourt, like the rest of South Africa, has seen a marked increase in women's labour supply in recent years (Collinson et al., 2016). The study identifies a significant increase in women's migrancy for work, which suggests that this research is in the broad arc of the Wolpean tradition where it is important to understand the impact of the apartheid labour market on the configuration of family life even in the post-apartheid era.

Wits Rural Health Facility Agincourt HDSS database

The Agincourt HDSS database is a census database with 20 years of data covering approximately 22 000 households in the Agincourt village in rural Mpumalanga. The HDSS has seen an annual update of each birth, death, or migration since the baseline in 1992. The intention is to maintain a dynamic list of all people living in the area, and all those who have lived in the area. There are currently about 22 000 households and 120 000 individuals in the HDSS site, covering 21 villages. The village of Agincourt is one of these and gives the whole research site its name. The census collects a host of demographic and health data, but also includes labour market data, such as employment status, nature of employment, and socioeconomic indicators such as asset ownership. Each household in the Agincourt sample has a unique identifier, and so the HDSS dataset and the Sucses panel have been linked via this number, allowing for a unified dataset. I primarily use the data gathered and analysed from the HDSS database to provide overall context and framing for my analysis of the Sucses data, which I discuss below.

The Sustainability in Communal Socio-Ecological Systems (Sucses) panel study

Overview

The Sucses survey is a central source of data for my research because it contains information on both paid and unpaid work at the household level. The literature I reviewed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three argues that such data are essential for a gendered political analysis because they allow the distribution of paid and unpaid work, and the relationship between the two, to be investigated. The Sucses panel survey covers 595 households nested in the Agincourt HDSS. Data is gathered for all members of the household from one respondent in each household. This means that the Sucses survey contains data on roughly 4,600 individuals. There are some challenges with accuracy in the case of proxy respondents, as is the case with the Sucses survey. This needs to be

balanced by the benefits of such an approach which provides data on all members of a household, providing a more complete picture of household economic activity. The survey was established in 2010 and covers households which are distributed across 12 of the census villages in the Agincourt HDSS. The survey questionnaire collects data on livelihood strategies, activities, shocks, and responses for the sampled households. Surveys were conducted yearly from 2010 to 2014 (five rounds), and an additional round was conducted in 2019. The survey comprises both household and individual components. The household interview is conducted with the best respondent available in the rural household, and the individual interview with the sampled individual or, in the case of a child, their caregiver.

Sampling frame

The households in the Sucses survey were sampled from a sub-set of villages in the HDSS site, covering both the rainfall gradient and village size. As noted above, the households in the Sucses panel are identifiable in the HDSS census through the household identifier. For the former, the HDSS was divided into three rainfall zones, with the wet zone receiving more than 700mm a year, the mid zone between 600 and 700mm, and the dry zone less than 600mm of rainfall a year. Within each zone, three villages of various sizes were selected. Here, villages are conceived of as contiguous settlements and not political or census boundaries. Small villages are those with fewer than 500 households in 2009, medium villages are those between 500 and 1 000 households, and large villages with more than 1 000 households (See Table 2).

Table 2: Summary of sample villages according to size

Village size	West (wet)	Mid (mesic)	East (dry)
Small	–	Ireagh B	Lillydale B
Medium	Cunningmore B Xanthia	Ireagh A	Huntington
Large	Agincourt/Croquetlawn B	Kildare A, B & C	Justicia A & B

Source: Twine et al., (2018)

The result, see Table 3, is a random stratified sample of 600 focal individuals and their households. This represents a roughly 8% sample of the settlement size. Previous research work using these data have not weighted them because the questions examined are about relationships and connections, and less about making representative claims about the whole HDSS area (Mbiba et al., 2019; Ragie et al., 2020). In this line, I have not weighted the sample data, either.

Table 3: Sample size per village

Village	Number of randomly selected individuals and their households
Cunningmore B	51
Xanthia	61
Agincourt (including Croquet Lawn B)	96
Ireagh B	26
Ireagh A	50
Kildare (A, B & C)	144
Lillydale B	34
Huntington	43
Justicia (A & B)	95

Source: Twine et al. (2018)

Focus of the survey

The household survey is designed to collect data on livelihood capitals namely, human, financial, physical and social, livelihood activities, and experience of shocks and stresses by the household, and how the household responds. A household roster, which is partially populated from the Agincourt HDSS database, is used to collect data on health status, education status, and contribution to household income of each household member, whether a permanent resident or temporary migrant. The survey captures information on the resident, health, education, and occupation status for each household member. Most importantly the survey captures information on household activities that are both paid and unpaid, for each member over the age of 11. This includes income earning activities, childcare work, farming and subsistence activities, and household reproduction activities such as cleaning, cooking, shopping and care work for the sick and elderly. It also gathers information on household income from all sources, use of credit and savings, household expenditure, and asset holding. These are the types of data that are key to understanding the changing nature of social reproduction, and the links between social reproduction and employment. It is important to note that the Sucses survey links to the broader HDSS database, so all the data captured for the Sucses households as part of the HDSS annual survey can be linked.

In this research, I analysed this data set to examine what information is available on work and households. In doing so, I drew on insights from the literature about social reproduction theory, households, and political economy. I drew on Sen's theoretical paradigm which argues that households and the broader economy mutually constitute each other, and this link reinforced

gender inequalities both in the households and the economy. This approach enabled me to create a set of descriptive tables which provided insight into the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid work presented in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, in order to examine the key concepts of work and households. In Chapter Five, I used the data to analyse the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid work in Agincourt. In Chapter Six, I analysed the data to investigate the structure, composition, and dispersion of households in Agincourt.

Qualitative data sources: In-depth interviews

The literature review highlighted the importance of understanding the meaning of several key concepts, particularly work, employment and economic participation, and the importance of understanding how households function. In-depth interviews are well-suited to investigating these questions because they allow the researcher to investigate meaning and understanding. The final data source for this project is a set of in-depth interviews with a selection of households from the Sucses sample and informal traders. The fieldwork component of this research was conducted with the assistance of Ms Sizzy Ngobeni, an experienced fieldworker and project manager at the Agincourt HDSS. Ms Ngobeni assisted me to identify the respondents and locate their households. She also interpreted the interviews from English to Xitsonga and back. Ms Ngobeni also transcribed the interviews, recording a translation of the answer from the Xitsonga, rather than transcribing her interpretation of the response in the field.

Together we conducted 24 interviews. Table 4 presents a high-level breakdown of the demographics of the respondents. Fifteen of the interviews were with household members from the Sucses survey, sampled as outlined in Chapter Four. One of the ways to find out what is going on within the household is to look at what is happening outside the household. To this end, my fieldwork included interviews with eight informal traders – both men and women – in two villages, Agincourt and Xhimungwe.

Table 4: High-level breakdown of respondents' demographics

Interview #	Relation to HH member	Gender	Age category	Primary occupation according to Sucses survey
1	Head	Female	Pensioner	Pensioner
2	Head	Male	Pensioner	Pensioner
3	Daughter	Female	Working age	Unemployed
4	Son	Male	Working age	Unemployed
5	Head	Male	Working age	Unemployed
6	Head	Female	Pensioner	Pensioner
7	Daughter	Female	Working age	Unemployed
8	Son	Male	Working age	Unemployed
9	Daughter	Female	Working age	Unemployed
10	Head	Female	Pensioner	Pensioner
11	Daughter	Female	Working age	Employed full-time
12	Son	Male	Working age	Student
13	Head	Female	Pensioner	Pensioner
14	Son	Male	Working age	Unemployed
15	Head	Male	Pensioner	Pensioner
16	N/A	Female	Working age	Trader
17	N/A	Female	Working age	Trader
18	N/A	Female	Working age	Trader
19	N/A	Female	Working age	Trader
20	N/A	Male	Working age	Trader
21	N/A	Male	Working age	Trader
22	N/A	Male	Working age	Trader
23	N/A	Male	Working age	Trader
24	N/A	Female	Working age	Fieldworker

Source: Author's own data

The inclusion of interviews as a research instrument is informed by the theoretical work on household bargaining, and the contestation by social reproduction theory that we need to take a broad view of work, which includes unpaid work. These interviews were conducted with two main groups of respondents. The first was with a set of household respondents from the Agincourt region, selected purposefully from the Sucses sample. The second was with a set of informal traders in the two villages in the Agincourt study site. The interviews were carried out during July and August 2022. The purpose of these extended interviews was to explore and probe the findings from the quantitative analysis of the Sucses survey data. As such, the participants were selected

purposively to explore particular questions. Using the Sucses data, I selected respondents to include both men and women, covering the age range from 18 to those in retirement (interviewing minors is more difficult). The respondents included students, the unemployed, self-employed, part-time and full-time employed, and pensioners.

The interviews served two purposes. The first was data gathering. Here, I aimed to gather data about both the material conditions of the respondents, and their perceptions about issues of gender, work, and the political economy of the area (see Appendix A for the list of guiding questions). As Mosoetsa (2011) argues, economic data alone, which focuses on employment and labour force participation, excludes some important economic activities which are located in the household and are performed predominantly by women. The second was to cross-reference and enrich the survey data on which much of this analysis is based. The research leaders of the Agincourt HDSS insist that researchers using the HDSS data spend some time in Agincourt, although they do not require any actual fieldwork to be carried out.

Despite the perceived objectivity of quantitative analysis, of course researchers bring their own perceptions and biases to the process. This can impact how the data are cleaned and analysed, and of course on the conceptual and methodological approach which underpins these processes. It is very easy, as a researcher in an urban setting, to let one's own preconceptions and stereotypes shape the analysis. It was my intention that spending time in the field and carrying out in-depth interviews would bring the data alive and contextualise it better, allowing for a more cautious and sensible approach to the quantitative data analysis. This operates on at least two levels. The first relates to the variables which are in the survey data. For example, how respondents understand and respond to questions about work and employment (are these seen as synonymous or different?), unemployment, income, and so on. The second was to shape how the different elements and variables fit together: for example, a household in the data may appear with no member employed, subsisting off social grants and agrarian livelihood strategies. But what does a household like this *look* like? Spending time in the field is the best way to ascertain this. I have addressed the second component in two ways. The first is the qualitative interviews I discuss in detail here. The second was spending time with the Sucses survey fieldworkers when they carried out the 2019 survey. This provided additional points of comparison to link the qualitative data gathered in the survey with observational data about what houses which provided particular quantitative data looked like in reality.

Both approaches, particularly the in-depth interviews, generated fascinating information both about the economic and social lives of respondents, and about their own perceptions and understanding of how they articulate with the world, and the opportunities and barriers they face. It is important not to overstate the extent of the fieldwork. Twenty-four interviews is a modest number, but it was sufficient to achieve my two objectives above. Given the depth of the quantitative survey data available, the returns to interviews were low for new data, but high for context, and thus the interviews added exponentially to my understanding of the area.

There are a few important considerations that must be mentioned regarding fieldwork in the area. The first is that this area has been studied relentlessly for 30 years. This is not a trivial factor when considering the dynamics of fieldwork. Research fatigue is an important consideration among the participants. However, most of the research is either quantitative survey or clinical research – in-depth interviews, while they do happen, are rare in comparison. To manage the risks of research fatigue, HDSS management considers all proposals for fieldwork, and so do the local and provincial authorities. While I was able to secure informed consent from the respondents I spoke to, securing and maintaining consent from the community is essential, and requires ongoing engagement with community and political leaders, and with local and provincial bureaucrats.

The second aspect to consider is my own positionality regarding the respondents: the stereotypical "white man with a clipboard" arriving at people's homes to ask them probing questions about the gendered nature of work within their homes, and in the broader economy, and in English. Ms Sizzy Ngobeni's guidance was essential and invaluable in this regard. Ms Ngobeni was not only the enumerator and translator, but also acted as the social and cultural interface between me and the respondents. Many interactions at the start of the interviews raised perhaps the most important existential question about research: what is the purpose of your study? If you are asking about work, what is going to come of it? It was important as far as possible to manage expectations about the purpose and possible outcomes of the research.

Coding framework

I coded the interview transcripts in an iterative fashion to identify the main themes which emerged in relation to the key concepts from the literature. Table 5 presents the coding framework I employed.

Table 5: Qualitative coding framework

Key concept	Themes coded
Work	Paid and unpaid work
	Economically productive and unproductive work
	Jobs
	Types of employment
	Unemployment
	Education and skills
	Formal and informal employment
Households	Bargaining
	Cooperation and contestation
	Social reproduction
	Resourcing
	Pensioners
Political economy	Employment opportunities in Agincourt region
	Economic change
	Key economic actors
Cross-cutting issues	Gender
	Activity and employment
	Work
	Temporary migration
	Permanent migration

Source: Author

The cross-cutting issues are how I bring the three key concepts into dialogue with each other. The coding framework is used to systematically analyse the interview transcripts. Take, for example, the following extract from one of the in-depth interviews:

> ...[for] some, it's because the husband denied them the opportunity to work. You know what, like you are married, and your husband says as I have married you, you will live according to my rules or instructions. Then he promises you that he will do anything that you will need, he thinks if you go to work you will find other man then start having affair with them. Then you must stay at home. (Interview 9, working-age woman, unemployed)

This would be coded across several themes. The first is gender, because of the mention of the relationship between a husband and a wife. Secondly, it would be coded both under jobs and work. Third, it would be coded under cooperation and contestation because of the allusion to household decision-making. To take a second example, I refer to the extract below.

> There are lot of people who are not working in our village, those who are working are the ones that are educated. So, the reason why some women are not working it's because of us men. Some men are very strict, when your wife is interested in going to work, we said they are going to date other men and sometimes a woman is educated, and she wants to work; then as a man I will not let her go to work. (Interview 2, pensioner, man, household head)

This would be coded under both gender and household bargaining because of the discussion of the dynamics between husband and wife. It would also be coded under education and skills, and unemployment, because of the discussion of the link between education and unemployment. As a third example, I refer to the extract below.

> When I grew up there was jobs but now there are no jobs. When I grew up people were not selling things like now, we were growing things at the field and use it to feed our families. But nowadays things have changed, maybe there will be a point where people will no longer have jobs. Our children are educated but they are unemployed. They rely on our pension grant and things that we are selling. (Interview 23, working-age man, informal trader)

This would be coded under economic change, because of the discussion of changing job opportunities; under pensions, because of the reference to the role of pensions for household income; and under work, due to the reference to growing and selling produce.

Bringing the methods together

The mixed-methods approach work necessitated an iterative approach. I began first with the quantitative data, using it to generate a high-level overview of the main economic dynamics of the village, with a particular focus on emerging gender differences. This information was then used to inform the questions I put to respondents during the qualitative fieldwork, and it also explains why the fieldwork came relatively late in the research process. The third step was to go back to the quantitative data and re-evaluate it in light of the knowledge generated through the fieldwork.

There is also a larger methodological point at stake, which goes to the heart of economic methods. A crude division of economic methods would be into the confirmatory (or predictive) and the exploratory (or interpretivist). Confirmatory research is widespread in economics and asks: using new data, can we confirm or not the presence of a certain model of behaviour which we would expect to arise from our theoretical and axiomatic understanding of the world? This approach, simply put, is the foundation of much of the econometric analysis we see in economics. Indeed, it is not possible to specify a model to test if one does not have, ex ante, an idea of how things work. This approach can be powerful and useful when deployed appropriately. What it is less useful for is uncovering new information, or identifying new patterns and connections. This research, then, is more exploratory in nature. It is based on the evidence that interesting things are happening in the Agincourt area, about which there is much data. But it is not evident exactly what these things are until the research has been undertaken. Broadly, then, and skirting many of the internecine debates, this is a Marxist approach in the tradition of historical materialism. My intention has been to start with the concrete (what is observed in the data and in the field), move to the abstract (how can theory help us make sense of what is going on?) and back to the concrete again (therefore, what can we say about Agincourt?).

This approach is not without its challenges. Indeed, in recent decades, the exploratory dimension of economics has been supplanted by the more objectivist approaches which are seen as more precise and rigorous. One of the reasons for this is the objectivist approaches get around the sticky question of theory choice. That is, in the words of Lavoie, "how do we decide which theoretical approach or approach we will use to make sense of the world? How does one decide among alternative theoretical frameworks if simple accuracy in the prediction of facts cannot algorithmically decide the matter? Restricting science to its predictive dimension, where only precision counts, was seen as a way to make theory choice objectively solvable" (Lavoie, 2011, p. 103). Part of the answer can be seen in how we view the process of knowledge creation. As Lavoie argues:

> …one of the key aspects of any interpretivist explanation must be an emphasis on the historical roots of our present actions and knowledge. History of thought…must be seen as an integral part of any scientific discipline. And history proper is in this view not an attempt to find quantitative covering laws that fully determine a sequence of events, but an attempt to supply a qualitative interpretation of some part of mankind's story. (Lavoie, 2011, p. 112).

Conclusion

Research methods are tools used to interrogate a particular research question, or set of questions, and must be appropriate to the question asked. This research is arrow-shaped. It proceeds from a broad area of interest – women's economic lives in Agincourt – and narrows in on certain interesting and critical issues as they arise during the research. In many ways this makes it different from much labour market economics, which starts with a precisely defined issue, and moves upwards from a narrow to a broad focus. But this micro study raises the thorny issue of what we can say more broadly about the South African economy from a focused study of a relatively small village. How do processes at the village level articulate with national dynamics? Morris has argued persuasively for clear thinking in relating wider processes and the dynamics observable in smaller communities. He argues that it is important to acknowledge that:

> ...these wider processes are the ultimate source of structuration of such smaller communities. It is the wider process of capital accumulation and class struggle that structures the life possibilities of small communities. In a very profound sense, they play out these wider social forces in their own local context, but always with the critical proviso that this is done in unique ways and forms, and therefore, without the results and conclusions being pre-determined outside these local context. Thus the specific manner in which these forces are instantiated in such communities cannot be grasped except through local and micro studies (Morris, 1988, p. 63).

This chapter has presented an overview of the epistemological and methodological approaches used in this research to better understand the issues under examination. I have argued that the interpretivist and exploratory nature of this research is well-suited to a combination of inductive and deductive epistemological approaches, and to the use of both quantitative and qualitative data. As I argue in the following chapters, this particular combination has yielded new insights both into the gendered nature of the economy of the Agincourt area itself, and into the ways in which the political economy of the area articulates with the broader South African political economy.

Chapter Five
Work, gender, and social reproduction in Agincourt

Introduction

In this chapter, I take a detailed look at work in Agincourt from an explicitly gendered perspective. I map out the contours of paid and unpaid work, and examine how incomes are gathered from a variety of sources. Understanding these dynamics helps us better understand the economic position of women in South Africa in the 21st century, and offers insights into why they remain in a significantly worse economic position than men.

South Africa is a large and diverse country. Economic lives and livelihoods take shape differently across the republic. Most of our knowledge about people's economic lives comes from large, nationally representative surveys of employers, employees, and work seekers. These statistics, while undeniably useful, can mask important heterogeneity between different people in different places. They are also, with a few exceptions, focused on the paid economy. High-level unemployment figures often cited in South Africa suggest that a large proportion of people are idle: unemployed, under-employed, or not looking for paid work at all. This is reflected in the oft-cited statistics about the high number of people in South Africa not in employment, education, or training. A close study of the Agincourt area, however, reveals that most people are in fact very busy indeed. As argued by social reproduction theory, if we broaden our conception of work to include unpaid work and care work, and subsistence and livelihood activities, we find that people are engaged in a wide variety of productive work.

In terms of the research aims of this thesis, understanding the distribution of paid and unpaid work in rural South Africa helps to locate such areas in the political economy of the country as a whole. It shows the value of social reproduction theory in thinking about the political economy as a unitary whole which includes paid work and unpaid, socially reproductive work. This research is focused on understanding the persistent gender inequalities women suffer in the South African economy and its labour market. It draws on a historical micro-study of the Agincourt area, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to throw new light on this enduring problem. In Chapter Two, I provided an overview of research that explores how South Africa's colonial and apartheid history and patriarchal family relations continue to shape social and economic relations in Agincourt, even well into the 21st century. In this chapter, I turn to contemporary economic data gathered from the Sucses survey and my own qualitative research,

to sketch a picture of economic lives of Agincourt residents, and particularly its women, two decades into the 21st century. This analysis is informed by the theoretical and methodological approaches of feminist economics and social reproduction theory. I take a holistic view of the economy to include paid and unpaid work, and a holistic view of the productive economy, which includes both the traditional sphere of production, and conceives of the household as a site of economic production, too.

The South African Context

Employment and unemployment in South Africa

Studying an area like Agincourt, which is on the geographic and economic margins of South Africa, raises the question of what the "real" South Africa is. What we conceive of as the real South Africa is often determined by the data on which any analysis is based. The level and reach of any data necessarily shape the descriptive and analytical approach of research. The mainstay of labour market analysis, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), gives us a good overview of South Africa on average. The QLFS was introduced in 2008, and has become one of the most trusted and cited sources of labour market data in South Africa. It is a nationally representative survey with a sample size of about 30 000 respondents, and is very useful for highlighting national labour market trends, and for providing insights into the development of South Africa's economy. Having an overview about national trends gives us an average view, but it does not tell us all that much about the median resident of South Africa. In other words, what is the real South Africa, and is such a concept even useful? What are the analytical questions we are trying to answer when we use the QLFS? The QLFS data are often presented provincially, but due to the sample size, the survey is not particularly useful for analysis at anything more detailed than the provincial level. But the availability of excellent labour market data in South Africa should be celebrated, and this work contributes to the body of literature we have developed from national surveys.

One of the most urgent and enduring questions facing any scholar of the South African political economy, as well as politicians and policy makers, is why unemployment has risen consistently and alarmingly in the post-apartheid era. Labour market surveys, beginning in the early 1990s, have consistently shown that while the economy has generated new jobs, the labour force has grown

faster than employment, resulting in rising unemployment[14] (Altman, 2003; Banerjee et al., 2007; Bhorat, 2005). This has been true particularly for women. The rapid increase in women's labour force participation has significantly outstripped job growth, with the result that unemployment is especially high, and has increased especially quickly for women (Casale, 2004). Another important national employment trend is that where there has been job creation, it has been predominantly in low-paid sectors, such as retail trade and community and social services (Valodia et al., 2016). While there is a deep and contested literature about the nature and causes of South Africa's unemployment, I identify two main and competing theories for the persistent unemployment in the post-apartheid era.[15] These two theories are informed by very different assumptions about the underlying structure of the South African economy. Understanding these competing approaches is important as an entry point for thinking about the Agincourt labour market and the economy more broadly.

The first approach focuses on the labour-supply side of the economy. It essentially argues that South Africa's unemployment remains high because reservation wages exceed the equilibrium market wage. This is the neoclassical way of thinking about the labour market, and it underpins a large section of the labour market literature most prominently advanced by Nattrass and Seekings (Nattrass and Seekings, 2019; Seekings and Nattrass, 2015, 2005). Under this conception, improving employment levels requires lowering reservations wages, and improving productivity of workers. Here, workers become the focus of study – and this has been the case with much of the labour market research in South Africa. Human capital theory is often the silent partner in this analysis.

The second approach is radically different, and identifies labour demand as the main constraint to employment growth. Here the argument is that it is a lack of demand – for goods and services, and thus employment – which means that the level of labour demand is far below that required for full employment. The problem thus lies with the size of the economy, and not with the level of wages (Francis and Valodia, 2018). I have presented these arguments as simplistic dichotomies, but in fact there is merit to both approaches, and a holistic examination of the economy requires

[14] This is true at least until 2019. Since then, the economy has seen falling overall employment and rising unemployment (Statistics South Africa, 2021b).

[15] Of course, this is a telegraphic presentation of complex arguments. It is beyond the scope of this research to provide a comprehensive overview of these important debates, although they are addressed in various ways during my analysis.

engaging with them both. The implications of the first approach are clear: if this conception is correct then to solve the unemployment problem we need to focus on workers, and on lowering the cost of labour by reducing social and labour protection. In this world view, productivity, skills, wages, and wage expectations are centrally important, and are the constraint to economic and employment growth. The second approach, however, directs us to the structure of the economy: the success or otherwise of an individual is not only a product of their own characteristics and capabilities, but also a reflection of the structure of the broader economy. No matter how smart, skilled, or experienced a person is, they cannot get a job if there are no jobs. As the analysis in this research shows, the structure of the South African economy shapes households and individuals in important ways, and is responsible for some of the enduring gender inequalities evident in Agincourt today. I now turn to the economy of Agincourt, and in the following sections set out the main economic trends, with a particular focus on the labour market.

Rethinking the concept of work in the Agincourt area

In Chapter Two, I examined how the economic lives of black African women in the Agincourt area have been shaped at the nexus of the patriarchal family, and the colonial and apartheid state. In Chapter Five, I examined households in Agincourt and identified some of the salient features of their gendered structure, and moments of continuity and change. I now turn to an in-depth examination of individuals in Agincourt, focusing on a five-year period from 2010 to 2014. This generates a detailed picture of the political economy of the Agincourt area, drawing from my two main data sources. The first is the Sucses data set. The second is a set of in-depth interviews which I undertook in July and August 2022 with households in the Sucses sample, and with a number of informal traders.

The data from the Sucses survey illuminates various aspects of the village itself, and the wider South African labour market, which are not evident from the larger, nationally representative surveys. The triangulation of these data sources provides a rich insight into the Agincourt area, and may well help us understand the post-apartheid trajectory of South Africa's political economy more broadly. These arguments were laid out and examined in great detail during the debates about the National Minimum Wage in 2016 (Valodia et al., 2016).

Working in Agincourt

In understanding who is doing what and why in the Agincourt villages, the first point of arrival is to examine the occupational breakdown in the village: who is studying, who is employed, who is

unemployed and who is a pensioner. For this I take the middle year of the survey: 2012. The Sucses database divides the sample into eight main occupational categories which are: scholar/student, full-time employed, part-time employed, full-time self-employed, part-time self-employed, pensioner and unemployed. These are mutually exclusive categories and are separate from the age categories. So, for example, a respondent who was 58 and retired would be classified as retired. Conversely, a 75-year old who was looking for work would be unemployed. What is important, and both revealing and limiting in the data, is there is not an option to be classified as not economically active. My assumption was that those who are not employed and not looking for a job are classified as unemployed in the survey. As I discuss in more detail later, my fieldwork results suggest there are very few people in this category. My interviews found that most respondents would take work if they could find it. In terms of labour market status, I am particularly interested in those classified as working age (those over 15), including pensioners.

Table 6 presents the labour market status of those between 15 and 65, disaggregated by gender. Labour market status is provided by the household respondent for each member of the household. Immediately, some interesting observations are evident. Approximately 3% of both men and women in this sample report being pensioners, and 21.45% of women and 25.08% of men are scholars or students. Regarding employment, only 17.96% (261) of women report being full-time employed, compared with 34.64% of men. Of the 1 460 women in the sample, 45.32% (662 women) report being unemployed, compared to 24.74% of men (329 men).

Table 6: Labour market status in Agincourt: Working age people 15–65 years old (2012)

Adults	Women		Men		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	1 400		1 306		2 706	
Studying	291	20.8%	334	25.6%	625	23.1%
Pensioner	51	3.6%	36	2.8%	87	3.2%
Employed	430	30.7%	627	48.0%	1 057	39.1%
Self-employed	76	5.4%	46	3.5%	122	4.5%
Full-time	*46*	*3.3%*	*32*	*2.5%*	*78*	*2.9%*
Part-time	*30*	*2.1%*	*14*	*1.1%*	*44*	*1.6%*
Employed	354	25.3%	580	44.4%	934	34.5%
Full-time	*307*	*21.9%*	*518*	*39.7%*	*825*	*30.5%*
Part-time	*47*	*3.4%*	*62*	*4.7%*	*109*	*4.0%*
Unemployed	628	44.9%	309	23.7%	937	34.6%
Unemployment rate		59.40%		33.00%		46.99%

Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

Self-employment is more prevalent for women than for men, but a very small percentage of working-age adults report self-employment at all, with 5.4% of women in the sample reporting being self-employed compared with 3.5% of men. From the labour market status, I can calculate unemployment rates among working-age people as per the expanded definition, as shown in the Table 6 (using the standard definition where the unemployment rate = unemployed/labour force). Here, the results are striking from a gender perspective. For the year 2012, the unemployment rate for women was 59.4%, and for men was 33.0%. In absolute terms, more than twice as many women are unemployed compared to men (628 women compared to 309 men). Some caution is advisable with this number, however.

The Sucses survey provides the eight labour market status options listed above. Not economically active is not an option, so it is not possible to distinguish in the data between those who do not work because they cannot find a job from those who do not wish to undertake paid work. This is possible with the QLFS. The in-depth interviews I conducted, however, suggest this may be a useful way of measuring unemployment. Of the 16 household interviews I conducted, only one respondent said that because she oversaw childcare for her extended family she would not take a paid job even if she could get it. All other respondents said they would take a paid job if they could find one, regardless of their current activities. In all other cases, respondents who were not doing paid work – they were doing household, unpaid work instead – said they would find some other way to get that work done through employing a domestic worker, or asking another member of

the household to help. It does not appear therefore that labour supply is determined very much by the need to do unpaid work in the household. This highlights the contradiction in much of the literature about the apparent links between unpaid work and labour market status. Rather, that gender norms shaped the availability of work which in turn shapes the distribution of work within the household. Understanding this was a central focus of my qualitative research, and I return to it in more detail later in this research, particularly in Chapter Seven.

Nationally, the gendered distribution of unemployment is very different to that seen in Agincourt. According to the QLFS, from the fourth quarter of 2012, the overall unemployment rate, according to the strict definition was 24.9%. Among women it was 27.9%, and for men it was 22.4% (Statistics South Africa, 2013). In the same year, according to the Sucses survey, the overall unemployment rate was 46.99%. I suspect this is in large part due to the way the question is asked, and the fact that Sucses does not have a category for not economically active. If QLFS was asked in the same way, unemployment would be probably higher, given the numbers who are classified as not economically active. But as I note above, the qualitative work suggests that most respondents who, in the QLFS would be classified as discouraged work seekers, or not economically active, might be more accurately classified as unemployed.

The Sucses data unfortunately does not ask any direct questions about informal economic activity. In larger labour market surveys, there are several ways in which informal economic activity is identified: either by assessing whether the respondent pays income tax, or whether or not they have a formal contract in place, among others.[16] In the absence of such questions in the Sucses survey, I use self-employment as a proxy for informal economic activity. The incomes associated with self-employment in the survey suggest that these are informal economic activities, and this was corroborated by my fieldwork. Using this measure, the insight into informal activity is striking.

Of total employment, only 12% is self/informal employment: 18% for women and only 7% for men. This is low even by South Africa's standards. For South Africa, recent figures suggest there are only 2.7 million people employed in the informal sector, which is about 18% of total employment (Statistics South Africa, 2021b). Looking at informal employment, recent statistics from the International Labour Organization (ILO) show that 34% of all employment in South

[16] For a full exposition of the different ways of classifying and measuring informality, see Kanbur (2009).

Africa is informal[17] (International Labour Organization, 2018). This is far smaller than in similar labour markets elsewhere. The ILO reports that 61% of all workers globally and 90% of workers in developing countries are informally employed. Informal employment in much of the developing world offers the opportunity for employment for those excluded from formal-sector jobs for many reasons, particularly women. In Africa, 89.7% of all employed women are in informal employment. This employment is often vulnerable and precarious, in sectors like domestic work, home-based work, and family care work (International Labour Organization, 2018). My fieldwork suggested a number of reasons why informal economic activity might be so constrained in Agincourt, including the dominance of formal retailers in the area, and low levels of income to support informal economic activity. Some of the reasons are definitional, too. The statistics recorded above relate to occupational classification with reference to paid work. The evidence presented in Chapter Five about livelihoods, and later in this chapter about unpaid work, suggest that informal work for own consumption, and care work, are actually widespread and prevalent. They account for a higher share of activity than suggested by the occupational breakdown presented above.

My fieldwork findings suggested that economic activity is not limited to working-age adults aligned with the standard classification of those in the labour force (up to 65 years of age). Given the complex and heterogeneous roles played by older persons in Agincourt (Madhavan et al., 2017), it is also useful to look at the occupational breakdown of those 65 years and older, as reflected in Table 7.

[17] A note on the definitions, which are conceptually useful for understanding informality. The term informal sector was first defined by Keith Hart during his fieldwork in Ghana in the 1970s. It has evolved to focus on the nature and location of economic activity itself, leading to the terms formal and informal sector (Hart, 1973). Informal employment, by contrast, refers to the nature of the work itself, and the nature of the employment relationship, rather than the location of the economic activity. Informal employment is therefore possible in both the formal and the informal sector. Finally, the term informal economy is the broadest of these terms, and includes both the informal sector and other informal economic activity within the formal sector.

Table 7: Labour market status in Agincourt: Pensioners (2012)

Pensioners	Women		Men		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	119		58		177	
Pensioner	94	79.0%	47	81.0%	141	79.7%
Employed	6	5.0%	9	15.5%	15	8.5%
Self-employed	5	4.2%	5	8.6%	10	5.6%
Full-time	*4*	*3.4%*	*4*	*6.9%*	*8*	*4.5%*
Part-time	*1*	*0.8%*	*1*	*1.7%*	*2*	*1.1%*
Employed	1	0.8%	4	6.9%	5	2.8%
Full-time	*0*	*0.0%*	*2*	*3.4%*	*2*	*1.1%*
Part-time	*1*	*0.8%*	*2*	*3.4%*	*3*	*1.7%*
Unemployed	19	16.0%	2	3.4%	21	11.9%
Unemployment rate		76.00%		18.18%		58.33%

Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

Here some caution is advised as the sample size is very small. As expected, the majority of those in this age bracket report being pensioners, which in this instance means being retired or no longer looking for work (71.86% of women and 70.01% of men). In absolute terms, there are more than twice as many women pensioners, and again this is to be expected given the demographic profile of South Africa overall. Very few pensioners work: 5% of women (six women) and 15.5% of men (nine men) reported being employed in some capacity – most often in full-time self-employment. Interestingly, 16.0% of women and 3.4% of men reported being unemployed. Unemployment is generally applicable only to those of working age, and is not usually discussed in terms of pensioners. However, the Sucses questionnaire allows respondents of pensioner age to select "unemployed" as their labour market status. While this is unusual, it offers some insights into the economic role of older persons in Agincourt. Here, then, I have calculated the unemployment rate for pensioners as the share of those who say they are unemployed out of the "labour force" of older persons (the total number, minus those who are employed or select "pensioner" as their labour market status). Only a very small fraction of men or women report being employed in some capacity. Of course, this does not account for unpaid work, which I look at in more detail below.

The distribution of paid and unpaid work

The occupational breakdown presented in Table 6 gives a useful overview of the distribution of employment, self-employment, and unemployment in Agincourt. But the data also raise a number of questions about the distribution of paid and unpaid work in the village, and it is to this that I

now turn. The Sucses database includes questions on many other work-related activities, although these are largely unpaid. Understanding the distribution of paid and unpaid work is critical to this investigation. It helps shape our thinking about what constitutes work. The in-depth interviews provided an opportunity to investigate perceptions and understanding from respondents about what constitutes work. Translating terms such as "work", "employment", and "job" can lead to a lack of clarity, and these terms are different in important ways. From respondents' answers, it was clear that most respondents synonymise "work" and "a job", and in both instances the question evokes employment for a particular employer. Many respondents said they did not work. But when prompted with specific questions about whether they were involved in part-time employment or self-employment, particularly that which is based in and around the home, they noted that they did do some work like that.

The category of non-employment work largely includes small-scale agriculture, either in the yard or in nearby fields, or harvesting firewood from the nearby bush to sell either from home or in the village. As is clear from the overall labour market status statistics, paid permanent employment is very scarce. I did not speak to anyone who was employed in a permanent capacity as part of the household interviews. This is also a reflection of the timing of the interviews. They were all carried out during working hours, and thus it was difficult to speak to people involved in full-time work. But it was still possible to gather information about employment and employment opportunities from the interviews. It emerged that where permanent jobs exist, they are in education, the police force, and other jobs in the public sector. There are very few, if any, permanent private sector jobs available to residents of the villages. Where private sector work is available, respondents noted it was usually in the form of short-term contracts, for example in construction, or otherwise required migrating out of the village to towns and cities nearby and far away.

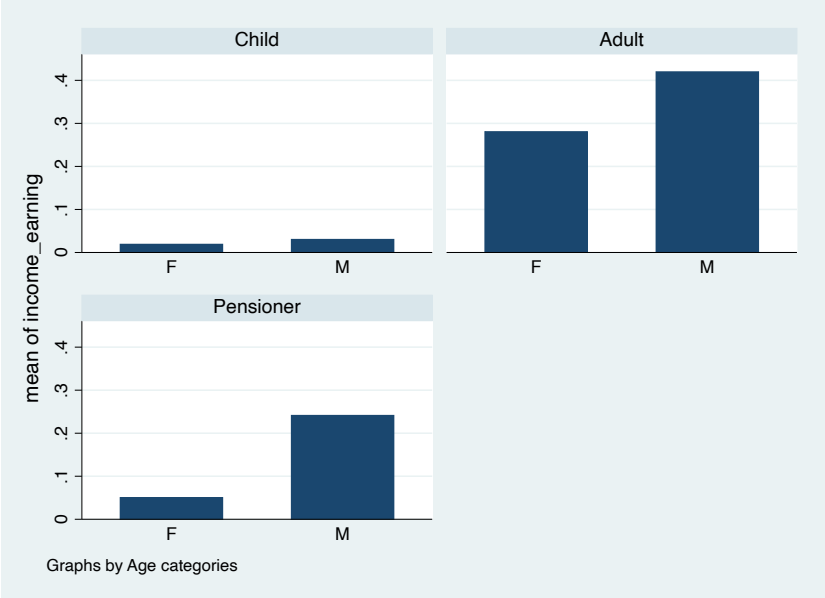
Incomes in Agincourt

Income from work

One of feminist economics' lessons is to be careful not to elide the concepts of work and employment. In this section, I move on to examining cash income in the Agincourt area, separate from work, which is a broader concept dealt with throughout this chapter. Incomes are derived from a number of sources, and are captured in the survey in the following categories: salaries, remittances, trade, self-employment, financial support income, and government grants. This, of course, excludes in-kind incomes from agricultural activities and other subsistence work. Total

incomes are reported at the household level but information on income-generating activities is gathered for each respondent. One of the first questions relating to income is who in the household is doing income-generating work. Here, again, the gendered divisions are stark, as shown in Figure 9. Among working age adults (n=2,898), 28.1% of women and 42.0% of men report undertaking income-earning work. Among pensioners (n=187), the division is more striking. Only 5% of women report doing income-earning work, compared to 24.1% of men, although here the actual number of people is very small. As is to be expected, only a very small number of children under the age of 15 report doing any income-generating work (n=1,502).

Figure 9: Income-generating work in Agincourt, by age and gender (2012)



Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

Turning to the incomes earned by these activities, I calculate total household income by summing the individual components of household income (wages, remittances, trade, and social grant income). Total household income is a composite variable which includes wages and salaries, remittances, trade income, grant income, and other financial support received by all members in the household. The methodology for the collection of this information changed in 2013, and so I have constructed a harmonised variable which calculates total household income. This is done by summing all sources of household income provided by the respondent, including remittances, wages and salaries, and social grants. Individual income was collected from 2010 to 2012, but this was found to be unreliable and inconsistent with reported household income, and so for 2013 and 2014, total household income has been collected, and is presented here in Table 8. Here, the unit

analysis is the household, and the data is collected for the household from the designated respondent.

Table 8: Total monthly household income between 2010 and 2014, in nominal terms

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Average
Total average household monthly income (all sources)	R4 025.87	R3 819.15	R2 777.47	R3 848.75	R2 781.42	R3 450.53
Total average household grant income	R1 052.11	R1 161.87	R1 275.23	R1 452.78	R1 376.26	R1 263.65
Share of household income from grants	26%	30%	46%	38%	49%	37%

Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

It is important to note that this income is generally what is received by the household in Agincourt. Income from household members who are non-resident migrants, perhaps working in Mbombela or Johannesburg, is captured under remittances. But this is the remittance income which flows directly to the household, and not the total income of the non-resident migrant. While these figures are broadly consistent with what we would expect with the poorest quintile of households in South Africa, some of the trends are also suspicious, and not easy to explain. Most notable is the significant decline in household income in 2012 and 2014. The broad quantum over the period, and the share of household income contributed by social grants, is consistent with other work on household incomes during the same period (Bhorat et. al, 2016).

The average mean total monthly household incomes across the five-year period are R3 450.53. This places the average household in Agincourt in the lowest income decile according to statistics from 2012, which are presented later in this chapter. There is some notable fluctuation in these amounts: average income for 2010 was R4 025.87, while for 2014 it was R2 781.42. Per capita income is similar to what we expect form national surveys. Bhorat et al (2016) calculated mean per capita income for quintile one households at R323 in 2012. The Sucses data generates a per capita income of R360 for the same year across all households. It is perhaps not surprising that households in the Agincourt area fall largely into the lowest quintile in the national context. What is also expected is the large share of total household income which is from social grants. However, the growing share of household income from social grants over the period is striking. Grants made up 26% of total household income in 2010, but by 2014 this had risen to 49%. In the national context, then, households in Agincourt are among the poorest.

Income from social grants

Across the period, grant income comprises an average of 37% of total mean household income. This is a large proportion, and one expected from the literature for low-income households (Bhorat et. al, 2016). What is striking, however, is the rate of growth of average grant income for households across the period, from R1 052.11 in 2010 to R1 376.26 by 2014. As a result, the share of total average household income contributed by social grants has increased from 26% in 2010 to 49% in 2014. This is a result of both the growth in absolute grant income, and a decline in average household income. But it may also be a product of variation in observed rather than actual incomes. The two grant types which contribute the most to household income are the child support grant (CSG) and the older persons grant (OPG). A large proportion of grant income is from the older persons grant. This is somewhat surprising, given that pensioners comprise only about 5% of all people in the Sucses survey, as highlighted above. The older persons grant is a means-tested grant for older persons in South Africa. It is restricted to those with South African identification documents – both citizens and permanent residents are eligible. Until 2008, women were eligible from 60 years, and men from 65, but between 2008 and 2010, men's age-eligibility decreased in increments to age 60.

By 2014, the outer year of this Sucses data, the means test for a single person was income less than R61 800 a year, and assets worth less than R891 000 a year. The threshold for married pensioners is double that for single pensioners (Ralston et al., 2015).

These findings are consistent with earlier work on the provision and impact of pensions in the Agincourt area. In a 2002 study, Case and Menendez (2007) find that households with a pensioner report significantly higher total income than non-pensioner households. They found that the presence of a pensioner in a household significantly reduced reports of adults and children missing meals because of a lack of money for food, and that girls were significantly more likely to be enrolled in school if they lived with a woman pensioner.

The pension is generous relative to median incomes. In 2010, the monthly older persons grant was R1 080. This is nearly double the median per capita income for black South Africans (Ralston et al., 2015). In terms of household effects, there is evidence that the grant has protective effects for all household members, not just the pensioner. These grants improve health and wellbeing for the household and increase children's school attendance. While the evidence is mixed, the preponderance of literature suggests that older persons grants play a number of important roles

for individuals and households (Ralston et al., 2015). Unsurprisingly, social grants play a critical role in income for households. Many households mentioned relying on at least one pension and a number of child support grants to provide for their daily needs. Pensions are the only form of cash income in many households. The role of social grant income in the political economy of Agincourt is discussed in more detail later in this research.

Employment, unemployment and labour supply in context

It is interesting to locate the occupation figures from Table 6 in Agincourt in the national context during the same period. Drawing on Wave 3 of the National Income Dynamic Survey (NIDS), Bhorat et al. find very high levels of unemployment, particularly in quintile one households (see Table 9). In 2012, the narrow unemployment rate in quintile 1 households was 61.2%, and the broad unemployment rate 65.8%. This is compared to a narrow rate of 19.0% for quintile 3 households, and an overall narrow unemployment rate of 25.1% for all households (Bhorat et. al, 2016). A related and important metric is the distribution of economic activity. For quintile one households in 2012, only 15.9% of all adults were employed, 25.1% were unemployed (according to the narrow definitions which excludes discouraged work seekers), 5.5% were discouraged work seekers, and 53.5% of adults were not economically active at all. In comparison, for all quintiles, 44.4% of adults were employed. The presentation of these data highlight one of the big differences between the occupational data in the Sucses survey and that in other household surveys: the fact that the Sucses survey does not allow for a "not economically active" category means the unemployment results for the period of my study look very different when compared with other national household surveys.

Table 9: Household indicators for South Africa (2012 – nominal values)

	Poor		Non-Poor			All
	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5	
General						
Share of households	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	100.0%
Number of people (000s)	16 306	12 867	8 979	7 640	6 483	52 275
Share of population	31.2%	24.6%	17.2%	14.6%	12.4%	100.0%
Average household size	5.2	4.1	2.8	2.4	2.1	3.3
Labour market participation						
Employed	15.9%	35.9%	52.5%	65.3%	75.0%	44.4%
Unemployed (strict)	25.1%	17.4%	12.3%	9.0%	2.6%	14.9%
Unemployed (discouraged)	5.5%	4.5%	2.2%	1.7%	1.2%	3.4%
Not economically active	53.5%	42.2%	33.0%	24.0%	21.3%	37.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Unemployment rates						
Narrow unemployment rate	61.2%	32.7%	10.9%	12.1%	3.3%	25.1%
Broad unemployment rate	65.8%	37.9%	21.7%	14.1%	4.8%	29.1%
Wages and labour market linkages						
Average wage of employed persons	R1 017	R1 707	R2 651	R4 751	R13 458	R5 787
Average number employed per household	0.4	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.2	0.9
% Working households	36.2%	65.8%	71.1%	85.8%	87.8%	69.3%
Average number non-employed per employed in working households	4.1	2.5	1.4	0.9	0.6	1.5
Average monthly household income	R1 671	R3 125	R4 169	R7 317	R24 090	R8 018
Average monthly per capita income	R323	R773	R1 491	R3 117	R12 509	R3 611

Sources: Bhorat et. al (2016), drawing on the National Income Dynamic Survey Wave 3

This discussion does beg the question about what it means to be "economically active" and "not economically active", and the usefulness of these terms. In general usage, our understanding of economic activity is activity which is remunerated, or from which an income can be earned, in the case of the self-employed. But if we broaden this to include socially reproductive work such as care work, as suggested by social reproduction theory, a very different picture begins to emerge. Often, we do not get this picture because labour market surveys are not interested in unpaid work and so don't ask this question. Instead, we are left with the sporadic time-use surveys. One of the central obstacles to solving the pervasively gendered dynamic in our labour market is our understanding of what constitutes work in the first place. When we talk about work, we generally mean paid work. This ignores the vast amounts of unpaid work done, particularly by women,

around the world. Within economics, there is of course a vast literature which stresses the importance of considering unpaid work as a central part of the economy, but this has not yet been embedded in mainstream economy policy making, at least in South Africa. The feminist economics approach as outlined by Elson (2000), highlights the need to understand gender discrimination both in the labour market in the form of unpaid work in the household, and as a larger social relation (Francis, 2020). Thus, it is to unpaid work which I now turn.

Unpaid work

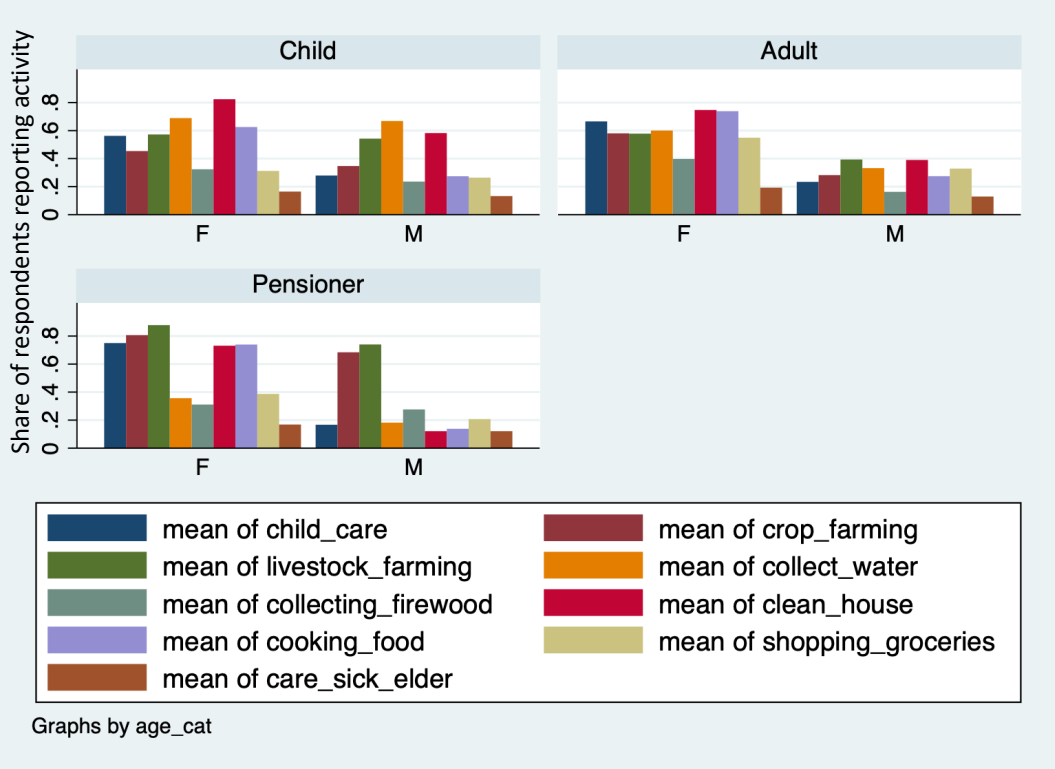
One of the important contributions of the Sucses data set is that is gathers information on paid and unpaid work in the past 30 days preceding the questionnaire. The unpaid work is called "activities and chores" in the questionnaire and includes all household members who are eleven years or older in June of the data collection year. Migrants are included. Activities and chores include:

- income earning activities in the formal and informal sector
- childcare
- crop farming
- livestock farming
- collecting water
- collecting firewood
- domestic work: cleaning the house, laundry, washing dishes
- preparing and cooking food
- shopping for groceries
- caring for sick or elderly relatives and friends.

Understanding the distribution of unpaid work and its links with paid work, is critical to developing a more holistic picture of the political economy of the area, and to helping think through the links between the productive and reproductive spheres of the economy. Figure 10 provides a simple overview of the distribution of unpaid work within the household in 2012. It shows the proportion of boys and men and girls and women in each of the age categories: children (11–15 years in this case); adults (16–64 years) (n=2,898); and pensioners (65+ years) (n=187) who report doing any of the listed activities and chores in the 30 days preceding the survey. This is a simple, binary variable; unfortunately, it does not capture the magnitude of the work undertaken, or the time

spent on the task. Nonetheless, it is still a significant improvement over the lack of these data in the usual labour market surveys.

Figure 10: Gender distribution of unpaid work in Agincourt (2012)



Source: Author's own calculations using Sucses data

Table 10, which follows, presents a closer statistical comparison of the gender differences in paid and unpaid work. For a holistic picture, this includes all those surveyed, including pensioners and children, for 2012. As I have shown, thinking about the distribution of work among children is useful for untangling some of the problems investigated here. The first variable is a dummy which indicates if the respondent does any income-earning work of any sort. The results show that 23.3% of women report doing income-earning work, compared with 36.4% of men. This is a statistically significant difference (at the 1%), and shows a 13-percentage point difference in income earning work between men and women. Secondly, looking at who reports doing no unpaid work at all, again the gendered differences are striking: 38.4% of women compared with 51.2% of men report doing no unpaid work at all: again, statistically significant at the 1% level, as are all the results in this table. It comes as no surprise, then, that women report doing significantly more unpaid work across all the reported categories compared to men. Particularly large differences in the distribution of unpaid work can be seen in childcare (41.7 percentage points) cleaning the house (34.6

percentage points) and cooking food (45.3 percentage points). In terms of overall proportions, men's unpaid work falls largely into cleaning the house, livestock farming, and collecting water.

Table 10: Gender differences in paid and unpaid work: All ages (2012)

	(1)	(2)	t-test
	Women/girls	Men/boys	Difference
Variable	Mean/SE	Mean/SE	(1)–(2)
Does some income earning work	0.233	0.364	-0.131***
Does no unpaid work	0.384	0.512	-0.128***
Childcare	0.656	0.239	0.417***
Crop farming	0.578	0.307	0.270***
Livestock farming	0.599	0.433	0.166***
Collecting water	0.597	0.382	0.215***
Collecting firewood	0.381	0.179	0.202***
Cleaning the house	0.757	0.411	0.346***
Cooking food	0.722	0.270	0.453***
Shopping for groceries	0.504	0.314	0.190***
Caring for the sick and elderly	0.187	0.129	0.058***
The value displayed for t-tests are the differences in the means across the groups.			
***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent critical level.			

Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

In reviewing the data presented in Figure 10 and Table 10, several striking features are evident. The first is the gendered pattern of unpaid work among children. This is surprising for girls and boys, when we consider that most of these children are in school, and not undertaking paid work. In no category does a higher proportion of boy children report doing these activities compared to girl children, and, perhaps surprisingly, a greater proportion of girl children report undertaking livestock farming. Slightly more than 80% of girls report doing housework, compared to around half of all boys. House cleaning and collecting water are the most prevalent activities boys undertake, but the proportion of boys reporting doing these activities is still lower than that for girls. This finding is particularly interesting considering some economic theories of specialisation between paid and unpaid work. Most of the explanations for the gendered distribution of care work are rooted in labour market explanations. The nub of these arguments is that because they expect lower wages, women choose to "specialise" in unpaid work because the opportunity cost of their doing so is lower than that for men (Brown, 1984). But as we have seen from Figure 9, while more boys than girls report doing income generating work, the absolute numbers are very small indeed. This suggests there are non-economic, gendered determinants of the distribution of

unpaid work in the household. Uncovering the non-economic roots of this is very difficult, and has formed the basis of much debate in the past (Meillassoux, 1981). This suggests that sociocultural factors, as identified by Mosoetsa, are playing a role in the gendered division of labour in the Agincourt area (Mosoetsa, 2011).

The gendered burden of unpaid care work becomes most striking in the adult age group among working-age residents. Here the gender gap is particularly pronounced, with no more than 40% of men reporting undertaking any of these activities, while 50% or more of women reported doing childcare, caring for the sick or elderly, livestock farming, housework, collecting water, and cooking food. This is associated with a marked divergence in paid work between men and women, as shown in Figure 9, where it is evident that significantly more men report undertaking paid work compared with women. Looking at the question another way, I examined what proportion of working-age men and women report doing at least one of these, and what proportion does not report doing any of these activities at all. Here, twice as many men do not report doing any of these activities compared to women. Thirty-nine percent of men do not report undertaking any of these unpaid activities compared to 21% of women. Conversely, 78% of women report doing at least one of these activities compared to 61% of men.

The gendered division continues for pensioners, where a greater proportion of women than men reported doing work in all the categories. The most pronounced differences are in childcare, housework, and cooking. Regarding who does at least something and who does nothing, for those aged 65 and over, the ratio is similar: 19% of men do not report doing any of these activities compared with 9% of women. There are of course some important limitations with these data. The most notable is that they do not give us any idea of the time spent doing these activities, only whether they are done at all. A time-use survey would be necessary to give a better understanding of the distribution of this work. Other work examining these questions elsewhere in South Africa would suggest that the findings here would be confirmed by time-use data (Budlender, 2010; Budlender et al., 2013; Floro and Komatsu, 2011). But it is important, too, not to undersell the use of the Agincourt data on unpaid work. Traditional labour force surveys do not give much insight into the distribution of unpaid work, nor do they allow us to link paid and unpaid work, as I am able to do here.

The qualitative interview respondents provided interesting, varied, and contradictory responses to questions about the gendered nature of work. While many said there were no particular barriers

for women compared with men, and that there were equal opportunities, many others provided contradictory responses. Interestingly, there were respondents who said it was easier for women than men to get jobs because women could work in general occupations, such as domestic work and informal trading, whereas men could work predominantly only in sectors where there was a perception that the activity required physical strength, such as construction and brickmaking. Others said that because women had recourse to sex work, they had an advantage in the labour market.

These responses are interesting because they come in the face of unemployment rates for women that are twice that for men. Many respondents also noted that while there used to be a gender division of work, and that women were expected to work in the household and men in the paid economy, this is no longer the case in modern Agincourt. Respondents noted that women and men had equal agency and were able to decide where to work or not to work, and how to work in the household. While the data shows a clearly gendered pattern in the distribution of unpaid household work, the interviews and observations from the fieldwork showed the picture to be quite complicated. While there were more women than men performing household work in the survey, many of the interview respondents indicated that both men and women, and boys and girls, all participated in unpaid household work. It is, however, not clear whether the distribution was equal, even where both men and women did these chores.

The political economy of Agincourt

The feminist economics literature I reviewed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three argued for the importance of rethinking the binaries of paid and unpaid work, economic and non-economic activity, and productive and reproductive labour. The data presented in this chapter confirm the importance of rethinking these distinctions, and the meaning of these concepts. If work is paid work, the data suggest a village where the majority of women do not work, and are not involved in the economy. However, deploying a conceptualisation of work which includes unpaid work shows, in contrast, that the women of Agincourt are very busy. Indeed, the data shows how women of all ages, from children to pensioners, undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid work, both within and outside of the household. The findings also show the continued dislocation of work and income. While most women do not undertake paid work, they contribute to non-cash incomes in households from a portfolio of livelihood activities. Importantly, they contribute to cash incomes in households through the receipt of social grants.

The data presented in this chapter offer other important insights. The first and most striking is the finding that women in the Agincourt area are significantly economically worse off relative to men. There are stark differences in employment, unemployment, and the distribution of unpaid work among both working age adults and pensioners. There are also notable differences in the distribution of unpaid work between boy and girl children between the ages of 11 and 15. The second finding, also emphasised in Chapter Five, is that this is clearly not a society which is fully commodified, and where market relations govern the distribution of commodities and work.

There is evidence that households employ a strategy of livelihoods which extends beyond the labour market and income from social grants, and incorporates subsistence and foraging in the natural environment. Here, income from labour market activities is only one component, and not even the largest in monetary terms: social grants contributed the largest share of household income by 2014. But contrary to some other research in South Africa, it is not at all clear that social grants are supplanting subsistence activities as the basis for social reproduction.

The findings presented here need to be understood against a backdrop of continuity and change. In many ways, Agincourt is a rapidly transitioning society. In the past few decades, there has been a notable rise in women's migration for work, work seeking, and other activities. There has been a rise in women's labour force participation and employment, and a rise in women's unemployment, too. There has also been a rapid expansion of public services. School attendance has risen to near-universal levels, there is a well-developed primary healthcare network, and almost universal electrification (Harris et al., 2017). There has also been a large and widespread expansion of social protection in the form of social grants, primarily for caregivers and the elderly. Education levels have increased and school attendance, particularly in primary education, is near universal.

But it is also clear, especially when considering Agincourt in its historical context, as outlined in Chapter Two, that many things remain the same – in structure if not always in magnitude. This in-depth look at economic lives in Agincourt suggests that from the apartheid era there are important aspects of continuity, and striking moments of change. Many of the gendered patterns entrenched by colonial and apartheid legislation, and the patriarchal evolution of the family remain visible, despite the dismantling of the legislative barriers to equality, and despite evidence that a far greater proportion of women now being economically active. Similarly, the position of older people, particularly older women, as key economic actors in the household – thanks to the relative size of the older persons grant – has been strengthened even further in the post-apartheid period. The

paradox this raises – growing economic participation and incomes but continued economic marginalisation – is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. It is clear that there persists a highly gendered pattern of paid and unpaid work for both adults and pensioners. As I highlight in Chapter Five, subsistence activities and foraging remain important parts of the creation and maintenance of livelihoods in the villages. Also discussed in Chapter Five, patterns of economic migrancy, while changing, are still gendered with far more men than women migrating for work.

While this study is closely focused on the Agincourt village, and does not aspire to broader applicability as a primary aim, that this area might not be unique is important for the analysis. The rapid transformation of places like Agincourt calls into question the applicability of the terms rural and urban, and our understanding of the relationships between then. And what about the term "peri-urban"? It is also of limited use. In many ways, the Agincourt area looks like peri-urban parts of South Africa, but there is a critical difference in that it is not proximally adjacent to any large urban centre. The term "rapidly transitioning rural society" might be more useful, as it alludes to the number of important social, economic, and built environment changes underway in the area, while somewhat skirting the rural-urban definitional debate.

Returning to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), there is the related point that the survey is fundamentally concerned with individuals – and particularly workers and work-seekers – rather than households, even though the unit of analysis is the household. Although it does capture some household information, this is not sufficient for us to interrogate the links between the household and the labour market in much depth, because the focus of the survey is on paid economic activity. If we take a wider view of work, which includes unpaid work, we need more information, and this is where the HDSS and Sucses data are so useful.

A deeper understanding of work in Agincourt

My analysis of the Sucses data presented above shows a village where people are busy in a variety of different ways, and where the high headline unemployment rate belies the wide range of productive, if not always remunerated, economic activities taking place across the household. The research literatures reviewed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three pointed to the importance of considering both paid and unpaid work as part of the total political economy. It also called into question the delineation of the concepts of paid and unpaid work, and of economic and non-economic activity. The evidence presented here suggests that unpaid activities, including care work, are strikingly gendered, as are paid activities. The data also suggest there is a very long way to go

to achieve any semblance of gender equality in the political economy of the village. Both the distribution of paid work, and the burden of unpaid work, are highly skewed along gender lines. Unemployment is twice as high for women as for men, while predominantly women undertake unpaid activities. This close-up look at the political economy of the area reveals nuances and heterogeneities not evident from the nationally representative labour market surveys, particularly the QLFS. The reliance on the QLFS as the main instrument for labour market investigations means that labour market economics missed out on the granularity and detail available from smaller surveys.

This reliance also leads us to a simplistic and often dualistic understanding of the political economy of South Africa. Much of the high-level analysis is based on a conception of South Africa as a country with a rapidly urbanising core and a rural countryside. A great deal of writing is based on this dualist conception which clearly has its roots in the Wolpean view of the South African political economy, whether it is made explicit or not. But, of course, South Africa has changed in many important ways since the 1970s, both in urban and rural areas. And even this overall conception of the articulation between rural and urban is now out of date. One of the striking things about the Agincourt area is that it is so clearly neither urban nor rural; but it is probable that it is representative of a large proportion of non-metropolitan South Africa.

The variation and depth of productive and socially reproductive activities in the area allows us to rethink the conception of "rural" South Africa as a site of social reproduction, as offered by Wolpe's cheap labour thesis. It complicates the picture of an urban South Africa which is the economic engine, and a rural South Africa which is the dormitory for social reproduction. The evidence here suggests that "rural" South Africa, while characterised by high unemployment and poverty, is also a site of economic dynamism. In the coming chapters, I examine two related aspects in detail. The first is the household's role as a unit within the political economy of the labour market. The second is to rethink the relationships between households in areas such as Agincourt, and the broader South African economy, and the implications for a refreshed understanding of dynamics between South Africa's economic periphery and its core.

Chapter Six
Households, the economy, and social reproduction in Agincourt

Introduction

The economy of the Agincourt area is strikingly gendered, as is the division of unpaid work within its households. This chapter examines how, in the context of very high unemployment, individuals and households get by, and are able to construct economic and social livelihoods. This is important because conceptualising households as economic units only leads to a focus on contestation around economic resources, such as income and expenditure, and ignores contestation and cooperation on issues of unpaid and socially reproductive work. Analytically, the chapter examines the economic theory of households in two related dimensions. The first is social reproduction and households: how the gendered nature of the economy impacts on social reproduction within the household. The nexus of these issues emerged as a central concern in my review of the literature. The second is to assess how theories of the household can help us understand these dynamics. I analyse households as units of social reproduction, and therefore as sites of both paid and unpaid work.

It is clear from both the social reproduction literature and the data that households are an important unit of analysis when considering the questions of work, both paid and unpaid, and social reproduction. Both are the central focus of this research. It is also clear that the use of social reproduction theory necessitates an analysis at the household level – both within and between households – and the broader economy. There are three dimensions to households which are important in this analysis. The first is how households function as social and economic units in and of themselves to construct economic and social livelihoods (cooperation and contestation). The second is how individuals within these households function as full beings, socially and economically, and the areas of cooperation and conflict which arise from this. The third is how individuals and households are incorporated into the political economy, an issue which is examined in more detail in Chapter Eight.

These areas are the subject of two forms of enquiry in this chapter. The first is empirical: to establish what exactly is happening within and between households in the Agincourt area. The second is theoretical: how do the findings sit in relation to the literature, and how can my research strengthen our understanding of households' role in the political economy? What new theoretical insights can be gained from examining this peripheral area of South Africa for feminist economics

and social reproduction as a whole? There are many ways in which these issues play out at the household and societal level. In keeping with this research, the focus here is on the gendered dynamics.

The division of labour within households, both the form it takes and the identity and nature of its determinants, has been a central concern of social scientists, most often economists and sociologists. Empirical studies based on this model have established quite clearly that access to economic means, particularly labour market incomes and social transfers, gives women more bargaining power within households by both improving their endowments and elevating their exchange entitlement mapping. This chapter grapples with a central question: why, given changes that have placed women more centrally as leaders within households, does the material position of women, and of girl and women-headed households, continue to be so much worse than that of boy and men-headed households? How can new data from Agincourt make sense of this conundrum? I analyse the Sucses survey data to provide information on the structure, composition and dispersion of households along explicitly gendered lines. I find that, despite some improvements in their income and thus bargaining positions within households, women remain in a significantly inferior economic position to men, as do girl/women-headed households. I argue that this empirical analysis confirms Sen's contention that households and the broader political economy co-constitute each other: the division of labour in the paid economy shapes the division of unpaid work within the household, and vice versa.

Examining households in Agincourt

Households in the sample

Households and families are the basis of the political economy of Agincourt, as they are of almost any place, and they are the key units of analysis in my research (Mattila-Wiro, 1999). The Sucses database, on which this analysis is based, is a random stratified sample of roughly 600 households across 12 villages in the Agincourt census area. This equates roughly to an 8% sample of the total census household population, covering about 4 600 residents. The sample spans the range of village sizes, and the west-east rainfall gradient in the Health and Democratic Surveillance Site (HDSS), as discussed in great detail in Chapter Four. In this section, I lay out the key findings about households from the Sucses survey data. This allows for the qualitative work which follows in Chapter Seven to be located in its proper context, and also allows for a closer examination of

the contradictions which emerge between the quantitative and qualitative data. The total number of households in each year of the survey is detailed in Table 11.

While this sample is small in comparison to nationally representative surveys, it is large enough both to provide a useful insight into the political economy of the village, and to allow for certain statistical tests to be performed, particularly because the sample is a random selection of the larger HDSS data set. As shown in Table 11, there are slight variations in the number of households and respondents each year. But overall, there is very little attrition in the sample across the five-year period (Ragie et al., 2020). The variation in the number of individuals is due to the changing size of households themselves, due to births, deaths, and in- and out-migrations.

Table 11: Number of households and individuals in the Sucses survey sample

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of households	591	557	547	547	580
Number of individuals	4 791	4 524	4 372	4 609	4 639

Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

Household size

Households in the sample are large, as indicated in Table 12. The mean household size across the five years is just larger than eight members, and there are no significant changes in household size over the 2010–2014 period. Over a longer period, from 1994 to 2012, Wittenberg and Collinson (2020) found there was a decline in household size in the Agincourt area more broadly, which they attribute to new household formation driven by the provision of Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses, and a process of household reconstitution to better access services.

Table 12: Household size in the Sucses survey sample (2010–2014)

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Mean	8.15	7.8	7.7	8.1	8.0
Median	7	7	7	8	7

Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

According to the 2016 Community Survey by Statistics South Africa, the average household size in Mpumalanga was 3.5 people, and for the country, 3.3 (StatsSA, 2016). It is also large when compared with other estimates of household size for the Agincourt area. The weighted census for 2011 estimates household size at 4.07, while calculations from the Agincourt HDSS data indicate

a household size of 5.58 (Shoko et al., 2016). Both are significantly smaller than the estimates from the Sucses data. The difference in household size between the HDSS data and the Census data is mostly likely due to the different definitions of household which the two surveys use.

The HDSS definition deliberately includes temporary migrants who belong to the rural household but are absent for a temporary period, either for work or for education (Shoko et al., 2016). As is to be excepted, the share of household members who are temporary migrants is high; this is a direct result of the impact apartheid had on the structure of the South African labour market (Posel, 2020; Shoko et al., 2016). But it is less clear what explains the large difference in household size between the HDSS census and the Sucses sample.

As I discuss in Chapter Five, this is partly explained by the definition of household used in the Sucses survey which does not have a co-habitation requirement. Instead, any family members who are considered part of the household are counted. On average, households have an average of almost three economic migrants included in the Sucses household survey, and five permanent residents. It is likely this definitional difference accounts for the larger households in the Sucses survey. This is useful for this research because it allows us to view the household as a social and economic unit, rather than one which is geographically bound. Given the way the South African economy functions, and the centrality of migrant labour and migrant incomes, this is a very useful feature of the data.

The apartheid system fundamentally altered the structure of households in South Africa, along with the colonial era which preceded it, as I have argued in Chapter Two. The system of migrant labour, which developed over time and reached its zenith in the 20th century, "stretched" households, and dispersed family members between different geographical households, even as they continued to be united by forms of kinship (Posel, 2020). The post-apartheid labour market and broader political economy has been characterised by extremely high rates of unemployment generally, and among rural black populations in particular. This has kept levels of labour migration high for men, and driven increasing rates of labour migration among women, an effect which is particularly pronounced in Agincourt (Collinson et al., 2016). Finally, high unemployment has also meant that older persons grants and other social grants have come to contribute a large, sometimes the largest, share of income, particularly for rural households, and for those in the lowest income quintiles (Bhorat et. al, 2016; Schatz et al., 2015).

The age distribution of Agincourt residents

The age distribution of residents in the sample is largely as expected from the Census data for the region (Collinson et al., 2016), and outlined in Table 13.

Table 13: Average age distribution of individuals in the Sucses sample 2010–2014

Age categories	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Child (<15)	1502	32.74%	32.74%
Adult (15-64)	2898	63.18%	95.92%
Pensioner (65+)	187	4.08%	100.00%
Total	4587	100	

Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

Age categories are, of course, flexible depending on the question at hand. Because this is a labour market investigation, I have aligned the age brackets to the labour market age groups. Thus children are classified as those aged under 15, adults are aged between 15 and 64, and pensioners are 65 years and older. In the South Africa context, there is a complication because the pensionable age is 60, not 65. This is important because it is the age at which residents become eligible for the older persons grant, which is a significant source of household income, as I discuss later. However, the proportion of adults between the age of 60 and 65 is small – the share of residents aged 65 and over is 4.08%, and this rises only to 5.8 % if we include all those 60 years and older. Going forward, I use the standard pensioner age of 65 and over; this is also the threshold used in the HDSS census database. In the rest of the sample, adults account for 63.18% of all residents, and children for approximately one third, at 32.74 %. While any changes to the age distribution are muted over the short five-year time span, longer-term data shows there has been significant ageing in Agincourt, in line with the rest of the country, as it undergoes a demographic transition (Collinson et al., 2016).

It is important to say something about the differences between households and families. In general academic use, households are defined as groups of people who co-reside and share common resources, to some extent (although under the definition of households I use here, the co-resident requirement is greatly relaxed). Families, on the other hand, are households of related individuals. Thus families which co-reside are households, but not all households are families (Willekens, 2010).

Gender and households in Agincourt

Household composition and structure

Table 14 presents an overview of the differences of some key characteristics of women- and men-headed households in Agincourt. Within the sample, in 2012 there were 305 men-headed households, and 234 women-headed households. Household headship is by self-identification within the household, and it is possible for the household head to be a migrant. From my qualitative work, it emerged that the household head could be the eldest member of the household, or could be assigned on the basis of employment, among other factors. Several significant differences between these two groups of households are immediately evident. Firstly, 32% of women household heads report being unemployed, compared with 14% of male household heads – a difference of 18 percentage points (statistically significant at the 1% level). Related to this, 65% of men household heads report being employed, compared with 32 % of women, a notable difference of 33 percentage points. Almost one third of men household heads report that they did no unpaid work (care work, broadly defined; this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five), compared with only 7% of women household heads. Men household heads are therefore far more likely to undertake paid work compared to women household heads, and far less likely to undertake unpaid work. One of the results of this is that men-headed households earn significantly more income from paid work.

Table 14: Household size, gender composition, structure of households in the Sucses sample (2012)

		(1)		(2)	t-test
		Men-headed household		Women-headed household	Difference
Variable	N	Mean/SE	N	Mean/SE	(1)-(2)
Household head unemployed	305	14.426	234	32.479	-18.052***
Household head employed	305	64.590	234	32.051	32.539***
Household head does no unpaid work	307	32.248	235	6.809	25.439***
Average household grant income (monthly)	307	1262.443	235	1308.851	-46.408
Average household wage income (monthly)	307	1654.550	235	1105.021	549.529*
Average total household income	307	2916.993	235	2413.872	503.121*
Average number of children in household	307	2.596	235	2.702	-0.106
Average number of adults in household	307	5.104	235	4.911	0.194
Average number of pensioners in household	307	0.336	235	0.315	0.021
Average household size	307	8.036	235	7.928	0.108
Average number of employed household members	307	1.700	235	1.749	-0.049
Average number of unemployed household members	307	1.736	235	1.783	-0.047
Average number of self-employed household members	307	0.296	235	0.174	0.122***
The value displayed for t-tests are the differences in the means across the groups.					
***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent critical level.					

Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

Regarding the composition of households, the two groups are quite similar. Average household size is eight people for both, and comprises about 2.7 children, 5 adults and 0.3 pensioners each household. Interestingly, both men-headed and women-headed households report the same average number of paid-work members, at 1.7 per household. Where there is a surprising difference is in the number of self-employed household members: men-headed household have an average of 0.3 self-employed members, compared to 0.17 in women-headed households (a statistically significant difference at the 1% level). In some ways, the similarities between the households is surprising, and suggests that the concept of women-dominated households might

be an interesting area to explore in further research. It would also be interesting to further explore how respondents self-identify as the household head, and what forms of negotiation and contestation underpin this process.

This marked difference in rates of employment and self-employment between men- and women-headed households is in part a result of the ways in which different types of work are understood by respondents, an issue I investigated in my qualitative research which I discuss in Chapter Seven. My findings there suggests that unpaid, economically productive work, such as subsistence agriculture, and even own-account work located in the household, is not considered work, or even self-employment. My qualitative findings suggests that if self-employment was understood more broadly to include productive activities located within the household and unpaid economically productive work, a higher proportion of women would be classified as self-employed. This is an important issue, both conceptually, and in relation to how surveys understand and record work. I return to this in Chapter Nine.

Household income

Turnings to average household incomes, there is a statistically significant difference in total average monthly household incomes between men-headed and women-headed households. Men-headed households report an average income of R2 916 per month in 2012, compared to R2 414 for women-headed households. This difference is accounted for by a difference in income from work (R1 654 compared to R1 105): both household groups report similar income from social grants (R1 262 compared with R1 308). This means that men-headed households earn, on average, 20% more income than women-headed households. This is a large and significant gap which places men-headed households in a significantly better economic position compared with women-headed households. What is crucial to note is that these are reported figures for monetary household incomes. They do not include the imputed values of unpaid work. As I show in Chapter Five, women undertake far higher levels of unpaid work which is economically productive, but is ignored by household income calculations based on cash income.

Migration and movement

Household dispersion

A critical dimension to understanding households in the political economy is to examine the geographical location of households, and the associated patterns of migration. Previous work in Agincourt has not examined migration from the perspective of the gender of the household head.

Table 15 presents some simple measure of geographic dispersion of households, grouped by the gender of the household head. Both groups have the same average number of permanent residents (about 5.5) and the same number of migrants (about 2.4). However, where there is an important difference is in the migrant status of the household head themselves. Of the men household heads, 44.8% are also economic migrants, compared with only 15% of female household heads.

Table 15: Geographic dispersion: Migrants and residents in households in the Sucses sample (2012)

		(1)		(2)	t-test
		Men-headed household		Women-headed household	Difference
Variable	N	Mean/SE	N	Mean/SE	(1)–(2)
Household head is a migrant	306	44.771	235	15.319	29.452***
Average number of migrants in household	307	2.339	235	2.609	-0.270
Average number of permanent residents in household	307	5.622	235	5.255	0.367
The value displayed for t-tests are the differences in the means across the groups.					
***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent critical level.					

Source: Author's own calculations from Sucses data

An important characteristic of households in Agincourt is that many are geographically split: these are stretched households. As shown earlier in this chapter, households in Agincourt are large when compared to the average household in South Africa. This is partly definitional, because the Agincourt census and Sucses survey take a different approach to defining households compared to the South African Census, as discussed earlier. Many households in Agincourt have a base in the village and are also connected to members who live in other towns and villages: one household, two houses. This is quite different from many other sites in the global South, for example the urban households in Bangladesh which Kabeer examined in her 1997 paper.

Of course, many families are geographically split, but what is interesting about the Agincourt region, and of course other former Bantustans, is how widespread this is, and the extent to which people identify as a household even though they do not live together. Something more striking emerges when we examine the migrant status of the household heads themselves. Of men household heads, 44% reported being economic migrants in 2012, compared with only 15% of women. This is a difference of 29 percentage points, statistically significant at the 1% level.

This raises some interesting questions about the allocation of resources, and cooperation and contestation at the household level. How do such processes work when the household head, and often one of the main income earners, is not physically present in the household for much of the time?

Migration and permanent residence

The Sucses data also has information on individual migrancy. In Table 16, I highlight migrant and resident status among work-age adults. Among women, in 2012, 63% of adults are permanent residents, while 27% are temporary migrants, such as workers, work-seekers and others. Among men the picture is quite different. Just under half of all adult men are permanent residents (49%) while 46% of men are temporary migrants. These numbers are fairly consistent with the findings from earlier studies on this topic (Collinson et al., 2016; Ginsburg et al., 2021).

Table 16: Migration and permanent resident status of individuals in the Sucses sample (2010–2014)

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Temporary migrant	43%	24%	44%	25%	46%	27%	46%	27%	49%	26%
Permanent resident	52%	68%	51%	66%	49%	63%	45%	59%	45%	59%
Other residency status	5%	8%	5%	9%	5%	10%	9%	14%	5%	15%

Source: Author's own calculation from Sucses data

Migrant labour has historically been thought about as a principally, although not exclusively, men phenomenon. The role of women in migrant labour has been less well explored, and there has been limited progress in linking men's labour migration to women's work at home, both paid and unpaid. The rise in women's labour migration in the post-apartheid period has confounded this. It is necessary to introduce a further consideration – that of age. There is some evidence about what older people in Agincourt do, but it is less clear how it links to labour migration, although we know this for other regions.

The qualitative interviews I undertook as part of this study corroborate the choice of the Sucses survey and the Agincourt HDSS census to take a broad view of household membership. It is clear from respondents that permanent and temporary migrants are seen as intrinsic members of the

household, even though they are not physically present. They form part of a broader socioeconomic unit dispersed geographically by economic necessity. This section has highlighted that when considering the dynamics of households and families, we need to be aware of the particularities and peculiarities of an area like Agincourt, with its particular historical trajectory.

Households, contestation, and economic change in Agincourt

My analysis has mapped out some of the broader characteristics of the political economy of households in Agincourt. Several high-level findings are evident. The first is that households in Agincourt are different to nuclear families, and indeed to the model family which underpins thinking on households in some of the economic literature. Families in Agincourt are dispersed geographically, comprised of a significant proportion of economic migrants, and a majority of permanent residents. They are also dispersed across generations, with many multi-generation households. The data also show that there are some material inequalities between men and women-headed households, most notable in average household labour market incomes, and in the distribution of paid and unpaid work and unemployment. An analysis of the gender of the household head is also revealing: 42% of households are headed by a woman, which challenges the notion implicit in much of the household bargaining literature that households are comprised of a man head and a woman spouse. This model underpins much of the theory of cooperation and conflict in the household literature. Some of the key contributions to the household literature, such as the work of Kabeer (1997), conceive of a heterosexual household, headed by a man, and investigate the changing position of women vis-à-vis a man household head. The data from Agincourt shows both that women-headed households are common, comprising almost half of all households. And they are statically worse off in economic terms than men-headed households. This highlights the importance of not only looking within households, but between households, and at how the gendered nature of the broader economy shapes outcomes within households.

The data presented here also provide a more nuanced picture about how individuals and households are incorporated into the broader economy. They highlight the role of migrant labour for work and incomes, and the growing rate at which women are migrating for work. The qualitative interviews generated some important findings in this regard, most notably the importance of social networks and family connections in big cities for finding employment. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven. The work by Ragie et al. (2020), which I discussed in Chapter Two, presents an important and complex picture of the political economy. Most

importantly, it highlights that this is not a fully commodified society, either in terms of labour markets or consumption. Households rely extensively on the natural environment as part of their strategies of social reproduction. The natural environment forms an important part of total household income, widely conceived, and is thus a site of productive economy activity. But this economically important, if overlooked, work is highly gendered, with women undertaking the majority of own production and foraging work. Finally, both my analysis of the Sucses data, and the in-depth interviews, discussed in Chapter seven, emphasise that one of the main constraints to employment is the lack of work, rather than, for example, a skills mismatch between workers and vacancies.

What is not immediately clear from the data is why this manifests in a rate of unemployment for women that is twice that of men, nor in the significant economic disadvantage in which women-headed households are found. The qualitative interviews are particularly useful in exploring this question. One answer is that it appears there is a dual gendered layering, the two parts of which are related to each other. This is a prediction from the theoretical work of Sen, and one which appears to be confirmed by the empirical analysis I present in this chapter. The labour market itself is structured both by the skills and experience needed, and the labour market returns to these characteristics, both of which are highly gendered (Mosomi, 2019b, 2019a). This is visible in Agincourt, and also in nationally representative data looking at this question. A second answer is that the interviews clearly show there are normative factors within the household which structure the labour market, too. This is what Mosoetsa has called social and cultural factors. There are certain categories of jobs which are seen as acceptable for men to do, and not for women to do, and vice versa. The interviews reveal, for example, that domestic work, and to a lesser extent informal trading, are jobs seen as suitable only for women. In contrast, construction and policing are seen as men's jobs. This is evident in occupational data on the SA labour market, but the interviews reveal the normative component which is not visible in the quantitative data.

The labour market literature in South Africa examines occupational segregation in detail – the unequal and unfair allocation of jobs which cleave along lines of race and gender, among others (Gradín, 2018, 2017). But the literature does not engage with this supply-side segregation, except to deal with it as part of the unexplained discrimination in the labour market. Of course, I do not suggest that there is self-selection with full agency, but rather that social relations appear to be in part determining which types of jobs are acceptable to which gender, and this is impacting the types of work people look for and ultimately undertake. This is mirrored by gendered structuring

of unpaid work in the households which is visible in both the quantitative and qualitative data. Cleaning, childcare and work within the house itself are jobs for women, while farming and livestock herding are jobs for men, and the yard is the men's domain. What is less clear is *why* this is the case. Many of the respondents responded to this question along the lines of "this is just how it is".

It is also important to make the distinction between access to work and access to income – the latter includes access to social grants. Because of their design (the child support grant is paid to the primary caregiver who is most often a woman) and demographics (there are more women than men pensioners), the majority of grant income is paid to women in Agincourt. In Chapter Five, I show that social grant income comprises a significant and growing source of income for households in Agincourt: by 2014 grant income comprised more than half of mean household income. Two forms of social grant comprise the largest share of income – the child support grant and the older persons grant. Despite the fact that there are very few pensioners in the Agincourt area, the value of the older persons grant is high relative to labour market incomes, and thus both contributes significantly to overall household income, and also places older people, and particularly older women, given that there are many more older women than older men in my research project, as key economic actors within their households.

The co-creation of households and the economy

This chapter has so far explored the physical, economic and social factors which shape families and households in the Agincourt area. I now return to the economic theory of households to understand some of these dynamics. As I have noted in Chapter Three, there is important literature examining bargaining and contestation within the households which helps us understand how households make decisions, and how resources are allocated within households. This literature has been essential for developing thinking on the nexus between individuals and households as both economic and social units.

Much of the work the economics of households in South Africa is concerned with is the relationship between different sets of individual and household characteristics, and the labour market, or broader economic, outcomes. One of the reasons for this is that approaching this question in a purely econometric manner is difficult – it requires careful model specification and particular variables. But as Kabeer (1997) so persuasively showed in her article in *Development and Change*, combining methodological approaches from economics and sociology can yield powerful

results when applied to these types of questions. Some more recent work on this topic, exemplified by the doctoral work by Mosoetsa and Fakier, has been located within sociology, and has relied on careful qualitative work (Fakier, 2009; Mosoetsa, 2011). My research builds on their research through the addition of quantitative data. These data augment their and my own qualitative work by adding information about the broader context, and information on the composition of households within the villages, as I have presented in the tables in this chapter.

To guide my analysis, I have drawn on Sen's foundational work on the incorporation of households into the economy (Sen, 1987). As I discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, Sen's theory is important to my analysis for several reasons. He argues it is important to take an integrated approach to the pattern of activities both within the household as well as outside of it: together they make up the production process. His approach allows us to link what appear to be social arrangements, such as the gendered division of unpaid work within the household, to the arrangement of technology and production.

Sen argues it is necessary to examine the productive aspects of what are often treated purely as 'cultural' phenomena, and to interrogate productive contributions to the household made by labour expended in activities which are not seen as productive. Sen also contends that the conceptual division of labour into paid and unpaid, in the broader context of productive arrangements, brings in systematic biases in our perception of who is producing what, and who is earning what. These biases are key to understanding why women continue in an inferior economic position in both 'traditional' and modern societies. Finally, Sen argues that gendered divisions of work outside the household partly reflect traditional divisions of labour within the household. These themselves influence the cultivation of skills, and sustain the asymmetry of opportunities for acquiring skills, which are rewarded in the labour marketplace. These three points have guided my analysis in Chapters Five and Chapter Six and, in turn, the findings have confirmed the applicability of Sen's approach which sees the economy and the household as interrelated.

The Agincourt area presents some complexities to some of the literature regarding the composition of households, their geographic dispersion, and the extent of their commodification. The data show that households are not comprised of nuclear families with a heterosexual couple at the centre. Instead, households are stretched geographically, and almost half of them are headed by women. This makes Agincourt households very different to households in the global North which inform much of the current literature on social reproduction (see, for example, the empirical

work in Bhattacharya and Vogel, 2017), and to households in some other studies in the global South.

The location of Agincourt households outside of South Africa's main urban areas is one important difference to the important study of urban Bangladesh by Kabeer (1997). But Kabeer also takes an uncritical view of family structure, largely assuming families comprise a heterosexual couple. Based on this, she examines the marginal improvements of the position of women vis a vis their husbands. As the evidence in this chapter and much other research shows, this is not the case in South Africa, and certainly not in Agincourt. Here, there are many women-headed households, many skipped generation households, and many households where the head is also an economic migrant – particularly in the case with men. Skipped generation households have only grandparents and children. How do these changes affect our understanding of household-level configurations? This leads back to one of the central questions of this research and this chapter. Why, given the rapid and large structural changes in the South African economy in the past decades, do girl and women-headed households remain significantly economically worse off them men? Why do women continue to earn less, and do so much more unpaid work? Mosoetsa offers one answer:

> ...the centrality of women in households has not resulted in a role reversal or the 'end of patriarchalism'…while it is true that patterns of male domination and female subordination are changing in the two townships, in accordance with shifting class and economic dynamics, patriarchal values and practices remain the norm. These values and practices, however, are no longer underpinned chiefly by the economic position of men as breadwinners but by a reassertion of traditional and cultural values (Mosoetsa, 2011, pp. 147–8).

Investigating cultural and traditional values is delicate and difficult, and was not my research focus. In this study, I have focused largely on the material factors which shape the gendered nature of social reproduction. However, as documented in Chapter Seven, there is evidence from the interviews that respondents offered gendered cultural norms to explain the gendered patterns of paid and unpaid work observed in Agincourt. The findings in this chapter emphasise the importance of knowing what is going on *outside* the household for thinking about what is happening within it, and vice versa. This is a point Sen persuasively makes in his foundational work on models of household cooperation and contestation (Sen, 1987). Decision making and bargaining in households does not take place in a vacuum; it is structured by the broader political

economy. Similarly, the broader political economy reflects the outcome of household-level decision making. It is for another research project to examine the causal link – the aim of this chapter is to make this broader conceptual point.

My findings raise a set of interesting questions. What does the almost total absence of permanent paid work, and the scarcity of other forms of paid work, mean for inter-household and for intra-household allocations, agency, wellbeing, and decisions about who works, and where they work? How does the geographically disperse nature of households in much of South Africa influence social reproduction in households? How does the extension of social protection impact on household social reproduction? What does the high proportion of women-headed households mean for models of household contestation? These questions go beyond quantifying the material position of households. They suggest the need to think theoretically about the interactions at the household level between different members, and, as importantly, between households and the broader political economy – an aspect of social reproduction struggles which the literature often ignores. Agincourt offers the opportunity to link data on households with data on the broader political economy, and to examine household-level dynamics under this rather peculiar set of circumstances. I return to these questions in Chapter Seven, drawing on my analysis of the Sucses survey data and my set of in-depth interviews.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented some new findings about households in a part of rural South Africa, the Agincourt villages. Firstly, women head 43% of households in the Sucses sample; and households in Agincourt are not traditional households formed around a heterosexual couple with a man household head. Secondly, there are marked and significant gender differences in households' economic outcomes depending on whether the household head is a woman or a man. Women-headed households gather significantly less income overall, and have lower rates of labour migration, while women household heads themselves are significantly more likely to be unemployed than men household heads. These disparities are overlaid with the individual gender differences outlined in Chapter Five, showing that for women more broadly, and not limited to household heads, unemployment was far higher than for men, while women and girl children undertook significantly more unpaid work both within and outside of the household.

Third, this chapter has shown that households in South Africa are significantly geographically dispersed, with almost a third of all members not co-resident in the household on a regular basis.

This means that the economic and social unit of the household does not map onto the household's geographical location. It also raises complications for models of household bargaining which conceive of a household as a co-residential unit. This research shows households as sites of contestation and struggle themselves, but also as bases for contestation and struggle with the outside world. This is linked to the concept of double-rootedness, as offered by Bank, Posel and Wilson.

> In larger cities, urban job insecurity and rural connectedness have ensured that many urban migrants remain 'double-rooted': despite growing amounts of time they spend in urban areas working or looking for work, they retain a rural connection (Bank et al., 2020b, p. 3).

This geographical dispersion means it is essential to understand migration – how people move between the different sites that make up a household. In this regard, recent research from Agincourt shows there has been a notable rise in younger working-age women's labour migration, although the levels of migration are still significantly below that for men.

Fourth, as my analysis of the Sucses data in Chapter Five, and the work of Ragie et al. (2020) show, households in the Agincourt area are not fully commodified. The implications of this are wide-ranging enough to justify a full thesis. Here it is important to note that non-cash incomes remain significant for households, which clearly continue to rely on the natural environment and subsistence farming as part of their livelihood strategies. Polanyi (2001) in his work, *The Great Transformation*, argues that the transition to capitalism required the commodification of land, labour, and money. The evidence from Agincourt is that at least land and labour have not been fully commodified. This raises the possibility of the household as a refuge from capitalism. In fact, evidence presented here and in Chapter Seven about the declining economic fortunes in the Agincourt area suggest that we could possibly be witnessing a reversal in the commodification of labour, as households move from labour-market to subsistence and social grant incomes. This process was identified by Mosoetsa in her work in KwaZulu-Natal:

> The unemployment that followed South Africa's entry into the global economy has shifted the focus of survival and economic activity from the factory to the household. There is a greater reliance on family networks and state grants, and a 'turn towards self-provisioning' (Mosoetsa, 2011, p. 53).

These four factors, combined with the findings presented in Chapter Five and Chapter Seven, present a complicated picture of social reproduction in the Agincourt area: the burden of socially reproductive work remains largely on women in the villages, but there have been some important changes – a greater proportion of women are migrating for work (Collinson et al., 2016), and it is largely women who receive social grant incomes. While the findings here are broadly consistent with the global literature on social reproduction, this work makes some important contributions. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, it is an empirical study from the global South. As I have argued, much of the empirical work underpinning the resurgence of social reproduction research around the world is based in the global North. This research has presented the complexities of social reproduction in the global South. It has identified important ways in which global South households differ, and in ways that matter, to global North households.

This research has also raised some questions. What is the purpose of households in Agincourt? What function do they fulfil in the broader South African political economy? Are they there for production or consumption, or both? Who is being exploited? How does this fit with what we think of as cooperative conflict? In this chapter, I have argued it is important to understand households and families in the Agincourt area if we are to understand the political economy of the region, and how it articulates with the national political economy – an issue I address in the next chapter. I also examine some of these questions through my analysis of qualitative data from a set of in-depth interviews.

Chapter Seven
Fieldwork: Households and traders in Agincourt

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the key findings and themes which emerged from the fieldwork I undertook in the winter of 2022, in four villages in the Agincourt area. As argued in Chapter Three, qualitative work can be useful for identifying causal mechanisms and the role of meaning, for example, in investigating how Agincourt residents understand the meaning of "work". Qualitative work also has a complicating tendency to pull against the inertia in quantitative work to clarify and simplify– which of course has its own benefits. The tensions between these two approaches are evident here, and are useful for adding depth to this research. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can yield new and powerful insights into the political economy of Agincourt.

The quantitative data from the Agincourt HDSS and the Sucses survey provides a solid basis for examining the questions posed for this research around the gendered nature of work and the political economy of Agincourt. There are several ways that fieldwork and qualitative data can add to this research. The in-depth interviews helped me uncover how people understand phenomena and concepts such as work, employment, social reproduction, and gender relations, all of which emerged from the literature as important areas of research. They are also essential for illuminating how people understand their lives: the meaning they ascribe to struggles over resources, and to reproduction. I wanted to understand what respondents think of the gendered nature of paid and unpaid work in the villages, the trajectory of its economic development (or otherwise), and perceptions about who the main economic actors in the village are.

Figure 11: Trading under a tree in Agincourt, July 2022



Source: Author

Main findings from the fieldwork

My analysis of the fieldwork generated important findings in five areas. The first is that gender relations structure both the household and the economy in overlapping ways, but that the effect is uneven. The interviews revealed that gender is a key socioeconomic construct which shapes how work, both paid and unpaid, is distributed both within households and in the economy. But its impact is uneven between households. In some households there is clear evidence of the gendered allocation of work, while in others it is not apparent. Gender relations also shape work outside the household, a finding which emerged in my interviews with informal traders in Agincourt.

Secondly, the interviews revealed a perceived hierarchy of employment: work is a job, and self-employment and unpaid work are not seen or valued as work. The interviews revealed two important findings about how the meaning of work is understood: work means a job with some form of employment relationship. There is a clear hierarchy of types of employment in the respondents' understanding. At the top of the hierarchy is a paid permanent job. At the bottom is unpaid work within the household.

Thirdly, the interviews shed light on how respondents make sense of their economic activity in the context of extremely high unemployment, both in the Agincourt area and across the economy more broadly. The interviews examined perceptions of economic change in Agincourt, and what it means to look for work in the context of very high unemployment. The respondents highlighted the paradox that unemployment remains high, or is increasing, while at the same time, residents had higher levels of skill and more work experience than in the past.

Fourth, the interviews confirmed what has been found elsewhere in South Africa: households in Agincourt are stretched both geographically, and generationally. The interviews confirmed the position taken by the Sucses survey and Agincourt census that households are stretched. They are widely dispersed geographically, and non-resident family members are considered to be part of the household. Furthermore, older persons play a key role in the productive and socially reproductive activities in households. Pensioners play an important role in households because they have both time and money, most often from social grants. The findings confirmed the household as a site of both cooperation and contestation. There is cooperation in the pooling of resources. But there is contestation and conflict shaped by gender relations both within the household and in the wider economy.

Fifth, the interviews shed light on the process of economic change in the Agincourt village. Respondents highlighted a general decline in the economic fortunes of Agincourt and the country more broadly. This shapes the relations of economic power between individuals, households, and the state. Understanding this helps make sense of Agincourt's place in the South African political economy, which I return to in Chapter Eight. In the following sections, I examine each of these five findings in more detail.

Gender relations structure both the household and economy in overlapping ways

The interviews reveal that gender is a powerful construct. It shapes the economic and social lives of the residents of Agincourt. As the findings detailed below show, gender shapes residents' perceptions about work, employment, unemployment, and unpaid work in important ways. But the findings also show that the effect is uneven. As vignette one highlights, gender as a force structuring work is understood and deployed unevenly. Isaiah[18] was clear that as the man head of his household, his place was working with the crops on the farm. But in contradiction, his younger son undertook cooking and cleaning work in the household.

Vignette One

Isaiah was ploughing one of the fields outside his house in his extended yard when we arrived to interview him. Isaiah is a pensioner with a wife and three children, two boys and one girl. Two of the children are at school. He said that all the children help with the housework, and in particular his son undertakes all housework inside. Isaiah said he worked in the fields to keep fit. He plants mealies to eat, but not to sell. He also planted spinach, tomatoes, mangoes, and lettuce. His wife is self-employed. She sometimes sells crockery, and sometimes works at an initiation school for girls nearby. When I asked Isaiah about the main challenges in the village, he said the principle problem is no jobs. When asked about gender differences in work, he said he had heard that husbands prevented their wives from working in some instances, because they believe that as men, they should be the breadwinners. However, he said, women in the village do work as teachers and nurses, at clinics, and sometimes as domestic workers. He said the main income for his household came from his pension, one child support grant, and the income from his wife's work selling crockery and work with the initiation school. He emphasised that the yard and the crops were his domain, and housework inside the house was his wife's responsibility.

Understanding the gendered nature of paid and unpaid work in Agincourt is of course central to this research. The mixed-methods approach used here generates two main types of information. The first is data on the material conditions of workers, both from the quantitative and qualitative research. This includes information about the distribution of paid and unpaid work, incomes, expenses, employment and unemployment, and general economic opportunities. The second is data on how respondents perceived these conditions. This is important for understanding how respondents understand what is going on. These data also help the researcher understand the links between the quantitative findings, and to interrogate causality.

[18] All names have been changed.

At the highest level, there is an apparent contradiction between these two types of data. The quantitative data are clear that women in Agincourt are in a materially and economically worse position than men by almost every metric. Unemployment for women is twice that for men, earnings are lower, and fewer women can migrate for work. Women-headed households command lower incomes, and fewer women household heads migrate for work. And yet the interviews reveal something quite different: some men and women contend that the labour market is more challenging for men than for women. Approximately half the respondents, including both men and women, argued it was easier for women to get jobs compared with men, both because of the characteristics of women themselves, such as being more patient and adaptable, and because there were more job opportunities for the types of jobs to which women were better "suited". The other half of the respondents argued that it was equally hard for men and women to get jobs, owing to the condition of the economy and the scarcity of jobs. Only a handful of respondents said it was harder for women to get jobs than men. As one of the women informal traders I spoke to said:

> I think for women it's easy, they can get a job like working as a domestic worker, doing laundry and cleaning but [for] men it's not that easy…What I can say is that we don't have the same gift, men are [more] short tempered than women. Women can handle hard situations, even if it's difficult, we do force ourselves. Men can't handle difficult situations. (Interview 17, working-age woman, informal trader)

Interviewer: I am interested in differences in work opportunities between men and women. In your view, is it easier for men or women to find jobs?

Respondent: I think women are standing in an advantage.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Respondent: Because most women, they don't choose jobs, they can work any job. You can hire them to come and work on your yard, playing with kids, looking after them when you are at work. That is why I am saying they stand an advantage.

Interviewer: Why men are disadvantaged?

Respondent: They are disadvantaged because some of the work, like babysitting, it needs only a woman not a man because there are situations where you must do something like a mom.

Interviewer: What are the jobs for men, what kind of work do men do when they find a job?

Respondent: They can build houses, for self-employment they can sell maybe they can have minimarket where they can sell fruits or veggies. Sometimes, if you have a driver's licence you can be a taxi driver. I think that's all they can do, maybe…if they have qualification they can apply for jobs when there are vacancies somewhere. Like at Wits [University], you can apply according to your experience or what you have on your hand. Nowadays, they want people with something like qualifications to show that you are skilled on something. (Interview 5, unemployed working-age man, household head)

One of the men informal traders had a similar response, prompted by my question of why there were apparently many more women informal traders in the village than men.

> Women like doing business more than men. We as men don't like selling things. So, I don't know, it depends on how people see things when it comes to their lives. Most men, it's unusually for them to sell things but those who are matured, they know that trading is a good thing. If you not doing anything you can cause crime, stealing from others. But if you keep yourself busy you will be fine. Look, now I have ten rand that they bought something, and I will be able to buy bread. (Interview 23, working-age man, informal trader)

The discussions touched upon an important distinction which recurred in the interviews: the distinction between work in an employment relationship, and own-account and informal work.

Here again, a gendered structuring appeared, although the answers were once again contradictory. Some respondents noted that women were better than men at running business (Interview 24, working-age woman, employed), while others argued that men were better at running businesses (Interview 14, working-age man, unemployed).

> Most men don't like business because they don't take care of anyone. They don't like to be self-employed, but they want to be employed by someone. (Interview 24, working-age woman, employed)

> On business, women find it difficult to run it. I only knew one who has a chicken farm. When I look around, men are the ones who have business, and they are older people not youth. How can you do business while we still have people from Pakistan? They are the ones who runs the shops. (Interview 14 working-age man, unemployed)

Figure 12: Two men selling bananas, Agincourt, August 2022



Source: Author

Questions about gender and work also raised some issues Mosoetsa identified in her work, which she called sociocultural factors (Mosoetsa, 2011). Many of the responses in my research clearly linked labour market participation to gender relations within the household.

> There are lot of people who are not working in our village. Those who are working are the ones that are educated. So, the reason why some women are not working it's because of us men. Some men are very strict. When your wife is interested in going to work, we said they are going to date other men and sometimes a woman is educated, and she wants to work. Then as a man I will not let her go to work. (Interview 2, pensioner, man, household head)

Another conversation highlights the same issues:

Interviewer: Do you think it's more difficult for women to find jobs than men?

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: Why?

Respondent: I gave an example of men that it's easy for them to get job but for women, only when one of the spaza shop wants someone to help. But getting a good job, no.

Interviewer: Why is it difficult for women?

Respondent: Some it's because the husband denied them the opportunity to work. You know what, like you are married, and your husband says as I have married you, you will live according to my rules or instructions. Then he promises you that he will do anything that you will need. He thinks if you go to work you will find other man then start having affair with them. Then you must stay at home.

Interviewer: Do you agree with that or not?

Respondent: No, I don't agree.

Interviewer: Why?

Respondent: These things are in two ways. We can have an agreement that he will do anything for me. But there will be time that he is going to fail to provide for me. Then it is good that I have something, that I am able to make a living myself without depending on him. (Interview 9, working-age woman, unemployed)

A third conversation emphasises this.

Interviewer: Does it ever happen that women do not have jobs because their husbands do not allow them to work, and say they must stay at home?

Respondent: Not now. I think back then before 2010, there was such a thing. But now it's a choice because we are allowed to say yes or no. I cannot take a relationship that will limit me, so on that one everybody must just stand on your own. You must not blame anyone or say otherwise. It's either you want a job, or marriage. Because the marriage is not [a] guarantee. If tomorrow, they say go, you must start thinking. I am saying this because I know, my aunt, but it was 40 years back, she was a teacher, and she had to resign because of her marriage. Twenty years down the line the husband passed on. So, you can't go and bow down saying you want your job back.

Interviewer: Because her husband didn't want her to work?

Respondent: It's tradition, she has to choose. So, she chose to the husband although the husband was working at Johannesburg, and he left money for her. But the career you messed up. He left money for her but you can't go back and say I want that job. Because you already choose.

Interviewer: They can get a job if they want?

Respondent: Yes…I can say on 95%, its only 5%. 95% of people know what they want, they can choose. (Interview 11, working-age woman, employed)

In contrast to some of the responses, it is striking to note, when walking and driving around the Agincourt villages, that women make up a visible majority of informal traders. They are largely selling repackaged fresh produce, but also a range of other goods, including chips and biscuits (*amakipkip*), freshly prepared food, and some household goods. I had not initially intended to interview informal traders but this suggested an interesting dynamic, and one which deserved further investigation.

> There are no differences [between men and women doing informal trading], it depends on what a person wants in life. I don't see any challenges. Nowadays things are difficult and there are lot of people who are educated but they don't

> have jobs. So, if you want to make a living not stealing from others, it's better to start your own business. The little that you get is better than staying at home. (Interview 16, working-age woman, informal trader)

These responses highlight the varied and contradictory ways in which respondents understand the links between gender and work, and the intersection of the household and the economy.

Interviewer: In general, in your village, do you think it is harder for men or women to find work?

Respondent: Here it's the same. Our children are growing older here in the village. They are lazy to go to the farms and work. Some, when they have passed Grade 12, they think it's a shame when you work at the farms. They are staying at home doing nothing. They end up doing bad things, like smoking dagga. They don't want to work, especially men in this village.

Interviewer: What about women?

Respondent: Women are better because some are working as domestic workers. And most who are suffering by cutting wood are women, men no. (Interview 1, pensioner, woman, household head)

Again, the data on unpaid work from the survey and the interviews reveal interesting results. The survey data clearly reveal that women do significantly more unpaid work than men across all categories, and across the entire age range captured in the survey. But the interviews suggest there is some interesting variation in this. The fieldwork results do not contradict the survey data – indeed the data does suggest that men do some unpaid work, but to a lesser degree than women.

As is often expected from qualitative data, the interview findings complicate what otherwise looks like a stark gendered division of labour in the survey data. In addition to the targeted questions, the interviews provided the opportunity to observe, at close hand, the gendered division of labour in the household, in the surrounding areas of the yard, and in the village. The responses to questions about the division of work within the household provide an interesting picture. On the gender division of housework, one respondent said:

> We [all] do all the household chores, there is no difference. Anyone who went to the kitchen first, he or she will work in the kitchen. Let's say I am going to the bush [to cut firewood] and my boys are the ones that will remain at home. Like myself, I have five boys and two girls. When they are at home they must [all] cook. (Interview 1, pensioner, woman, household head)

Another respondent noted that he did not do household chores, but would undertake farming-related tasks in the yard: He said: "When I'm here, household chores are being done by women and I will be busy only when we are about to start planting. So, all household chores are done by my wife" (Interview 23, working-age man, informal trader). In discussing the allocation of household chores with a man household head, he said:

> Myself, I'm doing nothing, and my mom is doing all the household work. She is cooking, cleaning, and all those things. So, I am cleaning the yard, garden and looking after my livestock like cattle and goats. That's what I am doing. There is no one who is employed at home, we are all unemployed, so we survive because my mom is getting a pension. (Interview 5, working-age man, unemployed)

This division of unpaid work between the household and the yard is evident both in the qualitative data presented in Chapter Six and in the interviews. The *stoep* as the gender work boundary: many of the interviews were conducted on the front veranda of the households – often just a small overhang, known as a *stoep* in South Africa. This was an interesting coincidence because it emerged that the *stoep* is also the dividing line of the division of unpaid care work. Behind the *stoep*, inside the house, is largely the domain of unpaid girls and women's work, while outside the house, in the yard and the small plots of farmland, boys and men are occupied.

Work is a job: A hierarchy of employment

One of the areas in which the interviews are most illuminating is regarding employment. The survey data captures information on the type of employment, such as part-time, full-time and self-employment. But it does not capture occupation type, and it does not illuminate much about the struggles relating to employment, particularly between employers, employees and work-seekers, and historical information about employment. The definition and understanding of work is a key issue which I examine in this research. There are at least two dimensions where this is important.

The first is where the boundary of "work" lies on the continuum of paid and unpaid work. At what point does an activity cease to be work? The second is the boundary of "work" on the continuum of the conditions of employment: from a formal job on the one end, to own-production work on the other. In this section, I examine how respondents make sense of work along these two axes. Vignette Two illustrates this point well. When I asked Mrs D if she worked, she said she did not. As the interview progressed, it transpired that she sold both dried sweetcorn and firewood, but she did not consider either of these activities to be work.

Vignette Two

When we arrived at Diana's house she was seated on a stool in her yard, shucking dried sweetcorn. Diana is a pensioner and is head of her household. She has seven children, two boys and five girls. Her eldest child is in Johannesburg living in a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) house. One of her children is at university, and one is at school. But her child is currently not going to school because protesters burnt the school down. To supplement the income from her pension, Diana cuts and sells firewood. She has a small farm on a separate plot where she grows groundnuts. She sells these from the village and from her house, along with some other crops.

When asked about employment opportunities for men and women, she said most men were just lingering around the villages. She said if men passed Grade 12 they would not do agricultural work or subsistence farming as they considered this beneath their skills and education. She said it is easier for women to find work because women are prepared to do any sort of work. She said that in previous years, farms offered employment opportunities for men and women, but there had been recent retrenchments at farms and there are far fewer jobs.

She said that the household chores were split evenly between the boys and the girls: when the boys are at home, they help to cook and clean. She also said that in the neighbourhood more broadly, everyone within households were sharing housework and yardwork in the same way. She said the household shares income and they collectively decide what to spend according to what money they have coming in. They use social grant payments from the child support grant and the older persons grant, for food. They use income from firewood sales to pay for transport.

An important area which the interviews illuminated was how respondents understand work and employment. I asked respondents if they did paid work. This was almost exclusively understood as: "Do you have a job?", which is not the same thing. With many who answered "No" to the question, "Do you do paid work?", it subsequently emerged that they undertook some own-account or informal work, but not in an employment relationship. This is similar to the findings of Hannah Dawson in her excellent work in Zandspruit. She found that work, or a job, means paid work in an employment relationship (Dawson and Fouksman, 2019; Dawson, 2022).

This also, in part, might explain the very high unemployment numbers in the Agincourt area both overall, and for women in particular. The Sucses questionnaire distinguishes between "employed" and "self-employed", but in this vein both suggest an employment relationship or more formal business relationship, rather than own-account work. It would be very interesting to ask respondents, "Do you do any work you are paid for?" in the Sucses survey. My interviews revealed a hierarchy of employment, which is itself gendered. At the top of the hierarchy are permanent jobs, either in the private sector in towns and cities, or in the public sector. Public sector jobs are about the only permanent jobs available within the village. Such jobs include teachers, police officers, healthcare workers and, in small numbers, municipal councillors and local traditional leaders. Here the job opportunities are the least gendered, particularly for teachers and healthcare workers. Indeed, from those I interviewed, the majority of people in these categories were women. Formal and permanent jobs in the private sector, however, were dominated by men.

Employment in the traditional authority structures is still largely restricted to men, although I did meet the first woman induna (local traditional leader) in one of the outlying villages. Falling beneath permanent jobs are contract appointments, usually in construction within the villages. These usually take the form of outsourced employment from government tenders for the construction of roads, water systems, and government buildings. Construction work is still largely men-dominated. This can be observed driving around the villages and was confirmed in the interviews. Then there is the large and heterogeneous category of informal employment. This includes small-scale farming, informal trading, domestic work, and harvesting firewood from the natural environment. At the bottom of the hierarchy are categories of unpaid work, such as own account work and unpaid care work. The interviews suggest these are not considered as types of "work", but as activities which are part of general household responsibility. Livelihoods are discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, but the interviews give an interesting insight into how economic lives and livelihoods are constructed through a mix of paid and unpaid work, subsistence activities, and social grants. As one elderly woman pensioner explained to me:

> I am working in the field. I have land on that side [of the village], and I am cutting and selling firewood. I just started in my own garden. I planted groundnuts last year, and I have sold some. I still want to grow things there [on the plot] but first I want to plough it to be bigger. (Interview 1, pensioner, woman, household head)

As was very clear from the quantitative data, social grants play an important role in total household monetary incomes. A number of respondents noted how grant income was the backbone of the financial means of the household, and was used to pay for monthly food needs.

> Women depend on the child grant. Like myself, I am getting a grant for two children. And I have seven children – all of them are not working, but they got NSFAS [National Student Financial Aid Scheme] to further their studies. Now I live with three children but I am getting money for two children. (Interview 1 pensioner, woman, household head)

In Chapter Five I focus on different forms of household cash income, largely from wages and social grants. But to focus on cash incomes, and productive work which generates money, is to miss a large part of the productive economic activity households undertake in the Agincourt area. The cultivated and natural environment are sites of productive economic activity, and as a source of income they are part of diversified household livelihoods strategies. Evidence from the Sucses survey suggests that households make extensive use of the natural environment as part of their livelihoods strategies (Ragie et al 2020). For us to get an overall picture of the political economy of the area, it is important to understand how land and livelihoods combine with labour market income

A surprising finding, both from the data and from my fieldwork, was the extent and depth of small-scale planting farming and gardening in each of the households. This is especially notable given the literature in South Africa on the decline of subsistence agriculture (Beinart et al., 1986). Most of the households I visited during the fieldwork component of this research had some sort of small-scale agricultural pursuits, including maize, mangoes, avocados, spinach, and a variety of other greens, sweet potatoes, groundnuts, chickens, goats, and cattle. Many respondents did note that the progressively drying climate was making it more difficult to grow food at home. However, there had been a relatively wet winter period in the year before the fieldwork, and so the many of the yards were abundantly full of both green and starchy vegetables and fruit trees.

Making sense of unemployment when there are no jobs

The residents of Agincourt understand very well the extent of unemployment. The interviews were useful for interrogating where respondents locate the main constraints to employment. Was it on the supply or the demand side of the labour market? Vignette Three illustrates how the majority

of respondents identify the key constraints to employment as being on the demand side of the labour market: there are no jobs. This then has consequences for how activities are structured within the household.

Vignette Three

When we arrived at Mary's house, she was sitting with five other adults of varying ages, from young adults to pensioners, looking after about 12 children between them. Mary is a woman in her early 30s. Everyone was sitting in the sandy yard, shaded by a variety of flowering mango trees, and an avocado tree laden with hundreds of avocados. Mary said this was her grandparents' house: she lives at home with her partner and her child. Her partner does some construction work. She said she comes over during the day to stay with her grandparents, and to share in the childcare.

Mary said that at home she does the household chores while her husband makes bricks and chops wood to use at home. She said the children help with the washing the dishes, but she does the cooking. She said she previously worked at Spar (a national supermarket franchise), and then as a domestic worker. She noted it was becoming increasingly difficult to find work as a domestic worker, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic. Mary said she believed it was equally hard for men and women to find jobs in the village, and that there were no impediments facing women. She said doing household chores does not stop women looking for work. She said despite doing the household work, she does go around looking for jobs and sometimes finds some work. When she does find work, her children stay with their grandparents. She said she had in the past travelled to find work, but because of her children, she would not take up permanent migrant work.

The interviews provide rich and varied accounts about this from a range of respondents. The interviews also highlighted one of the main contradictions of the South African labour market: that unemployment is rising while skills, qualifications, and other aspects of "human capital" are improving.

> Our children are educated, my daughter-in-law is educated. Some have been trained as police officers, some are chefs, but they don't get jobs. They came home and they stay here. Even when they apply, they don't get any answers. My son has gone to school, learnt how to cook, and trained as police officer, but he doesn't get any jobs. Nothing. (Interview 15, pensioner, man, household head)

The interviews presented some insights into reasons why individuals sought paid work.

> This business is mine and I have started it myself to make a living because I'm not working. I don't have a husband, but I am married. My husband passed

> away. I had two children, then one passed on and I'm left with one. And, I'm not staying with her, she is married. So, because I was unemployed, I started a business of trading to make a living for myself. (Interview 16, working-age female, informal trader)

The interviews highlight two main shifts in the nature of employment over the past few decades. The first concerns agricultural employment: respondents talk of how both men and women used to get seasonal, casual work on large farms in nearby areas. But now this was a much smaller employer. The second relates to longer-term labour migration to formal jobs in the cities. In the past, workers would get long-term employment in factories and mines on the Witwatersrand, and in the Witbank/Emalahleni area. This type of employment is now seen as something of the past.

> There is nothing here. Many people are educated but they are here at home, unemployed. Men are the ones who are making bricks and few women who are working on the supermarkets, but permanent jobs, no. (Interview 9, working-age woman, unemployed)

> Unemployment is a big challenge, even at the farms. They are no longer hiring a lot of people. Nowadays, they said they no longer plant bananas because it needs a lot of people. They are planting [ground]nuts because it doesn't need a lot of people to work…Most of the time people from these villages went to the farms looking for jobs as many of them are not working. (Interview 1, pensioner, woman, household head)

> They will go to the farms, Kruger National Park, etc. They are going to work. They will go to the farms, and look all over our neighbouring villages, we don't have anything, we have lot of children that are not doing anything especially the male ones. They are married and they are above 23 years, but they are not working. That is why they start stealing...I use my pension money to buy food for my children, cows and chickens. If you can go outside at the back, you will find chickens there. I have a lot of them, and I must buy food for them. I don't have money to buy its food. Where am I going to get the money? I do take care of my children, chickens, and dogs with my pension. I'm just getting R1 800 to

> take care of men that were supposed to work. (Interview 15, pensioner, man, household head)
>
> They must go to Hazyview, Nelspruit. We don't have places where people can work here, unless they work at the malls in Dwarsloop or Bushbuckridge [towns near Agincourt]. Otherwise, you must go to Hazyview, Nelspruit or Graskop to look for a job. (Interview 1, pensioner, woman, household head)
>
> I know lot of people, like myself, I was born in 1977. And when the president addresses the nation, he doesn't speak about us, but he speaks about youth under 35 years, then myself who is 45 where am I going to get job? As my beard is white, when going to look for job they will say I am old. We no longer getting employment, those who are forty and above Even the youth that they are addressing about work, they don't get those jobs. (Interview 14, working age man, unemployed)

On being asked if there are opportunities for work in agriculture:

Respondent: No, but like now there are people who have livestock, and they want to hire someone to herd them. I won't allow my child to do that while he is educated.

Interviewer: Why?

Respondent: Because he will start herding the livestock and his job that he has trained for is starting.

Interviewer: Then he will go and work elsewhere?

Respondent: Who is going to take care of the livestock? And when you are a herder, the payment is low. They will pay you R300. But when you are working to the white people maybe you will get R2 000 or R3 000. I won't work for someone and get R500, no. There is no weekend or holiday when you are a herder, even if it's raining you have to work and paid R500. It's difficult. (Interview 2, pensioner man, household head)

These answers give some insight into the ways capitalism in South Africa has changed. Firstly, within the primary and tertiary sectors, there has been a sustained move from labour-intensive to

more capital-intensive methods of production. And secondly, there has been a move from these two sectors to the tertiary sector, where services are now a major employer of low-skilled and low-paid workers. The answers also starkly illustrate the challenges on the demand side of the labour market: there are very few jobs, both locally and countrywide.

Households in Agincourt are stretched households

The HDSS census and Sucses survey use a definition of households which has been outlined earlier. I was interested to investigate how respondents understood questions about households and families, in terms of composition and scope. I asked each respondent to describe their household, and what each member did. The answers confirmed the findings presented in Chapter Six, about households as dispersed across generations and across geographical locations. Many households had members working in far-away cities, or on farms in rural areas away from Agincourt. As one respondent said of her eight children:

> The elder one is staying in Johannesburg. I have an RDP house there. He is not working. The second one is an assistant teacher at the school. The third one is doing her last year at the university, and the fourth one is at collage. Two are at high school and the last one is not going to school because they [members of the community] burned the school down. (Interview 1, pensioner, woman, household head)

This question also validated the approach in the census and survey research which defines households as a kinship unit rather than a co-resident unit. Many respondents considered family members as part of their household even when those members spent very little time physically at the homestead. In one case, a household consisting of eight members had only one resident in Agincourt. She was taking care of the family home while her family members worked, or looked for work elsewhere.

The specifics of household decision making have not been a central focus of this research. Indeed, it has been well-established empirically, and well-explained theoretically, that access to employment and income improves both the bargaining power and position of women within households (Kabeer, 1997; Case and Menendez, 2007; Himmelweit et al., 2013 among others). Nonetheless, the interviews revealed some interesting findings about how changes in paid work and income from social grants influence the configuration of labour, and how decisions are made

within households. In many ways, these findings concord with Sarah Mosoetsa's research, which presents an ethnographic investigation into cooperation and conflict in households (Mosoetsa, 2011).

When asked how household spending decisions are made, the respondents I interviewed in Agincourt provided varied pictures of household decision making. One woman noted:

> I don't have a secret when it comes to money. We sit down and look who has a shortage on what. If someone needs shoes or a uniform, then we solve that, and we also budget for food. I use one of the child grants to buy mielie meal. Then the money from peanuts and firewood I use to transport the children to school because they are not attending [school] here at our village. I am selling firewood and now I am expecting R600 and I am spending R400 on transport every week for two of them because they must travel. It is difficult, if you don't plan, you will die. (Interview 1, pensioner, woman, household head)

One of the informal traders had a similar response:

> As they [family members] get the grant, they do buy groceries and I will also buy whatever is missing. There is no rule that you must buy this, and I must buy that. We just buy whatever we think is needed. We don't even sit down and plan or contribute money. (Interview 16, working-age woman, informal trader)

Pensioners, despite making up a small number of the total residents, constitute a large component of the economic and social life of the villages. They are in the unique position of having both time and income, thanks to the fairly generous state older persons grant. This pension is large relative to median incomes, and thus contributes a significant share of total household incomes, as shown in Chapter Five

> I am a pensioner. I was working at Johannesburg. When I retired, my employer threw a big party for me and he said to me: 'When you retire going back home, you must not go and stay without doing anything. When you stay at home doing nothing, you will notice lots of mistakes that are happening in your house, and you won't be happy about it. Then you will fight with your family. But if you had a small business, selling tomatoes, or buy a cow and become a herder and

> keep yourself busy. You must not stay at home as we are giving you a pension. You will live better and be free in your life. But if you don't do something you will have high blood pressure and fight with your family all the time. If you have a business, you will come home in time and live better with your family. So, when you are busy you won't have stress.' (Interview 23, working-age man, informal trader)

In many households, due to their retired status and relatively large incomes, pensioners provide both economic means and the bulk of the unpaid care work, as illustrated in this interview with a woman pensioner.

> I am staying with my grandchildren, and they are five. And I also have three children that are not here at home, but they come home when they are on leave. My grandchildren are at school. And when they come home from school, they will find that I have washed the dishes. And they start cooking, clean and sweep the yard. There are four that are teenagers and two are still young. (Interview 13, pensioner, woman, household head)

> They don't get it [a job], it's rare. As you can see, we don't have a farm, nothing. Our children are not working, they are just staying at home. They have IDs, they have wives. We must take care of them and their children. Where are they going to work? That's the problem. (Interview 15, pensioner, man, household head)

Economic change and the Agincourt village

The political economy of Agincourt is not static, and it was important to me to understand how socioeconomic conditions in the village have changed over time. Vignette Four highlights changes in a number of dimensions, from gender relations in work, to the continued deterioration of Agincourt's economy.

Vignette Four

We arrived at the household to find a sprawling homestead with multiple vegetable patches, and two cattle enclosures. Sibongile, a middle-aged woman, lives with her mother, two sisters, and three children who are all at school. Each of the sisters has a section of the garden which in which they plant vegetables. All the sisters cook and clean in the household while their mother gardens and fixes fences around the farm. Sibongile says that job opportunities are very

poor in the village. She once worked as a domestic worker, but it was very hard and demeaning because she had to wash the family's underwear. She said all three sisters are looking for jobs but cannot find any work. She said it is more difficult for men to find jobs than women. She argued that it is easier for women because women could do domestic work and work as informal traders, while men are afraid to be domestic workers. She also said that South African men would not be informal traders. Sibongile said predominantly it was Zimbabwean and other immigrants that would trade in the street. She said there are no particular barriers facing women in finding work: things had changed, and there were now equal opportunities for men and women. If one of the sisters did find a job, they would reallocate the housework responsibilities between the remaining family members. Sibongile said there had been some talk of starting a cooperative bakery in the village and someone had come and spoken to villages about opportunity. But nothing had happened, and they had not seen or heard anything more; things in the labour market had deteriorated. Previously, one could go to work on the farms but now there are no jobs on the farms, and where there were jobs, one needed family connections to get them.

An important aspect of the interviews was to get a better understanding of the longer-term trends in the political economy of the area beyond the period covered in the data. I asked each respondent if, in terms of employment and the economy, things had improved, deteriorated, or remained the same in their memory of the area. A few main themes emerged.

The first was about changes in the agrarian nature of the area.

> In the past, people were planting things in their gardens, so it was not easy to notice that [the decline in the economy]. In the past, we were eating food from our land that we planted. We were pounding, grinding, and all those things, and eat. Our fathers were working but they were not suffering because food was there all the time. But now we don't have anything. (Interview 13, pensioner, woman, household head)

The second set of answers pointed towards changes in the climate, most notably the trend towards longer dry periods, and lower total rainfall.

> We don't have much rain and our children are lazy these days. You can tell them to plant, and they will say we are going to buy [food]. If all older people can die, there will be no ploughing. (Interview 13, pensioner, woman, household head)

The most striking and repeated answers about how things have changed, however, reflect how the economy, both in the area and in the country, has changed over several decades. This reflects the broader shifts in the nature of capitalism in South Africa, which I discuss in Chapter Eight.

> In the past people were working. Our parents were working and send money home. People were resigning from one job and find another one, when you create business these days, like we are five in this village, and we all have chicken farms, and some have tuck shops. How many people am I going to hire? Now, it's more difficult than in the past. I have lived in the time of apartheid although I was still young, there were lots of jobs than now. Transnet is retrenching, and in the past, there was a train goods that was passing here full of goods. There are lots of firms that are no longer working at Gauteng. They are no longer working, they use argents. Lever Brothers is still there but no longer functioning like in the past. There are lots of firms that are no longer working. Goods train were hiring people to offload the goods. (Interview 14, working-age man, unemployed)

> When we were young, we were not struggling to get a job. We were finding jobs. Since we got our leadership back [referring to the post-apartheid government], it has destroyed all the job opportunities that people have in the whole country. In the past, it was easy to get a job, especially on the farms. We were working on the farms even though the money was less, but we were working. But these days, they don't hire people. (Interview 15, pensioner, man, household head)

> When I grew up there was jobs but now there are no jobs. When I grew up people were not selling things like now. We were growing things at the field and used it to feed our families. But nowadays things have changed. Maybe there will be a point where people will no longer have jobs. Our children are educated but they are unemployed. They rely on our pension grant and things that we are selling. (Interview 23, working-age man, informal trader)

One of the interesting areas from a political economy perspective is to think more closely about who wields economic power between workers, capital, and the government. Almost all of the

respondents pointed to the government as the economic actor who could make some interventions to address the economic problems facing the community, particularly unemployment. Most respondents position the government as the key economic actor in the village, over the community and business. It is the government people see as having the power to effect the kind of change which could make a meaningful impact on creating employment. Where the government can and does create jobs, there is a widespread belief that those jobs are allocated unfairly, on the basis of family or political connections, and not in a meritocratic fashion. Very few households saw business or the community as major economic players in the creation of new jobs supporting the economy.

> What I have realised in our community, there is a lack of infrastructure. People don't have jobs because there are no places where they can train people how to do things, like how to manage things. (Interview 22, working-age man, informal trader)

> We people don't have powers, it's only the government that has money. Like last month, there was a strike for truck drivers. Our corrupt government are the ones hiring outside people more than us in the country. If we try to toyi-toyi [protest], they hit us with rubber bullets and all those things. Why? Because we don't have money. (Interview 14, working-age man, unemployed)

> I don't know what has happened with our new government. We had the first president, and he promised that our children are going to work but they didn't get the jobs. And another one [president] came, still the same problem. Now it's the third [president] but there is nothing. Our children are all over the village doing nothing. You will find them at the taverns drinking alcohol because they don't have place to go. (Interview 15, pensioner, man, household head)

Finally, some respondents were less optimistic about the prospects that the government could address some of the economic ills.

> I don't know what can be done by our government. But if you can go house to house, you will find lots of males not working, they are at home. Only God and the government can do something. I don't know what can be done to help people who are suffering. (Interview 6, pensioner, woman, household head)

Work, households, and the political economy of Agincourt

My fieldwork and qualitative analysis provide important theoretical insights which locate the findings in the three key concepts (work, household, and political economy) which emerged in the literature review. The quantitative data detailed in Chapters Five and Chapter Six mapped the contours and distribution of work, income, and livelihoods. The qualitative findings discussed here help me to understand the meaning ascribed to these insights of Agincourt's residents.

The concept of work emerged as centrally important to social reproduction and a gendered analysis of the economy. The interviews highlighted that respondents consider work to be a paid job, and do not, in the first instance, understand the term to include unpaid work within the household, or even own-account and informal work outside of the context of an employment relationship. The interviews also revealed a hierarchy of employment, with formal, paid jobs at the top of the pyramid, and informal, own account work, and unpaid work, at the bottom. The interviews also revealed stark gendered divisions in what was considered acceptable paid work, with certain occupations, such as domestic work, seen as unacceptable as men's work. This led to the surprising finding that many respondents considered it was more difficult for men to get jobs because they are "excluded" from certain occupations which are seen as feminine, while the reverse is less true for women. As such, gender emerged as a key concept to understanding the distribution of paid and unpaid work in the villages.

This qualitative work, read alongside the quantitative findings in the previous chapters, also calls into question what it means to be economically active, and to be a participant in the labour force. The national literature suggests that women's increased labour force participation has led, among other things, to higher unemployment for women. This research confirms that this is clearly the case for women in Agincourt. The change in legal status – the removal of legislative barriers to work – has not translated into economic equality with men, either in terms of employment or income. This, then, raises the question about what change, if any, we are capturing when we observe rising rates of women's labour force participation.

The interviews affirmed the definition of households used in the HDSS and Sucses data as one which includes non-resident household members. When asked about the composition of their household, respondents included those members who were often permanently located in cities far from Agincourt, but were still considered as key members of the household. The interviews also provided interesting and contradictory insights into household dynamics regarding the allocation

of work and resources between household members. In some households, work is allocated equally between family members, while in others there is clear evidence of a gendered division of work. There is also evidence, at least in some households, of a spatial division between the house itself, which is the domain of girls and women, and the yard, which is the domain of boys and men.

The interviews provided interesting information about how residents view the location of Agincourt in the broader political economy of South Africa. It was clear that Agincourt is defined in relation to broader South Africa as a place of lack and want: there are few jobs, poor services, and limited political power. Agincourt is seen very much as a place from where people travel to get work, and not one which provided much meaningful economic opportunity. Conversely, the interviews gave insight into the relatively thriving role of Agincourt as a consumption economy, fuelled by income from social grants. Given the scarcity of work, in Agincourt and in the broader South African economy, there is evidence that Agincourt is now more a site of the reproduction of a class of consumers, rather than a class of workers for the economy.

In terms of economic change in Agincourt, the interviews suggested a widespread view that economic conditions have deteriorated in recent years. Fewer, if any, formal jobs are available, and even informal agricultural work has declined. Respondents consistently identified constraints in the labour market on the demand side – there are no jobs – and not the supply side, noting that levels of skills and work experience among villagers has improved markedly in recent years. Even so, this has not translated into higher levels of employment. This is, however, something that it is perhaps difficult for respondents to assess from an individual vantage point, and is better investigated using other methods.

Conclusion

This chapter presented new insights, complications, and texture to the data and discussion in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. It has shown the varying and contradictory ways in which households locate themselves in the political economy of Agincourt, and – as importantly – how they understand their position. Understanding the gendered nature of work, both paid and unpaid, in Agincourt is central to the aim of this research, which is to understand how rural households articulate with the broader South African political economy. Taken together, Chapters Five, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven provide a detailed and nuanced examination of the gendered nature of work, and women's economic lives in Agincourt. The research shows the value of a feminist

economics approach, and the power of social reproduction theory to help conceive and examine the economy in a way which includes both paid and unpaid work both within and outside of the household.

Feminist economists have long advocated this approach, and it has taken a particular form under the resurgence of social reproduction theory (SRT) in the last decade. But while SRT is useful for helping us think about links between paid and unpaid work, it is not without criticism and limitations. The resurgence of SRT has been driven by scholars concerned with social reproduction in the global North, and as such it has taken on characteristics such as a focus on the spatial division of the spheres of production and social reproduction. I have shown here that no such split exists in Agincourt. In the next chapter, I turn to the relationship between households and South Africa's political economy. This serves to contribute to a debate about the relationship between the countryside and capitalism in South Africa, and indeed globally.

Chapter Eight
Gendered labour, social reproduction, and rural-urban articulations in Agincourt

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have used feminist economics, social reproduction theory, and Sen's theory of households and the economy to analyse quantitative and qualitative data. This provided insights into the gendered nature of the political economy in Agincourt. My analysis shows that significant gender inequalities in the distribution of paid and unpaid work persist, and identifies ways in which gendered labour relations in the households and in the economy reinforce each other. This chapter builds on this foundation. It takes a wider view to examine how households in Agincourt are incorporated into the political economy of broader South Africa. In doing so, I revisit Wolpe's cheap labour thesis of the 1970s, and critically examine where it remains relevant. I identify where the process of economic change in Agincourt necessitates rethinking the cheap labour thesis.

I begin by discussing the implications of my findings for Wolpe's cheap labour thesis: my research shows that the economy of Agincourt is pervasively gendered, in both the spheres of paid and unpaid work, and calls into questions Wolpe's categorisation of rural South Africa as the site of reproduction, and the economic core as the site of production. I then identify and analyse key areas of economic change in South Africa in the post-apartheid period, and discuss the implications for the cheap labour thesis. I argue that changes in the nature of capitalism, the role of the state, and the changing nature of work and unemployment, requires a rethinking of the articulation between households and the economy.

I then turn to an analysis of what my data show about the ways in which households in 21st century Agincourt are incorporated into capitalism. I argue firstly that households in Agincourt are sites of both economically productive and socially reproductive activity. Secondly, productive and reproductive work in Agincourt is highly gendered, both within and outside of households. This is important for examining inequality in Agincourt. Thirdly, I argue that Wolpe's focus on rural households as the site of the reproduction of labour ignores their important roles as site of broader social reproduction. Finally, I conclude that feminist economics, social reproduction theory, and economic theories of the household can be combined to rethink the cheap labour thesis for the 21st century in a way which reveals the role of women in both production and social reproduction.

The cheap labour thesis and 21st century Agincourt

As discussed in Chapter Two, in the 1970s Wolpe provided an incisive materialist analysis of apartheid. He argued that the rural economy served as a site of the reproduction of labour for capitalism in urban South Africa, thus ensuring a supply of cheap labour. His cheap labour thesis has formed the backbone of political economy analysis in South Africa ever since. But Wolpe and other academics, such as Morris, who studied the relationship between the rural economy and the development of capitalism in South Africa, were largely unconcerned with the highly gendered nature of cheap labour. This, despite the fact that the law actively excluded women from mining and the industrial economy, and that women played a critical role in the reproduction of life and labour in the Bantustans. It could well be argued that the cheap labour thesis is a historical relic – useful for explaining the development of South Africa in the 20th century, but of little use today given the ways the country has changed in the post-apartheid era. But revisiting Wolpe is useful for three reasons, as argued by Reynolds, Fine and Van Niekerk in their recent book re-examining Wolpe (Reynolds et al., 2019). The first is that Wolpe's work provides historical grounding for contemporary analysis. The second is that his method, as separate from his thesis, is a useful approach to understanding contemporary South Africa. As Scully and Webster argue, the concern "is not to explain cheap labour today. As many critics of Wolpe have argued, the idea of labour being 'cheap' is ambiguous…Wolpe's main utility today, therefore, is not to explain the relative price of labour, but as a methodological guide, which highlights the importance of the interface between the capitalist sector and non-wage economic activities, or more simply, between production and reproduction" (Scully and Webster, 2019, p. 33). The third reason is that much of the more recent liberal analysis, while important for understanding some of the labour market dynamics, has not satisfactorily grappled with some of the enduring structural questions raised in this research, including the persistently gendered nature of the economy.

Revisiting the relationship between South Africa's core and periphery is interesting for both theoretical and practical reasons. This relationship has long been the focus of scholarship in South Africa and elsewhere – illuminating for what it can tell us about the South African political economy, and for what it reveals about the nature of social reproduction in capitalist societies. While there has been a sustained focus on Wolpe since the publication of his important paper, most of the work is theoretical, and where it incorporates empirical work, this is largely ethnographic (O'Laughlin, 2021; Scully and Webster, 2019). The findings and data analysis

presented in the previous chapters allow me to make a contribution to these debates from a firm foundation of empirical evidence.

One of Wolpe's most important contributions to this thinking is his emphasis that economic participation is not a matter of individual choices. It is determined far more meaningfully by who exercises the power to make the constraints, and by the existence of structural determinants. However, while Wolpe was concerned with structural factors, he did not examine the role of gender, even though it was, and continues to be, one of the key structural factors in the political economy of South Africa. In the previous chapters I showed how feminist economics such as Elson and Sen have highlighted the role of gender as a central structural determinant, both in households and in the broader economy. Here I bring these ideas to bear on an analysis of the cheap labour thesis in contemporary South Africa.

Economic change and the cheap labour thesis

In the post-apartheid period, the relationship between core and periphery changed because the economy has changed. As I have discussed in detail in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, there have been important changes in patterns of reproduction, employment, migration, and consumption. There has been a dramatic rise in women's labour force participation and labour migration; there has been a rise in informality in both rural and urban areas; and the tertiary sector has overtaken the secondary sector in the share of labour it absorbs. These changes have been accompanied by a sustained increase in unemployment, and a significant expansion in social protection. As my analysis in Chapter Five, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven shows, rural households are sites of both economically productive and socially reproductive work, some of which is paid work and some of which is unpaid work.

Despite the collapse of apartheid, and marked rise in women's labour force participation and labour migration, the political economy in Agincourt remains strikingly gendered. There are far higher rates of unemployment for women than for men, and a highly gendered distribution of unpaid work. These economic changes are linked, and in some cases have precipitated changes in the pattern of social reproduction in rural areas. In this section, I discuss four important areas of economic change I identified during my research. These changes have been identified and discussed in the preceding chapters. Here I summarise them in four thematic areas. These are: the changing nature of capitalism; the changing role of the state; the changing role of workers and consumers; and the changing nature of work and unemployment.

The changing nature of capitalism

In South Africa in general, the post-apartheid period has seen a move away from labour intensive production in agriculture and mining. The move has been towards services, which in some cases are still labour intensive. Mining and agriculture have become more capital intensive. Retail capital has expanded significantly across South Africa in the post-apartheid period. Its reach is quite clear in Agincourt, where formal retail dominates the market for goods, food and building supplies. The services sector, and particularly retail, is highly concentrated, with a wide geographical reach across the country. A few large retail conglomerates account for a large share of the retail market. There has been an associated expansion of formal retail and services activity into the former Bantustans, as evidenced by the proliferation of large malls in the Bushbuckridge area.

There are two large shopping malls adjacent to the Agincourt study site. These host a range of all the large South African chain stores one has come to expect, including fast food outlets, supermarkets, and clothing stores. From the data and interviews, purchases in these malls are funded by a mix of wage income, remittances and, principally, social grants. Even informal produce traders source most of their goods from formal retailers, while a few source directly from local farmers. Consumption of services is somewhat different to retail. While the malls do offer service outlets, personal services such as haircuts and barbers are available informally all over the study site. Healthcare, conversely, is provided almost exclusively by the government, except for the few civil servants and formal employees who have private medical aid and are able to access medical services in Mbombela.

These changes have led to a substantive change in the way surplus value flows through the economy, and how it is extracted and accumulated: during apartheid and before, surplus value was extracted from workers who sold their labour power to white capitalism, and they often had to migrate to urban areas to do so. While extraction of surplus value continues, the role of consumers of commodities has become relatively more important for the flow of surplus value. My research has shown that consumers in Agincourt spend income derived from grants and waged work as part of their livelihood strategies. However, as my analysis has shown, Agincourt has not (yet) become fully commodified. While there are wage relationships and informal economic activity, there are important uncommodified links to the environment, with households relying on subsistence agriculture and foraging.

The changing role of the state

The state's role has changed fundamentally since the 1970s, and this is clear in the analysis I have presented in Chapter Five, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven. Under apartheid, the state performed a coercive function vis a vis capitalism, as argued by Wolpe. This was to repress the cost of the reproduction of labour, and ensure that capitalism had a steady supply of cheap workers. Of course, the state also played a coercive role in the enforcement of the racist ideology of apartheid. The capitalist system, as argued by Meillassoux at the time, was not concerned with aspects of reproduction beyond the reproduction of labour:

> The capitalist system does not provide adequately for old-age pensions, sick leave and unemployment compensations, they have to rely on another comprehensive socio-economic organization to fulfil these vital needs…it follows that the…preservation of the relations with the village and the familial community is an absolute requirement for wage-earners, and so is the maintenance of the traditional mode of production as the only one capable of ensuring survival (Meillassoux, 1972, p. 103).

At least two things have changed in the intervening decades. The first is that capitalism has in fact assumed some of these roles for those with formal sector jobs (e.g. private health care). The second is that that the South African government has significantly expanded its role both in the provision of social assistance, and in its role as an employer. A consequence of government's role in employment is that this positions it as the key economic actor in areas like Agincourt. There has been a rapid expansion in social protection, too, most importantly in the form of the child support grant, the older persons grant, and more recently the Covid-19 social relief of distress grant.

Perhaps the most important of these for the gendered nature of Agincourt's political economy is the older persons grant. Being large relative to median household income, the pension has shifted household dynamics in important ways, as discussed in the previous chapters. During apartheid, much of the care work would have fallen on working-aged women and pensioners, and would have happened outside the flow of cash. The relatively large size of the pension means that some aspects of the household economy have become monetised. Furthermore, far more women than men receive the older persons grant, and this has positioned older women as key economic decision makers within households. The role of land continues to change, too. Within the confines

of the Agincourt village, there is in fact a surplus of agricultural land available for subsistence and small-scale commercial agriculture.

The changing role of work

One of the main changes since Wolpe's analysis in the 1970s is the rise in women's labour migration. This can be seen clearly in the data from the Agincourt region (Collinson et al., 2016). This change in gender composition has been accompanied by a change in the type of jobs for which people migrate. While there is no data on occupation type from the Agincourt HDSS in the Sucses survey, it is clear from national data that mining has declined both in absolute and relative terms as a source of employment. It has been supplanted by services – and this is particularly the case for women, where data show that the post-apartheid period has been marked by a rapid rise in low-paid services work for black women.

At the highest level, there has been a sustained increase in absolute employment *and* absolute unemployment, with the latter growing faster and resulting in a steady rise in the unemployment rate in the post-apartheid period. There has also been a rise in non-standard employment, with increasing levels of informalisation and precarious work. Of particular interest to the Agincourt context is the rise of informalisation. As Scully and Webster have argued, "much of what is discussed under the banner of informalisation are forms of work that are driven by the unemployed and excluded who carve economic niches with independent 'self-employment' activities, especially – but not exclusively – in urban areas" but the world of wage work has also changed in important ways (Scully and Webster, 2019, p. 40). They also find that migration for formal, permanent jobs is now much less common. My qualitative and quantitative data analysis suggests similar findings to those of Scully and Webster. My data show a decline, down to very low levels, in recruitment in the rural areas for urban jobs, with the onus for work seeking now placed on workers who must travel to the city to look for work, many of them unsuccessfully, even over many years. Work seekers must now rely on their own social networks – family and friends in the city – as a base both to search for work and to provide the all-important links to jobs.

One of the main sources of formal employment that was present during the Bantustan period and continues today is in the public sector: teachers, police and healthcare workers. Throughout both periods, these jobs were almost the only a formal, permanent employment available. My interviews revealed the equivalent jobs in the private sector within the village area are almost unheard of,

unlike in more urbanised parts of South Africa. During the interviews, this was mentioned many times, and as a result, permanent government jobs are seen as prized positions. Another form of work arising from the government is short-term contract work on infrastructure projects, such as roads, water, and the construction of public buildings. These positions are tightly contested. Almost all respondents noted these short-term contracts were often given out to family, or to political connections of those who had secured tenders for the work. During my fieldwork, each day I drove past a depot for a public water reticulation project. The community had blockaded the entrance to the depot with burning tyres, and on one day a burning pickup truck. On speaking to residents, I ascertained that the protest was about frustration with how jobs were awarded for this work. This was an ongoing theme and came up many times during my fieldwork.

There is very little empirical work from the Bantustan period about patterns of consumption in Agincourt, but from the historical record and the information presented in Chapter Two, we can make some inferences. The main form of income would have been migrant workers' wages; migrants would remit funds, or bring back goods from the cities to the rural areas. It is clear that trading within the Bantustans would largely have been informal and rudimentary, with most formal retail trading taking place in the cities. Within this small pool of workers, significantly fewer women found work compared with men. However, my findings and analysis suggest that if we broaden the definition to include unpaid informal work, it is clear that women play an important role.

The changing nature of unemployment and surplus populations

One of the most enduring questions facing political economy scholars of South Africa is why unemployment in the country is so high. Traditionally, Marxists have considered the unemployed as a surplus population, with different characteristics. Marx first examined the reserve army of labour in detail in Capital Volume Three (Marx, 1993), where he identified five components of the army of labour.[19] One of the functions of surplus populations – in their form of the reserve army of labour – is to lower the prevailing wage rate. But it is not clear whether this is the case with the surplus populations in South Africa's periphery any longer. Many people in these surplus

[19] Working-class people who are employed in average working-class jobs; the stagnant pool: those marginalised workers with extremely irregular employment – those in what we would now call precarious and informal work; the latent reserve: the segment of the population not fully integrated into capitalist production, and who survive on livelihood strategies, including subsistence agriculture; the floating reserve: those who used to have working-class jobs but are now unemployed; the paupers: the homeless and those who cannot adapt to capital's never ending changes.

populations have a contingent relationship to capitalism on the productive side. And it is a mistake to see a functional line between high levels of employment and low wages. As Mafeje commented, referring to the apartheid period, "in recent years we have witnessed in South Africa the dumping of unwanted labour in the reserves, not to reproduce their labour-power but to perish" (Mafeje, 1981, p. 134).

The surplus populations debate has a major blind spot: its focus is on the incorporation of people into capitalism through labour, and this is explained, in part, by the focus of Marxist scholarship on the productive forces in the economy. But it ignores the other ways in which so-called surplus populations participate in the political economy. Conversely, it is also simplistic to suggest that areas such as Agincourt are ancillary to capitalism. Indeed, their role may be contingent, but my research has shown that they remain incorporated into capitalism in important ways, both for their own reproduction and for the reproduction of capital. My data suggest that residents of the Agincourt area are also incorporated into capitalism as consumers, through both the formal and informal retail system – and that their incorporation is supported by the provision of social grants, wage and remittance income, and income-earning livelihood strategies. To the extent to which social reproduction can been viewed as instrumental to capitalism, it also operates through the reproduction of a class of consumers.

Much of the literature discussed here divides the economy into core and periphery, or the spheres of production or reproduction. But an equally important distinction is between the supply side and demand side of the economy. There is a tendency, particularly in more traditional Marxists analysis, to view the labour supply part of the economy as entirely functional for capital. Under this conception, there is the expectation that the entire supply side, both the employed and unemployed, function together to supply labour power to capital. If we look at the demand for labour, however, a different picture emerges in South Africa: one where the capital stock, even when fully employed, cannot absorb all those who wish to work. Here, then, social reproduction is not only about the reproduction of labour and labour power, but about the reproduction of life, as O'Laughlin (2021) so powerfully argues. A focus on the unemployed as surplus populations, or as a reserve army, begs the questions: surplus to what, and a reserve army for who?

There are two related issues. The first is that South Africa's unemployment rate is now so high, and the labour market is segmented in such a way that it is not clear what role the vast reserves of unemployed play in the determination of wages. It is clear now that South Africa would reach full

employment of its capital stock long before it would ever reach full employment, which Marx predicted (Marx, 1993).

The second related issue is the contradictory relationship that social reproduction, particularly in rural areas, has to the South African labour market. Wolpe's argument was that unpaid labour in the Bantustans lowered the cost of the reproduction of labour, thus lowering the cost of labour to capital. Indeed, much of Marxists' focus in the late 20th century was on the ways in which rural workers were incorporated into capital. There was less attention paid to "surplus" populations in these areas. There is some evidence now that the configuration of livelihoods, and strategies for social reproduction, do the opposite: income from social grants, and the availability of unpaid work, which largely women undertake, could function to increase reservation wages, and therefore increase the cost of labour for capital – this is something which requires further research.

In this section, I have summarised four areas of economic change in the Agincourt area which are important for an analysis of rural-urban articulations. This is important as a basis for the remainder of this chapter in which I identify three ways in which households articulate with capitalism in contemporary Agincourt.

The articulation of households and capitalism in 21st century Agincourt

I now turn to what my findings show about the articulations between households and capitalism in Agincourt in the 21st century, and the important ways this differs from the cheap labour thesis. Here I present three main findings. I argue, firstly, that households in Agincourt are sites of both economically productive and socially reproductive activity. Secondly, productive and reproductive work in Agincourt is highly gendered, both within and outside of households. This is important for examining inequality in Agincourt. Thirdly, I argue that Wolpe's focus on rural households as the site of the reproduction of labour ignores their important roles as sites of broader social reproduction of both life and labour. This is important for examining class relations in rural areas such as Agincourt.

Households as sites of productive and reproductive activity

Wolpe's cheap labour thesis conceived of rural households as primarily sites of social reproduction, and the urban core as the location of economic activity. My research shows that households in Agincourt are sites of both economically productive and socially reproductive activity. Within economically productive activity, some is paid work, while other activities are unpaid, but are still

economically productive. As I showed in detail in Chapter Five, the distribution of paid and unpaid work, and economically productive and socially reproductive work, is highly gendered. Women undertake a far greater proportion of unpaid and socially reproductive work. This spatial and analytical distinction between production and reproduction arises with Marx and others, and is central to Wolpe's thesis. Both Wolpe's cheap labour thesis, and some recent work on social reproduction globally (see, for example, Bhattacharya and Vogel, 2017), take as a starting point the existence of separate spheres of production and reproduction. For Wolpe, the Bantustans were the sphere of social reproduction, and the economy in the core was the sphere of production. For social reproduction scholars, there is the distinction between the household (reproduction) and the economy (production). This dualism arises, in part, from the empirical basis of the resurgence of social reproduction theory, which is in the global North, particularly North America and northern Europe. Here, a spatial distinction between spheres of production and reproduction can be supported. But in Agincourt, this does not hold. Not only are households the site of both productive and reproductive activity, but the broader economy is also the site of reproductive activities. Production for own consumption and sale takes place within the household, while socially reproductive activities often take place in a communal context outside the household. O'Laughlin (2021) is correct to criticise the distinction between the productive and reproductive spheres, and her focus is largely on theoretical grounds. My research also highlights that this distinction is incorrect empirically. Households in Agincourt are very clearly sites of reproduction and of economic production, although it is less clear if they are sites of the production of surplus value in the Marxist sense.

Social reproduction theory (SRT) illuminates the role of social reproduction in overall production, but this does not necessitate its allocation to a distinct analytical sphere. In fact, SRT can do quite the opposite. It can facilitate thinking about how the activities of production and social reproduction (rather than their spheres) are linked as part of a unitary whole in the political economy. The evidence from Agincourt attests to this: households are places of both productive and reproductive work, while in some cases, reproductive work, such as childcare, is conducted outside the household by family and community.

Inequality and the gendered nature of productive and reproductive work

My second finding is that both productive and reproductive work in Agincourt is highly gendered, within the household and outside of it. My research has shown that the role of rural households in the South African economy is more varied, and more pervasively gendered, than Wolpe

theorised in his cheap labour thesis. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter Five, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven. In understanding the gendered nature of productive and reproductive work, and the link between the household and the economy, I have drawn on Sen's argument that gender relations in the economy and the household mutually reinforce each other (Sen, 1987). This dual gendered layering, which discussed in Chapter Six, has implications for examining inequality in Agincourt.

Wolpe's cheap labour thesis conceives of structural and pervasive inequality between the urban core – the site of productive work – and an impoverished periphery – the site of unproductive and unpaid work. While useful, it masks two important changes Wolpe did not foresee. The first change is *between* rural and urban areas in the post-apartheid period. The last three decades have seen rising urban poverty to levels far beyond those during apartheid, while at the same time some rural areas have become sites of accumulation. The second change, and more relevant to my research, is that Wolpe did not foresee rising inequality *within* rural areas. Wolpe identified the emergence of what he claimed were three distinct classes: (1) those who occupied or owned land, (2) those who both do not own or occupy agricultural land and who own no cattle and (3) and those who own no land but who graze their cattle on common land (Wolpe, 1972). This categorisation ignores gendered inequalities between men and women, and it ignores the role of the labour market (which is gendered) in rural areas such as Agincourt. His focus on land is typical of much political economy work in 20th century South Africa, which conceived of rural areas as site of precapitalist activity, and not of capitalist economic activity as they are today. O'Laughlin argues that Wolpe's approach "minimises the importance of class differentiation in the countryside and its relation to divisions between migrant and permanent workers in the urban working class, missed the significance of gender struggles in the countryside for the composition and orientation of the national working class, and misunderstood the dynamics of unemployment" (O'Laughlin, 2021, p. 17).

My research in Agincourt suggests there are differentiated patterns of accumulation which are changing economic and social relations within the village. It is certainly incorrect to think of the periphery, even particular areas of the periphery, such as the Agincourt villages, as homogenous. My research shows differentiated access and returns in the labour market, and other research shows divergence in asset and wealth accumulation, too. This is also observationally evident when travelling around the Health and Demographic Surveillance Site (HDSS). Far from the rows of identical Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses seen on the urban fringes

of Johannesburg, the housing stock in the HDSS is varied, ranging from small one-room or two-room houses, to large mansions replete with high walls, electric fences and multiple motor vehicles.

It is not clear that the differential accumulation of land is taking place, or is even possible in Agincourt, where land is held in communal title under the auspices of the traditional authority, and allocated according to need in exchange for a nominal payment. Most of the plots are a standard size. The same is true for agricultural land: a two-tier system exists, where land is allocated to those who request it; those using it for domestic purposes pay one rate, while those using it for commercial purposes pay a higher rate – both are once-off payments. As a result, I see no evidence that a market for land is developing. It is in the houses themselves where there is evident accumulation and differentiation. While almost all dwellings are formal cement-brick structures, there is wide variation in the size. In central Agincourt, on what locals call Millionaire's Row, the houses are all double story, with laminated glass windows, sliding doors, and walls topped with electric fences.

From my research, it is possible to identify the emergence of certain distinct classes of residents in the Agincourt area, and these classes are highly gendered. The first class is the unemployed in terms of paid work. These are residents who participate in social reproduction and unpaid work, and include large shares of both working-age men and women. However, a far larger proportion of women, indeed the majority, fall into this category. The second class is the precarious employed in terms of paid work. They are the people in the village who are in part-time employment and self-employment. Men make up the larger share of this category. The third class is the full-time employed, who are largely grouped into two – both, once again, dominated by men: civil servants in the villages, and migrant workers. As my findings presented in Chapter Five and Chapter Six show, the distribution of paid and unpaid work, and of employment and unemployment, is highly gendered. Women continue to make up the majority of the class of unemployed and the precariously employed, while a far greater proportion of men are part of the traditional working class. This is very different from Wolpe's analysis of cheap labour, which conceptualised a class of migratory, working-class men, and a class of unemployed women residing in the rural areas.

Households as the site of reproduction of life and labour

Thirdly, I argue that Wolpe's focus on the role of South Africa's rural areas as sites of the reproduction of labour ignores their important roles as site of broader social reproduction – reproduction of life as well as labour, to draw from O'Laughlin (2021). During apartheid, the

Bantustans were essential to the production of surplus value and the reproduction of capital because they reproduced workers for all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, mining, and industry. However, as I have outlined, in the post-apartheid period there have been some fundamental changes in the ways the former Bantustans articulate with the rest of the economy.

My research has shown that it is not at all clear that the capitalist mode of production is dominant within Agincourt: social grants, unpaid work, and precapitalist activities contribute a large share to household livelihoods. What, then, does the widespread availability and relatively large magnitude of social grants, and the ubiquity of women's unpaid work, mean for the way households interact with the capitalist economy, both within the village and more broadly in the political economy of South Africa? This question becomes even more interesting in relation to Wolpe's thesis, which posited social reproduction households as supporting households as labour-sending sites and subsidising the cost of the reproduction of labour. My research suggests that in Agincourt wage work, precapitalist subsistence, and income from social grants are combined to sustain a class of workers and consumers, and that the political economy of Agincourt remains highly dependent on women's unpaid work for its social and economic reproduction. Only a small proportion of total household income comes from workers selling their labour power to firms.

As I have shown in earlier chapters, cash income from social grants is a major source of income for households, and is augmented by own-account work, subsistence farming, and reliance on the natural environment. This is very different to the rural relations of production Morris analysed in his work on mid-20th century South Africa, where he found that the capitalist mode of production was dominant in South African agriculture. While the capitalist mode of production may still be dominant on South African farms, my research shows there is far more to rural South Africa than its links with capitalist agriculture. The expansion of South Africa's social security system, in the form of social grants, has bolstered household incomes with a steady and reliable source of cash income. Social grants make up less than 4% of South Africa's GDP, but for areas like Agincourt, they are essential: in some years they make up more than 50% of household income. It is not that residents are not incorporated into capital, but their position is changing from being workers to being consumers.

One of the households I interviewed illustrated this clearly. They receive a single older persons grant and several child support grants. The household pools these to buy groceries for the month for the entire household. The household also earns money through informal self-employment –

principally collecting and selling firewood. They use this, and any other income earned, to pay for other expenses on an ad hoc basis. We can see that the social grant income supports the essential components of the family's reproduction of life. There is evidence that, in some ways, Agincourt is a post paid-work society: formal employment accounts for a very small share of activity for working-age adults, particularly for the women.

Class analysis is useful for thinking about people as workers under capitalism. But it has much less to say about the role of people as consumers of commodities. My research has shown that for capitalism, the importance of residents of areas like Agincourt has shifted from their role as workers, and thus as producers of surplus value, to their role as consumers in the formal economy. From the perspective of capitalism, paid work is so scarce that residents use a mix of approaches to reproduce themselves as consumers. This is a dynamic often overlooked by the surplus populations literature which views such people as ancillary to capitalism – except for their role in keeping wages low due to high unemployment. But they are not surplus to capitalism as consumers, as evidenced by the extent, for example, of formal retail in the Agincourt area. Of course, households still do perform essential functions as reproducers of labour and labour power. But this is much diminished in 21st century South Africa.

Thinking about class in the South African countryside is thorny and contested terrain. In Marxist analysis, understanding class is, of course, central to understanding conflict and struggle. The rural areas of South Africa have predominantly been theorised in class analysis as the working class: workers who sell their labour power to capital in the industrial core of South Africa, and to its commercial farmers. Morris (1976) persuasively argued that agriculture was part of the capitalist mode of production. Wolpe took a slightly different view. He argued for two modes of production and three distinct classes in the countryside, although Mafeje (1981) criticised this theorisation. The issue of class differentiation was picked up by later scholars, including Spiegel (1988), Sharp and Spiegel (1990), Sharp (1994), and Carter and May (1999). In particular, Sharp (1994) showed how class differentiation was linked to the nature of access that workers had to the urban economy, rather than informal work which had been the case previously.

My analysis suggests that this characterisation requires rethinking in our contemporary context. How can we think about residents in Agincourt as consisting of a certain class? As shown in earlier chapters, only a very small share of residents in Agincourt are productive workers in the Marxist sense. Most of the work in Agincourt is either not monetised at all (unpaid work) or is informal

and own-account. What are the implications of this for how we think about class formation and class conflict in the South Africa countryside? As many scholars have pointed out, care is needed when identifying new classes: these need to be more than empirical observations, and must have a theoretical basis. What my research has shown is that it is foolhardy to think about class relations in the absence of gender relations. Gender structures the political economy of Agincourt in a pervasive manner. It determines the organisation of paid and unpaid work, and is thus central to understanding the class and exploitation dynamics in the village.

While social reproduction in Agincourt may be subsidising consumers and workers for South African capital, there is a marked gender differentiation within this, with women undertaking most of the unpaid and socially reproductive work on which the reproduction of labour is dependant. It has been well established in the South African literature that understanding class relations is essential both to make sense of the political economy of the country and to identify sites of struggle. There have been decades of debate about the class structure of rural South Africa (Mafeje, 1981; Wolpe, 1972), and this has been linked to debates about the dominant mode of production (Morris, 1988, 1976). This research has shown that a focus on the productive economy, and the relation to capitalism of people as workers and producers of surplus value only ignores some important developments in the political economy of rural areas such as Agincourt.

Feminist economic theory and the cheap labour thesis

In the final section of this chapter, I examine how different strands of feminist economic theory – which includes feminist economics, social reproduction theory, and economic theories of the household – can be combined to update the cheap labour thesis. Feminist economic theory can help us make sense of the economic changes highlighted above, both theoretically and methodologically, by helping us critically rethink the spatial divides between urban and rural; the conceptual divides between production and reproduction; and the ways in which households and the broader economy mutually constitute each other. My analysis provides insights into the factors which structure gender relationships in the economy, broadly conceived to include the household in an area in rural South Africa.

Firstly, I return to feminist economics and the argument by Elson, Himmelweit and others (Elson, 2000, 1993; Himmelweit, 2002) that it is necessary to take a holistic view of the economy to include both paid and unpaid work. It is clear from my analysis in this chapter that such an approach is necessary to conceptualise households as part of the economy. Doing so illuminates women's

economic contribution, whether it is paid or unpaid work, both within the household and in the broader economy.

Secondly, it is worth revisiting how social reproduction theory can help us deepen our understanding of South Africa's political economy, and improve our conceptualisation of rural-urban articulations in South Africa. In this regard, it is important to distinguish between social reproduction as a concept, which refers to the productive and reproductive activities essential to the production and reproduction of human life, and social reproduction *theory*, a theory which helps us think about how the activities of social reproduction are interlinked with other aspects of the economy.

Third, I use Sen's contribution to the economic conceptualisation of the household (Sen, 1987). His main contribution to my research is his theorisation of households and the economy as both linked and mutually constituting each other: economic arrangements within the household and in the economy reinforce each other to reproduce unequal gender relations between men and women. Taken together, I have used these three strands of feminist economic theory to critically re-examine Wolpe's cheap labour thesis for Agincourt in the 21st century.

Conclusion

The data and analysis presented here, and in preceding chapters, have illuminated some of the key characteristics of one area of South Africa's economic and geographic periphery. Better understanding the conditions in the periphery helps us analyse the relationship of South Africa's periphery to its core, which was theorised by Wolpe in the 1970s, but left largely unexplained as a black box of (social) reproduction. Wolpe theorised that social reproduction in the rural areas was key to surplus extraction because it reduced the cost of labour reproduction for South Africa's capitalist core. But he did not investigate the highly gendered nature of this social reproduction, nor did he see rural South Africa as a site of productive activity. Wolpe's thesis was based on a gender binary: rural households were seen primarily as sites of social reproduction carried out by women, while men migrated for work. What my research shows is that today rural and peri-urban areas in South Africa were, and remain, highly gendered. They are sites of both reproduction and production; they are incorporated into capitalist relationships through consumption, and less through the reproduction of labour for capital.

My research shows that rural households in Agincourt continue to play a role as sites of social reproduction for the enduring patterns of migrant labour. But migrant labour's economic contributions have decreased significantly, and there have been changes in the gendered patterns of work. It is also clear that households in Agincourt are far more than only sites of reproduction. They are sites of production and work, both paid and unpaid, and this work remains highly gendered. My research shows that people are constructing livelihoods from a mix of work, social grant income, subsistence, reliance on the natural environment, and consumption from the formal private sector – two huge shopping malls have been constructed adjacent to the study site in recent years. The malls employ hundreds of people, and sell to hundreds of thousands. They have displaced dozens of informal traders in their vicinity. Rather than a reserve army of labour, the area is reproducing a reserve army of consumers supported by the livelihoods I described above, with consumption levels linked very closely to social grant income.

There continues to be a lively debate about the links between South Africa's rural and urban areas, and between its developed core and underdeveloped periphery. Within the literature on South Africa's political economy, Wolpe's thesis continues to be deployed, both as a historical device and an analytical tool, well into the 21st century. But less attention has been paid to the empirics on which is based – particularly the ways in which the core and periphery of South Africa have changed in the post-apartheid period, and the extent to which those two terms are even useful anymore. More importantly, Wolpe and much of the subsequent analysis based on his work, ignores women's role in South Africa's political economy. My analysis has shown that to understand the ways in which South Africa's rural households are incorporated into capitalism, it is essential to understand the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid work, and women's role in production and consumption.

Chapter Nine
Conclusions: The paradox revisited

Introduction

This thesis opened with an exposition on the paradox of life and work in Agincourt: the coexistence of busyness and unemployment in the villages. My research has shown that the concepts of work, employment and labour force participation, as they are understood in mainstream economics, do not adequately capture the diversity of economically productive activity in the area. Specifically, they obscure the work women do as part of the economy. The development of feminist economics, and the more recent resurgence of social reproduction theory, have in recent years placed renewed emphasis on a gendered theoretical and methodological approach to thinking about the economy. Such an approach centres women and women's work in any analysis of the political economy of work. Doing so goes beyond a conception of the economy, and of labour force participation, which is limited to paid or value-producing work. It requires a conception which thinks about paid and unpaid work as part of a unified system of activity which sustains both economic production and social reproduction. Applying this paradigm to the Agincourt area has shown the centrality of women's work to the economy of the area, and repositioned Agincourt residents' economic lives in South Africa's political economy.

Answering the research questions

Understanding the economic position of women

The economies of South Africa's rural areas, and their relationship to its industrial economic heartlands, has been the focus of study for many decades. This thesis critically re-examines Wolpe for the 21st century by providing a materialist, gendered analysis of the economy of Agincourt, an area which remains on South Africa's geographic and economic periphery. This research has grappled with answering what the new South Africa, and rising women's labour force participation, has bought women in South Africa. It is: rising unemployment, an inequitable share of unpaid work, and worse socioeconomic outcomes than men. It has examined how a closer understanding of this can help us locate rural South Africa in the broader political economy of the country as an area of the reproduction of life and labour, and of consumers for modern capitalism in South Africa.

My research found that the political economy of Agincourt is pervasively gendered. Paid and unpaid work is inequitably distributed, to the detriment of women. Men continue to occupy most

paid jobs, while women of all ages undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid work, both within the household and outside of it. The gendered structure of the paid labour market reinforces the gendered division of labour within the household. In the national context, gendered inequalities appear more pronounced in Agincourt, with levels of women's unemployment being far higher in the Agincourt area compared with the national average.

The widespread and sustained rise in women's labour force participation in South Africa in recent decades has not translated into economic equality for women in Agincourt. My research shows that, for many women, a change in labour force participation reflects a move between statistical categories, with little or no substantive change in circumstances. Rising women's labour force participation is not a reflection of greater economic freedom and emancipation for women, nor is it indicative of economic equalisation between men and women. In many instances, economically active women in Agincourt remain unemployed and continue to undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid work both within the household and outside it. My data suggest that social grants have become a key component of social reproduction in rural areas, perhaps displacing (to some extent) unpaid care work by working-age women. Social grants, particularly the older persons grants, have positioned elderly residents, particularly women, as key economic agents within households. At the heart of this is a contradiction: despite now being the main economic contributors within households, women continue to do far more unpaid work than men.

Revisiting Wolpe's cheap labour thesis

My investigation of the gendered nature of production and social reproduction in Agincourt households makes a contribution to understanding rural households in the broader South African political economy. I have shown how the economy is still dependent on women's unpaid work, both within households and in the wider community. Most importantly, my research has shown that the role of rural households in the South African economy is far more varied, and more pervasively gendered, than was theorised by political economy scholars of the late 20th century. Households in Agincourt are the site not only of reproduction, but of production in a wide array of paid and unpaid economic activity. Furthermore, my research shows how households are both site of the reproduction of labour, and the site of the reproduction of life. This includes places where consumers are reproduced for South Africa's developed industrial core which has expanded its long reach into rural areas. My research describes, in detail, the labour market and wider socioeconomic conditions of a part of rural South Africa. This has been closely observed, but very

little has been written about the area's economy. While the Agincourt area is small in the national context, with about 120 000 people, in many ways it is emblematic of large swathes of rural and peri-urban South Africa. Studying Agincourt yields interesting insights into the broader political economy of the country. The nature of the research site allowed me to conduct a set of in-depth interviews with members of the households in the Sucses panel, allowing for new data to be gathered and additional layers of knowledge to be generated about the area.

My research shows how households have responded to changes in the South African political economy in the context of a sustained absence of paid work. While these responses are heterogeneous, they are consistently gendered. The burden of unemployment falls largely on women: women of all ages also do more unpaid care work than men. This should not be surprising to any scholars of gender in South Africa, but the magnitude of the inequalities is striking. To understand the position of women we need to think about their position within the economic system – a political economy approach – and not just individual women as possessing, or not, a set of characteristics. My research has underscored the value of micro, historical studies to understanding the South African political economy. It has shown it is essential that this work is grounded in theory, and placed in proper conceptual framework (Morris, 1988). This point was forcefully argued by Morris, who rightly critiques the approach of the social history movement in the mid-20th century.

As in many parts of South Africa now, waged work is not the central source of income for households. This research has highlighted the different ways in which households in the Agincourt area construct economic livelihoods, often from multiple sources, and through both income-generating activities and unpaid work. Money incomes are gathered through a mix of waged and own-account work, social grants and remittances, and this is augmented by non-money income from subsistence agriculture and the use of natural resources. Social grants have become central to the economy and to social reproduction. At the time of doing the quantitative component of this research, the two main sources of social grant income were the older persons grant and the child support grant. More recently, the Covid-19 social relief of distress grant has become a significant source of income for households.

My research confirms that households are not unitary bodies which maximise on a single utility function. Rather, they are sites of cooperation and conflict between men and women, workers and the unemployed, and between age groups, as is true in families, too. There is an intersection and

magnification of gender inequalities between households and the broader economy: unemployment rates are significantly worse for women than for men, and women continue to do far more unpaid work than men, both inside and outside the house. These findings are true across all age groups, although they are particularly pronounced for working-aged women and pensioners. The case of the latter is surprising given the economic power which the receipt of the older persons grant bestows upon older women. I examined household-level dynamics considering the literature on cooperative conflict. Using this lens, I concluded that while increases in resources for women improve their economic and bargaining position within the household, it is also clear that these improvements are on the margin. Despite often being the main income "earners" in the household, women continue to do significantly more unpaid work than men. This adds an important nuance in the literature. I also raised the question of cooperative conflict within households when these households depart from a conception of households that are nuclear, heterosexual, and located in one place. The data from Agincourt shows a multitude of different family and household configurations.

My research emphasises how history matters. The economy does not float in contemporary space and time outside of the historical context which shapes it, and in which it sits today. This has been well established in the social sciences and in sections of heterodox economics. In Chapter Two, I discussed the research literature that shows how women's economic lives in Agincourt have been shaped at the nexus of patriarchy and the state over several decades, at least from the middle of the 19th century. My research suggests there has been no corresponding counter-force in the post-apartheid period of the required magnitude to fundamentally change the course of the area's political economy.

This history has also shaped class relations, and these have changed in important ways over time. For much of the 20th century, residents of areas such as Agincourt were incorporated as workers in the capitalist mode of production on farms, in mining and in industry, as argued by Wolpe and others. This has changed in the post-apartheid period as the importance of these residents to capital has shifted from their role as producers of surplus value to their role as consumers of commodities, funded largely by social grant income.

Theoretical contributions

This research has made several modest but important theoretical contributions by intervening in three key debates in the literature on the gendered economy. The first is to intervene in the

literature on social reproduction, both empirically, and theoretically. Empirically, I provide detailed individual and household level data on the distribution of paid and unpaid work in the Agincourt village, embedded in its historical context. I demonstrate the importance of rethinking concepts such as work, labour force participation, and economic activity. Importantly, I provide new data from the global South, a counterpoint to the resurgence of social reproduction literature which has emerged from empirical work in the global North. This research has both deployed social reproduction theory, and provided a critique of it from the global South's perspective. Drawing on my analysis of a research site in the global South, I have argued that much of the theorisation which underpins the resurgence of social reproduction theory is based on an empirical world view in the global North. In addition, I have shown that households in Agincourt are sites of both socially reproductive work and economically productive activity. I have thus questioned the spatial (rather than conceptual) distinction between the sphere of production and the sphere of social reproduction in South Africa. This is different to the global North, where households remain socially reproductive spaces and productive activity takes place outside the household.[20]

My findings affirm the theoretical work of O'Laughlin, who argues that while social reproduction theory has problematised the distinction between paid and unpaid work, it has reproduced the division spatially with two separate spheres of production and reproduction. The data from Agincourt clearly shows that households are sites of both paid and unpaid, and productive and reproductive work. While it is useful, and indeed essential, to distinguish paid and unpaid work analytically, the evidence from Agincourt shows that production and reproduction happen alongside each other within the household, and even to a certain extent outside of the household. This means households themselves become sites of struggle, as well as being platforms for a struggle between households and the wider economy. Understanding this is key to making sense of the persistent gender inequalities visible in the South African labour market.

The second contribution is to the literature on the economics of households, which has been built on the work of Sen (1987). The insights arise from the mixed-methods approach: linking quantitative and qualitative data to develop a deep and holistic picture of Agincourt's political economy. The findings show how the gendered structure of the household and the broader

[20] The rise in gig and platform work, in both the global North and South, however, is changing this.

political economy reinforce each other, and that households are both the site of economic contestation and the site of contestation of the allocation and distribution of unpaid work. The Agincourt area presents some empirical nuances to the literature regarding household composition, geographic dispersion, and their incomplete commodification. I have argued that there is a gendered layering of two related parts: the labour market itself is structured both by the skills and experience needed, and the returns to these labour market characteristics. Both are highly gendered. In addition, the interviews show that there are normative factors within the household which structure the labour market: there are certain categories of jobs which are seen as acceptable for men and not women to do, and vice versa. Thus, the gendered structure of the economy outside the household, and that inside the household, mutually reinforce each other to women's detriment.

Thirdly, findings have helped me rethink, from a political economy perspective, the links between South Africa's "rural" areas and its economic core, both spatially and economically. In doing so, this research has intervened in the enduring debates in the South African literature about the articulations between rural and urban, as theorised most famously by Wolpe. Most importantly, the findings illuminated the stark gendered divisions in paid and unpaid work in an area considered to be on South Africa's periphery. The gendered dynamics of production and social reproduction in the periphery were largely ignored by Wolpe and others, such as Morris. This research provides important insights into both the gendered divisions of work in Agincourt, and how they shape the way Agincourt is incorporated into South Africa's broader political economy.

My research has brought together conversations about work, the paid labour market, and the political economy analysis of core-periphery, into one work, and in a way which has not been done before. This shows the value of a conceptual and methodological approach which combines feminist economics and social reproduction theory. Many of the links and relationships identified and analysed here only become clear when we take a broader view of the economy to include paid and unpaid work.

Policy contributions

This research has presented a historically-grounded, in-depth study of the political economy of the Agincourt area. It is informed by the urgent need to understand and address the persistent oppression of women in the economy and in society. The outlook for women is dire. Despite increasing education, the removal of restrictions on movement, and achieving formal equality

though the South African Constitution, women remain in a significantly worse economic position than men. The research has shown that if we are interested in making substantive progress in addressing gender inequality, we need to start with a conceptual and methodological approach which centres women and women's work. There needs to be a renewed conversation between micro-studies, such as this, and the more common nationally representative research. The benefits of such an approach can be seen in some of the findings in this work. This work has emphasised the importance of structural analysis. It is essential to understand the broader context, and the overarching economic structure, if we are to make sense of the lives of individuals. The findings highlight the importance of gathering data about the economy which acknowledges women's work. This requires systematically gathering data on paid and unpaid work in a harmonised fashion. This has been the case in some surveys, such as the now-discontinued National Income Dynamics Survey. The analysis here suggests that collecting these data should be part of the national survey process run by Statistics South Africa.

Close studies, such as this research, are an important counterpoint to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) which is the main labour market research instrument used in South Africa. There are a few reasons for this. The most important is that the QLFS has a relatively small sample size of about 30 000 respondents. This means that while it is nationally representative, it does not have the statistical power to provide useful results at any more detailed level than the province. And even then, there are concerns about the power of the survey. Writing this chapter in 2023, at South Africa's current unemployment rate, the QLFS includes only about 6 000 employed people. In some provinces, the response rate in recent survey waves has been well below 50%, although this is principally due to the migration to telephone surveys necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the QLFS does not contain information on unpaid work, subsistence activities, or broader interactions with the environment. These data are all available in the Sucses data set used here, and allowed me to construct a picture of how paid and unpaid work, social grants, remittances, and subsistence are combined to create livelihoods, and how these are shaped by gender and intergenerational relations within the household.

Labour market and social policy alone, while important, cannot effect the kind of structural change necessary to address the high levels of unemployment in the villages, nor to remedy the pronounced gender inequalities. The only conceivable approach that could make a substantive difference is large-scale capital investment in productive resources in the economy. It is difficult to see where the investment for this would come from in the current economic and political

climate. But there are compelling reasons to do so. Feminist scholars, and Himmelweit in particular, have argued persuasively that investments in the care economy, particularly childcare and care of the elderly and sick, are both highly beneficial for women, and have significant economic multipliers across the economy (De Henau et al., 2017; Himmelweit, 2002).

My research findings also make a strong case for the necessity of having gendered economic policy. The status quo is unacceptable. It is also evident that the rate of change on the current trajectory is far too slow, if any progress has been made at all. Addressing gender inequality in the economy should be a top priority of the government. But an analysis of current government policy suggests this is not receiving much attention or action. While there have been some attempts to fund early childhood development more systematically, the sector is woefully underfunded. The fiscal space available for such policies is highly constrained, and is likely to get significantly worse in coming years (Sachs, 2021). It is essential to think about social policy, including social protection, as a fundamental component of economic policy itself. This research has shown the links between grant incomes and economic livelihoods. Any economic strategy needs to be based on a sound appreciation of the role of social policy in political economy.

Gaps and limitations

There are, of course, some gaps and limitations in this research. The first is that the data presented here are not nationally representative, and thus the analysis is somewhat limited from a policy perspective. Secondly, the qualitative component was based on a relatively small number (24) of interviews. In part, the qualitative component was a pilot for exploring the usefulness of the mixed-methods approach for investigating the research questions posed here. The results suggest this should be continued and expanded. The lack of nationally representative data, and the small qualitative sample size, suggest that care must be taken when drawing larger conclusions. Finally, the research does not draw any hard conclusions about causation in the formal economic sense.

Future research directions

The Sucses data make a strong case for the inclusion of data on unpaid work in routine labour market surveys. Gathering such data is necessary for us to be able to analyse the economy in its totality. Currently, we have to wait at least ten years between each wave of the time-use survey, and it does not integrate perfectly into the labour market panel. In addition, the time-use survey highlights how people spend their time, but not how this links with labour market participation and paid work. There was an additional wave of the Sucses survey which was conducted in late

2019. Unfortunately, the data were too late for inclusion in this PhD. The additional panel wave from 2019, five years after the pervious data collection, would be very useful for examining how the issues analysed here have changed over time, and would possibly allow for the identification of some causal mechanisms.

One next step could be to test statistically some of the relationships highlighted in this research. The research and methodological approach used here could be expanded and tested in different ways. A comparative analysis of a similar rural area elsewhere in South Africa, possibly in KwaZulu-Natal or Limpopo province, at the site of one of the other HDSS areas, could be conducted. To further strengthen the links between rural and urban research, such an approach could be instructively deployed in an urban area. Regarding data collection, this research points to the need to gather data on unpaid work more systematically as part of labour market data collection. It is hard to overstate the importance of this. Feminist economists have, for many years, emphasised the need to think about paid and unpaid work as part of economically productive activity, but statisticians have responded unevenly. Improving surveys to capture women's work is an essential step towards understanding women's contribution to the economy, and taking the drastic steps required to address gender inequality in the economy and in society.

References

Agarwal, B., 2009. Engaging with Sen on Gender Relations: Cooperative Conflicts, False Perceptions and Relative Capabilities, in: Basu, K., Kanbur, S.M.R., Sen, A. (Eds.), Arguments for a Better World: Essays in Honor of Amartya Sen. Oxford University Press, Oxford; New York, 157–177.

Altman, M., 2003. The state of employment and unemployment in South Africa, in: Daniel, J., Habib, A., Southall, R. (Eds.), State of the Nation: South Africa 2003-2004. HSRC Press, Cape Town, 158–183.

Altuzarra, A., Gálvez-Gálvez, C., González-Flores, A., 2019. Economic Development and Female Labour Force Participation: The Case of European Union Countries. *Sustainability* 11(7), 1962.

Anker, R., 1982. Female labour force participation in developing countries: A critique of current definitions and data collection methods. *International Labour Review* 122(6), 709–723.

Ardington, C., Case, A., Hosegood, V., 2009. Labour Supply Responses to Large Social Transfers: Longitudinal Evidence from South Africa. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 1(1), 22–48.

Banerjee, A., Galiani, S., Levinsohn, J., McLaren, Z., Woolard, I., 2007. Why Has Unemployment Risen in the New South Africa (No. w13167). National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA.

Bank, L.J., Posel, D., Wilson, F. (Eds.), 2020a. Migrant Labour After Apartheid: The Inside Story. HSRC Press, Cape Town.

Bank, L.J., Posel, D., Wilson, F., 2020b. Introduction: Migrant Labour After Apartheid, in: Bank, L.J., Posel, D., Wilson, F. (Eds.), Migrant Labour after Apartheid: The Inside Story. HSRC Press, Cape Town, 1–28.

Becker, G.S., 1998. A Treatise on the Family, Enl. ed., 1. paperback ed., 4. print. ed. Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge.

Bekker, S., 2001. 'Diminishing returns: Circulatory migration linking Cape Town to the Eastern Cape', *Southern African Journal of Demography*, 8(1), 1–8

Beinart, W., Delius, P., Trapido, S. (Eds.), 1986. Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930, New History of Southern Africa Series. Ravan Press, Johannesburg.

Bezanson, K., Luxton, M., 2006. Social Reproduction. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Bhattacharya, T., 2017. Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction Theory, in: Bhattacharya, T., Vogel, L. (Eds.), Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression. Pluto Press, London, 1–20.

Bhattacharya, T., Vogel, L. (Eds.), 2017. Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression, First published. ed. Pluto Press, London.

Bhorat et. al, 2016. Investigating the Feasibility of a National Minimum Wage for South Africa. Development Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town, Cape Town.

Bhorat, H., 2005. Labour Market Challenges in the Post-Apartheid South Africa. *South African Journal of Economics* 72(5), 940–977.

Blundell, R., McCurdy, T., 1999. Labour supply: A Review of Alternative Approaches, in: Card, D., Ashenfelter, O. (Eds.), Handbook of Labour Economics. Elsevier Science, 1560–1689.

Bozzoli, B., 1983. Marxism, Feminism and South African studies. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9(2), 139–171.

Bridenthal, R., 1976. The Dialectics of Production and Reproduction in History. *Radical America* 10(2), 3–11.

Brown, L.J., 1984. Neoclassical Economics and the Sexual Division of Labor. *Eastern Economics Journal* 10(4), 367–379.

Brown, P., Lauder, H., Cheung, S.Y., 2020. The death of human capital? Its failed promise and how to renew it in an age of disruption. Oxford University Press, New York.

Buch, E., Beer, C. de, 1984. Health and health care in Mhala: an overview, in: Conference Papers Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa. Cape Town.

Budlender, D. (Ed.), 2010. Time Use Studies and Unpaid Care Work, Routledge/UNRISD research in gender and development. Routledge, New York.

Budlender, D., Chobokoane, N., Mpetsheni, Y., 2013. A Survey of Time Use 2010. Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Budlender, D., Lund, F., 2011. South Africa: A Legacy of Family Disruption. *Development and Change* 42(4), 925–946.

Burns, J., Keswell, M., Leibbrandt, M., 2005. Social assistance, gender, and the aged in South Africa. *Feminist Economics* 11(2), 103–115.

Casale, D., 2004. What has the Feminisation of the Labour Market "Bought" Women in South Africa? Trends in Labour Force Participation, Employment and Earnings, 1995-2001. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics* 15(3-4), 251–275.

Casale, D., 2003. The Rise in Female Labour Force Participation in South Africa: An Analysis of Household Survey Data, 1995-2001 (PhD Thesis). University of Natal, Durban.

Casale, D., Posel, D., 2002. The Continued Feminisation of the Labour force in South Africa: An Analysis of Recent Data and Trends. South African Journal of Economics, National Income Dynamics Study - Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey 70, 156–184.

Case, A., Menendez, A., 2007. Does money empower the elderly? Evidence from the Agincourt demographic surveillance site, South Africa. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 35(69), 157–164.

Carter, M.R. and May, J., 1999. 'Poverty, livelihood and class in rural South Africa', *World Development*, 27(1), 1–20.

Cassim, F., 1982. Labour Market Segmentation in South Africa (Seminar Paper), African Studies Seminar Paper. African Studies Institute, Johannesburg.

Charman, A., 1990. 'A response to Albie Sachs: What is the family?', *Agenda*, 6(8), 55–60

Che, G.N., Sundjo, F., 2018. Determinants of Female Labour Force Participation in Cameroon. *International Journal of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting* 3(2), 88–103.

Chevalier, A., Viitanen, T.K., 2002. The causality between female labour force participation and the availability of childcare. *Applied Economics Letters* 9(14), 915–918.

Collinson, M.A., White, M.J., Bocquier, P., McGarvey, S.T., Afolabi, S.A., Clark, S.J., Kahn, K., Tollman, S.M., 2014. Migration and the epidemiological transition: insights from the Agincourt sub-district of northeast South Africa. *Global Health Action* 7(1), 23514.

Collinson, M.A., White, M.J., Ginsburg, C., Gomez-Olive, F.X., Kahn, K., Tollman, S., 2016. Youth migration, livelihood prospects and demographic dividend: A comparison of the Census 2011 and Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance System in the rural northeast of South Africa. *African Population Studies* 30(2), 2629–2639.

Coovadia, F., 2019. Caregivers and gatekeepers: The gendered constraints to conducting job search for young black South Africans (Unpublished Masters Thesis). Oxford University, Oxford.

Dalla Costa, M., James, S. (Eds.), 1975. The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community, 3rd ed. Falling Wall Press Ltd, Bristol.

Daniels, R., Partridge, A., Kekana, D., Musundwa, S., 2013. Rural Livelihoods in South Africa (Working Paper Series No. 122), NIDS Discussion paper 2013/4. Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, Cape Town.

Dawson, H., Fouksman, E., 2019. Labour, laziness and distribution: work imaginaries among the South African unemployed. Presented at the WISER Seminar Series, Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research.

Dawson, H.J., 2022. Living, not just surviving: The politics of refusing low-wage jobs in urban South Africa. *Economy and Society* 51(3), 375–397.

De Henau, J., Himmelweit, S., Perrons, D., 2017. Investing in the Care Economy. International Trade Union Confederation and UN Women.

Delius, P., 2017. The History of Migrant Labor in South Africa (1800–2014). Oxford University Press.

Delius, P., Phillips, L., Rankin-Smith, F. (Eds.), 2017. A Long Way Home: Migrant Worker Worlds 1800–2014. Wits University Press.

Duflo, E., 2003. Grandmothers and Granddaughters: Old-Age Pensions and Intrahousehold Allocation in South Africa. *The World Bank Economic Review* 17(1), 1–25.

Edholm, F., Harris, O., Young, K., 1978. Conceptualising Women. *Critique of Anthropology* 3(9-10), 101–130.

Elson, D., 2000. Progress of the World's Women 2000 (UNIFEM Biennial Report). United Nations Development Fund for Women.

Elson, D., 1997. Gender-Neutral, Gender-Blind or Gender-Sensitive Budgets? Changing the Conceptual Framework to Include Women's Empowerment and the Economy of Care. (Mimeo). Commonwealth Secretariat.

Elson, D., 1993. Gender relations and Economic Issues. *Gender & Development* 1(3), 6–12.

Espi, G., Francis, D., Valodia, I., 2019. Gender inequality in the South African labour market: Insights from the Employment Equity Act data. *Agenda* 33(4), 44–61.

Esquivel, V., Budlender, D., Folbre, N., Hirway, I., 2008. Explorations: Time-use surveys in the south. *Feminist Economics* 14(3), 107–152.

Euwals, R., Knoef, M., van Vuuren, D., 2011. The trend in female labour force participation: what can be expected for the future? *Empirical Economics* 40(3), 729–753.

Eyal, K., Woolard, I., 2011. Female labour force participation and South Africa's Child Support Grant, in: Economic Development in Africa. Presented at the Centre for the Study of African Economies 25th Anniversary Conference, Oxford.

Fadayomi, T.O., Olurinola, I.O., 2014. Determinants of Labour Force Participation in Nigeria: The Influence of Household Structure. *Journal of Economics and Development Studies* 2(2), 169–190.

Fakier, K., 2010. Class and social reproduction in migrant households in a South African community. *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 72, 104–126.

Fakier, K., 2009. The Impact of Migration on Emnambithi Households: A Class and Gender Analysis (PhD Thesis). University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Fakier, K., Cock, J., 2009. Gendered Analysis of the Crisis of Social Reproduction in Contemporary South Africa. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 11(3), 353–71.

Ferber, M.A., Nelson, J.A., 2009. Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics. University of Chicago Press.

Ferguson, S., McNally, D., 2013. Capital, Labour-Power, and Gender-Relations: Introduction to the Historical Materialism Edition of Marxism and the Oppression of Women, in: Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory, Historical Materialism Book Series. Brill, Leiden, Boston.

Fields, G., 2004. A Guide to Multisector Labour Market Models (Working Paper), ILR Collection. Cornell University.

Fine, B., 2013. Labour Market Theory: A Constructive Reassessment, 1. Routledge frontiers of political economy. Routledge, London.

Fine, B., 1992. Women's Employment and the Capitalist Family, Routledge revivals. Routledge, London.

Fischer, A., 1992. Die Historiese en Sosiale Formasie Van 'n Nedersetting in Mhala, Gazankulu (DPhil in Anthropology). Rand Afrikaanse Universiteit, Johannesburg.

Fischer, A., 1987. Land tenure in Mhala: Official wisdom 'locked up' in tradition and people 'locked up' in development. *Development Southern Africa* 4(3), 502–519.

Floro, M.S., Komatsu, H., 2011. Gender and Work in South Africa: What Can Time-Use Data Reveal? *Feminist Economics* 17(4), 33–66.

Folbre, N., 1994. Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint (Economics as Social Theory). Routledge, London; New York.

Francis, D., 2020. Unemployment and the Gendered Economy in South Africa after Covid-19. *Transformation* 104, 103-112.

Francis, D., 2021. Migrant Labour After Apartheid: The Inside Story.in: Bank, L.J., Posel, D., Wilson, F. (Eds.), Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council Press, 2020. xii + 404 pp. ISBN 978 0 7969 2579 4. *South African Historical Journal* 73(3), 775-777.

Francis, D., Valodia, I., 2022. The Informal Economy and Informal Employment in South Africa, in: Mills, G., Jonas, M., Bhorat, H., Hartley, R. (Eds.), Better Choices: Ensuring South Africa's Future. Picador Africa, Johannesburg, 122–135.

Francis, D., Valodia, I., 2018. Minimum Wage for South Africa: a question of power. *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy* 71, 34–39.

Freund, B., 1985. The Modes of Production Debate in African Studies. *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 19(1), 23–29.

Ginsburg, C., Collinson, M.A., Gómez-Olivé, F.X., Gross, M., Harawa, S., Lurie, M.N., Mukondwa, K., Pheiffer, C.F., Tollman, S., Wang, R., White, M.J., 2021. Internal migration and health in South Africa: determinants of healthcare utilisation in a young adult cohort. *BMC Public Health* 21(1), 554.

Gradín, C., 2018. Occupational Gender Segregation in Post-Apartheid South Africa (WIDER Working Paper No. No. 2018/53). The United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), Helsinki.

Gradín, C., 2017. Occupational segregation by race in South Africa after apartheid (WIDER Working Paper No. 2017/73), Helsinki.

Hajdu, F., Neves, D., Granlund, S., 2020. Changing Livelihoods in Rural Eastern Cape, South Africa (2002–2016): Diminishing Employment and Expanding Social Protection. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46(4), 743–772.

Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., de Lacey, S., 2016. Qualitative research methods: when to use them and how to judge them. *Human Reproduction* 31(3), 498–501.

Harries, P., 1994. Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860 - 1910, Social history of Africa. Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg.

Harries, P., 1991. Exclusion, Classification and Internal Colonialism: The Emergence of Ethnicity Among the Tsonga-Speakers of South Africa, in: Vail, L. (Ed.), The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa. University of California Press, Berkeley, 82–117.

Harries, P., 1984. Aspects of poverty in Gazankulu: Three case studies, in: Carnegie Conference Paper No. 252, Conference Papers Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa. Presented at the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in South Africa, Cape Town, 1–12.

Harris, T., Collinson, M., Wittenberg, M., 2017. Aiming for a Moving Target: The Dynamics of Household Electricity Connections in a Developing Context. *World Development* 97, 14–26.

Hart, G., 2007. Changing concepts of articulation. *Africanus* 37(2), 46–65.

Hart, K., 1973. Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 11(1), 61–89.

Hartmann, H., Milli, J., 2021. Gender discrimination in the US Labor market, in: Berik, G., Kongar, E. (Eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Feminist Economics, Routledge International Handbooks. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon; New York,.

Heintz, J., 2019. The Economy's Other Half: How Taking Gender Seriously Transforms Macroeconomics. The Gendered Economy. Agenda Publishing Limited, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Heintz, J., Lund, F., 2012. Welfare Regimes and Social Policy: A Review of the Role of Labour and Employment (UNRISD Research Paper No. 2012–4). WIEGO/UNRISD, Geneva.

Himmelweit, S., 2002. Making Visible the Hidden Economy: The Case for Gender-Impact Analysis of Economic Policy. *Feminist Economics* 8(1), 49–70.

Himmelweit, S., Santos, C., Sevilla, A., Sofer, C., 2013. Sharing of Resources Within the Family and the Economics of Household Decision Making: Sharing of Resources Within the Family. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 75(3), 625–639.

Humphries, J., Rubery, J., 1984. The Reconstitution of the Supply Side of the Labour Market: The Relative Autonomy of Social reproduction. *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 8(4), 331–346.

Humphries, J., Sarasua, C., 2021. The feminization of the labor force and five associated myths, in: Berik, G., Kongar, E. (Eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Feminist Economics, Routledge International Handbooks. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, 169–178.

Hunter, N., 2007. Crises in social reproduction and home-based care. *Africanus* 37(2), 231–243.

International Labour Organisation. 2016. *Women at Work: Trends 2016*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_457317.pdf

International Labour Organisation, 2018. Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture (Third Edition). International Labour Office, Geneva.

Jaumotte, F., 2003. Female Labour Force Participation: Past Trends and Main Determinants in OECD Countries (Working Paper No. 376), OECD Economics Department Working Papers. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Geneva.

Johnson, C., 1996. Deductive Versus Inductive Reasoning: A Closer Look at Economics. *The Social Sciences Journal* 33(3), 287–299.

Kabeer, N., 2004. Globalization, labor standards, and women's rights: dilemmas of collective (in)action in an interdependent world. *Feminist Economics* 10(1), 3–35.

Kabeer, N., 1997. Women, Wages and Intra-household Power Relations in Urban Bangladesh. *Development and Change* 28(2), 261–302.

Kabudula, C.W., Houle, B., Collinson, M.A., Kahn, K., Gómez-Olivé, F.X., Clark, S.J., Tollman, S., 2017a. Progression of the epidemiological transition in a rural South African setting: findings from population surveillance in Agincourt, 1993–2013. *BMC Public Health* 17(1).

Kabudula, C.W., Houle, B., Collinson, M.A., Kahn, K., Tollman, S., Clark, S., 2017b. Assessing Changes in Household Socioeconomic Status in Rural South Africa, 2001–2013: A Distributional Analysis Using Household Asset Indicators. *Social Indicators Research* 133(3), 1047–1073.

Kahn, K., Collinson, M.A., Gomez-Olive, F.X., Mokoena, O., Twine, R., Mee, P., Afolabi, S.A., Clark, B.D., Kabudula, C.W., Khosa, A., Khoza, S., Shabangu, M.G., Silaule, B., Tibane, J.B., Wagner, R.G., Garenne, M.L., Clark, S.J., Tollman, S.M., 2012. Profile: Agincourt Health and Socio-demographic Surveillance System. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 41(4), 988–1001.

Kanbur, R., 2009. Conceptualising Informality: Regulation and Enforcement. IZA Discussion Paper No. 4186. Available at https://ssrn.com/abstract=1412264.

Kapsos, S., Silberman, A., Bourmpoula, E., 2014. Why is female labour force participation declining so sharply in India? (Research Paper No. 10), ILO Research Paper. International Labour Office, Geneva.

Kerr, A., 2018. Job Flows, Worker Flows and Churning in South Africa. *South African Journal of Economics* 86, 141–166.

Kerr, A., Wittenberg, M., Arrow, J., 2014. Job Creation and Destruction in South Africa. *South African Journal of Economics* 82(1), 1–18.

Killingsworth, M.R., Heckman, J.J., 2000. Female Labour Supply: A Survey, in: Ashenfelter, O., Layard, R. (Eds.), Handbook of Labour Economics. North-Holland, Amsterdam.

Kingdon, G.G. and Knight, J., 2004. 'Unemployment in South Africa: The Nature of the Beast', *World Development*, 32(3), 391–408.

Kingdon, G. and Knight, J., 2007. 'Unemployment in South Africa, 1995 2003: Causes, Problems and Policies', *Journal of African Economies,* 16(5), 813–848.

Klasen, S., Woolard, I., 2000. Unemployment and employment in South Africa, 1995-1997, Report to the Department of Finance. South Africa.

Lavoie, D., 2011. The interpretive dimension of economics: Science, hermeneutics, and praxeology. *Review of Austrian Economics* 24(2), 91–128.

Legassick, M., 1974. South Africa: capital accumulation and violence. *Economy and Society* 3(3), 253–291.

Legassick, M., Wolpe, H., 1976. The Bantustans and Capital Accumulation in South Africa. *Review of African Political Economy* 3(7), 87–107.

Lipton, M., 1986. Capitalism and Apartheid: South Africa, 1910-1986. Wildwood House, Aldershot, Hants.

Lombard, A., Kruger, E., 2009. Older Persons: The Case of South Africa. *Ageing International* 34(3), 119.

Madhavan, S., Schatz, E., Gómes-Olivé, F.X., Collinson, M., 2017b. Social Positioning of Older Persons in Rural South Africa: Change or Stability? *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43(6), 1293–1307.

Madhavan, S., Schatz, E.J., 2007. Coping with change: Household structure and composition in rural South Africa, 1992 — 2003. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 35(69), 85–93.

Mafeje, A., 1981. On the Articulation of Modes of Production: Review Article. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 8(1), 123–138.

Mahoney, J., Goertz, G., 2006. A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research. *Political. Analysis* 14(3), 227–249.

Maloney, W.F., 2004. Informality Revisited. *World Development* 32(7), 1159–1178.

Marks, S., Rathbone, R. (Eds.), 1982. Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture, and Consciousness, 1870-1930. Longman, New York.

Marx, K., 1993. Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, 3, Reissue Edition. Penguin Classics, London.

Mathee, A., Moyes, J., Mkhencele, T., Kleynhans, J., Language, B., Piketh, S., Moroe, E., Wafawanaka, F., Martinson, N., McMorrow, M., Tempia, S., Kahn, K., Cohen, C., 2021. Housing Quality in a Rural and an Urban Settlement in South Africa. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18(5), 2240.

Mattila-Wiro, P., 1999. Economic Theories of the Household: A Critical Review. UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki.

Mbiba, M., Collinson, M., Hunter, L., Twine, W., 2019. Social capital is subordinate to natural capital in buffering rural livelihoods from negative shocks: Insights from rural South Africa. *Journal of Rural Studies* 65, 12–21.

Meillassoux, C., 1981. Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Meillassoux, C., 1972. From reproduction to production: A Marxist approach to economic anthropology. *Economy and Society* 1(1), 93–105.

Mezzadri, A., 2019. On the value of social reproduction. *Radical Philosophy* 2(4), 33–41.

Milonakis, D., Fine, B., 2009. From Political Economy to Economics: Method, the social and the historical in the evolution of economic theory. Economics as social theory. Routledge, London; New York.

Mitchell, J., 1966. Women: The Longest Revolution. *New Left Review* 40, 11–37.

Mohandesi, S., Teitelman, E., 2017. Without Reserves, in: Bhattacharya, T., Vogel, L. (Eds.), Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression. Pluto Press, London, 37–67.

Moody, E., Golino, C., 1984. Area study on Gazankulu, in: Carnegie Conference Paper No. 252, Conference Papers Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa. Presented at the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in South Africa, Cape Town, 1–13.

Moore, E.J., 1984. Women and Rural Development Planning: A case study of Gazankulu (Unpublished Dissertation for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Town and Regional Planning). University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Morris, M., 1988. Social History and the Transition to Capitalism in the South African Countryside. *Review of African Political Economy* 15(41), 60–72.

Morris, M.L., 1976. The development of capitalism in South African agriculture: class struggle in the countryside. *Economy and Society* 5(3), 292–343.

Morton, P., 1971. A Woman's Work Is Never Done, in: Altbach, E.H. (Ed.), From Feminism to Liberation. Schenkman Publishing, Cambridge, 211–229.

Mosoetsa, S., 2011. Eating from One Pot: The dynamics of survival in poor South African households. Wits University Press, Johannesburg.

Mosomi, J., 2019a. Distributional changes in the gender wage gap in the post-apartheid South African labour market (WIDER Working Paper No. 2019/17). UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research, Cape Town.

Mosomi, J., 2019b. An empirical analysis of trends in female labour force participation and the gender wage gap in South Africa. *Agenda* 33(4), 29–43.

Moultrie, T.A., 2017. A Case of An Almost Complete Demographic Transition: South Africa, in: Groth, H., May, J.F. (Eds.), Africa's Population: In Search of a Demographic Dividend. Springer International Publishing, 87–99.

Muller, C., 2010. An Analysis of the Extent, Nature and Consequences of Female Part-Time Employment in Post-Apartheid South Africa. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

Murray, C., 1987 'Class, Gender and the Household: The Developmental Cycle in Southern Africa', *Development and Change*, 18(2), 235–249.

Nattrass, N., Seekings, J., 2019. Inclusive Dualism: Labour-Intensive Development, Decent Work, and Surplus Labour in Southern Africa. Oxford University Press, New York.

Niehaus, I.A., 1993. Witch-Hunting and Political Legitimacy: Continuity and Change in Green Valley, Lebowa, 1930–91. *Africa* 63(4), 498–530.

Ntuli, M., 2007. Determinants of South African women's labour force participation, 1995-2004 (Discussion Paper No. 3119), IZA Discussion Papers. Institute for the Study of Labor, Bonn.

Ntuli, M., Wittenberg, M., 2013. Determinants of Black Women's Labour Force Participation in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Journal of African Economies* 22(3) 347–374.

O'Laughlin, B., 2022. No separate spheres: the contingent reproduction of living labor in Southern Africa. *Review of International Political Economy* 29(6) 1827-1846.

O'Laughlin, B., 1977. Production and Reproduction: Meillassoux's Femmes, Greniers et Capitaux. *Critique of Anthropology* 2(8), 3–32.

Peck, J., 1996. Work-Place: The Social Regulation of Labor Markets. Perspectives on Economic Change. Guilford Press, New York.

Perelman, M., 2007. Articulation from Feudalism to Neoliberalism. *Africanus* 37(2), 22–38.

Pheby, J., 1988. Methodology and Economics: A Critical Introduction. Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Philip, K., 2010. Inequality and economic marginalisation: How the structure of the economy impacts on opportunities on the margins. *Law, Democracy & Development* 14, 105–132.

Polanyi, K., 2001. The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time, 2nd Beacon Paperback ed. Beacon Press, Boston.

Posel, D., 2020. Migrant Labour After Apartheid: The Inside Story, in: Bank, L.J., Posel, D., Wilson, F. (Eds.), Migrant Labour after Apartheid: The inside Story. HSRC Press, Cape Town, 29–43.

Posel, D., 2017. Enriching economics in South Africa: interdisciplinary collaboration and the value of quantitative – qualitative exchanges. *Journal of Economic Methodology* 24(2), 119–133.

Posel, D., 2014. Gender Inequality, in: Bhorat, H., Hirsch, A., Kanbur, S.M.R., Ncube, M. (Eds.), The Oxford Companion to the Economics of South Africa. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Posel, D., Fairburn, J., Lund, F., 2006. Labour migration and households: A reconsideration of the effects of the social pension on labour supply in South Africa. *Economic Modelling* 23(5), 836–853.

Posel, D., Grapsa, E., 2017. Gender Divisions in the Real Time of the Elderly in South Africa, in: Connelly, R., Kongar, M.E. (Eds.), Gender and Time Use in a Global Context: The Economics of Employment and Unpaid Labor. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Posel, D., Hall, K., 2021. The Economics of Households in South Africa, in: Oqubay, A., Tregenna, F., Valodia, I. (Eds.), The Oxford Handbook of the South African Economy, Oxford Handbooks in Economics. Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York, 800–822.

Posel, D., Rogan, M., 2009. Women, income and poverty: Gendered access to resources in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Agenda* 23(81), 25–34.

Ragie, F.H., Olivier, D.W., Hunter, L.M., Erasmus, B.F.N., Vogel, C., Collinson, M., Twine, W., 2020. A portfolio perspective of rural livelihoods in Bushbuckridge, South Africa. S*outh African Journal of Science* 116(9/10).

Ralston, M., Schatz, E., Menken, J., Gómez-Olivé, F., Tollman, S., 2015. Who Benefits - Or Does Not - From South Africa's Old Age Pension? Evidence from Characteristics of Rural Pensioners and Non-Pensioners. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 13(1), 85.

Reynolds, J.H., Fine, B., Van Niekerk, R. (Eds.), 2019. Race, class and the post-apartheid democratic state. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg.

Ritchken, E., 1995. Leadership and Conflict in Bushbuckridge: Struggles to Define Moral Economies Within the Context of Rapidly Transforming Political Economies (1978-1990) (Doctor of Philosophy). University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Rospabe, S., 2001. An Empirical Evaluation of Gender Discrimination in Employment, Occupation Attainment and Wage in South Africa in the late 1990s (Unpublished working paper). University of Cape Town, Cape Town.

Sachs, M., 2021. Fiscal Dimensions of South Africa's Crisis (Working Paper No. Number 15), Public Economy Project SCIS Working Paper. Southern Centre for Inequality Studies, Wits University, Johannesburg.

Sackey, H.A., 2005. Female labour force participation in Ghana: The effects of education (AERC Research Paper No. 150). African Economic Research Consortium, Nairobi.

Sanghi, S., Srija, A., Vijay, S.S., 2015. Decline in Rural Female Labour Force Participation in India: A Relook into the Causes. *Vikalpa* 40(3), 255–268.

Schatz, E., Madhavan, S., Collinson, M., Gómez-Olivé, F.X., Ralston, M., 2015. Dependent or Productive? A New Approach to Understanding the Social Positioning of Older South Africans Through Living Arrangements. *Research on Aging* 37(6), 581–605.

Scully, B., Webster, E., 2019. The Countryside and Capitalism: Rethinking the Cheap Labour Thesis in Post-Apartheid South Africa, in: Reynolds, J., Fine, B., van Niekerk, R. (Eds.), Race, Class and the Post-Apartheid Democratic State. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg,31–56.

Seekings, J., Nattrass, N., 2015. Policy, Politics and Poverty in South Africa. Palgrave Macmillan UK, London.

Seekings, J., Nattrass, N., 2005. Class, Race, and Inequality in South Africa. Yale University Press, New Haven.

Sen, A., 1987. Gender and Cooperative Conflicts (Working Paper No. WP 18), WIDER Working Papers. World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki.

Sender, J., 2002. Women's Struggle to Escape Rural Poverty in South Africa. *J Agrarian Change* 2(1), 1–49.

Sharp, J., 1994. 'A world turned upside down: households and differentiation in a South African bantustan in the 1980s', *African Studies*, 53(1), 71–88

Sharp, J. and Spiegel, A.D., 1990. 'Women and Wages: Gender and the Control of Income in Farm and Bantustan Households', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 16(3), 527–549

Shoko, M., Collinson, M., Lefakane, L., Kahn, K., Tollman, S., 2016. What can we learn about South African households by comparing the national Census 2011 with the Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance System data in rural northeast Mpumalanga? *African Population Studies* 30(2), 2403–2412.

Sitas, A., 2007. Wolpe's legacy of articulating political economy. *Africanus* 37(2), 39–45.

Sorsa, P., Mares, J., Didier, M., Guimaraes, C., Rabate, M., Tang, G., Tuske, A., 2015. Determinants of the Low Female Labour Force Participation in India (Working Paper No. 1207), OECD Economics Department Working Papers. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Geneva.

Spiegel, A.D., 1986. 'The fluidity of household composition in Matatiele, Transkei: a methodological problem', *African Studies*, 45(1), 17–35.

Spiegel, A.D., 1988. 'The ambiguities of betterment: A Transkei case study', *African Studies,* 47(2), pp. 145–154.

Sprague, A., 1994. Work experience, earnings and participation: evidence from the women and employment survey. *Applied Economics* 26(7), 659–667.

Stadler, J., 1994. Generational Relationships in a Lowveld Village: questions of age, household, and tradition (Unpublished Masters Thesis). University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Standing, G., 1999. Global Feminization Through Flexible Labor: A Theme Revisited. *World Development* 27(3), 583–602.

Standing, G., Sender, J., Weeks, J., 1996. Restructuring the labour market: the South African challenge, An ILO country review. International Labour Office, Geneva.

Statistics South Africa, 2021a. Quarterly Labour Force Survey Quarter 1: 2021 (Statistical Release No. P0211). Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Statistics South Africa, 2021b. Quarterly Labour Force Survey Quarter 2: 2021 (Statistical Release No. P0211). Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Statistics South Africa, 2016. Community Survey 2016 In Brief. Statistics South Africa, Pretoria. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/03-01-06/03-01-062016.pdf.

Statistics South Africa, 2014. Census 2011: Profile of older persons in South Africa (No. 03-01–60), Census 2011. Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Statistics South Africa, 2013. Quarterly Labour Force Survey Quarter 4: 2012 (Statistical Release No. P0211). Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Staveren, I. van, Elson, D., Grown, C., Cagatay, N. (Eds.), 2007. The Feminist Economics of Trade. Routledge IAFFE advances in feminist economics. Routledge, London; New York.

Thevenon, O., 2013. Drivers of Female Labour Force Participation in the OECD (Working Paper No. 145), OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Geneva.

Thornton, A., 2021. Household formation in post-apartheid South Africa, 1995-2011: Measurement and Trends (Doctor of Philosophy). University of Cape Town, Cape Town.

Tollman, S.M., Herbst, K., Garenne, M., Gear, J.S., Kahn, K., 1999. The Agincourt demographic and health study - site description, baseline findings and implications. *South African Medical Journal* 89(8), 858–864.

Twine, W., Hunter, L., Collinson, M., Erasmus, B., 2018. Research Protocol: Sustainability in Communal Socio-Ecological Systems (SUCSES) Panel study.

Valodia, I., Collier, D., Cawe, A., Lijane, M., Koyana, S., Leibbrandt, M., Francis, D., 2016. A National Minimum Wage for South Africa. NEDLAC, Johannesburg.

Valodia, I., Devey, R., 2012. The Informal Economy in South Africa: Debates, Issues and Policies. Margin: *The Journal of Applied Economic Research* 6(2), 133–157.

Valodia, I., Devey, R., 2011. Formal-informal economy linkages: What implications for poverty in South Africa? *Law, Democracy & Development* 14(1), 1-26.

Valodia, I., Francis, D., 2016. How the search for a national minimum wage laid bare South Africa's faultlines. The Conversation.

van Warmelo, N.J., 1935. A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs: Ethnological Publications. Government Printer, Pretoria.

Vlasblom, J.D., Schippers, J.J., 2004. Increases in Female Labour Force Participation in Europe: Similarities and Differences. *European Journal of Population* 20, 375–392.

Vogel, L., 2013. Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory. Historical Materialism Book Series. Brill, Leiden, Boston.

Walker, C., 1995. 'Conceptualising Motherhood in Twentieth Century South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(3), 417–437

Weiss, R.S., 1995. Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies. First Free Press paperback ed. Free Press, New York.

Willekens, F., 2010. Family and Household Demography, in: Yi, Z. (Ed.), Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems. UNESCO in partnership with EOLSS Publishers, Oxford, 86–112.

Wilson, F., 1972. Migrant Labour in South Africa. South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg.

Winders, J., Smith, B.E., 2018. Social reproduction and capitalist production: A genealogy of dominant imaginaries. *Progress in Human Geography* 43, 871-889.

Wittenberg, M., 2009. The Intra-Household Allocation of Work and Leisure in South Africa. *Social Indicators Research* 93(1), 159–164.

Wittenberg, M., Collinson, M.A., 2020. Household formation and service delivery in post-apartheid South Africa: Evidence from the Agincourt sub-district 1992–2012. *Development Southern Africa* 37(4), 708–726.

Wolpe, H., 1972. Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid. *Economy and Society* 1(4), 425–456.

Appendix A: Interview questions

Semi-structured interview: Households

1. Work and income
   1.1. Tell me about the employment opportunities in your community. Are you currently doing paid work? Can you tell me more about the work you do, whether it is paid or unpaid?
   1.2. Can you tell me more about your own activities? Do you have you own business or self-employment? How long have you been doing this business? Do any members of your family help with the business?

2. Reasons for lack of work (if the person is not working)
   2.1. Can you tell me a little bit more about the main challenges with finding work in Agincourt?

3. Decisions to undertake paid or unpaid work (if the person is working)
   3.1. Can you tell me more about the main reasons why you have a paid job/self-employment?
   3.2. What were the main barriers to your taking up paid work?

4. Paid and unpaid work in your household
   4.1. Can you tell me about any challenges you have faced balancing your paid and unpaid work in the household? When you started working, did you stop doing other chores/care work around the house?

5. Female employment in Agincourt
   5.1. Can you tell me about the barriers that women in Agincourt face when looking for work? Have you personally experienced these?
   5.2. Do you think it is getting easier or more difficult for women to find paid work in Agincourt?
   5.3. What do you see as the main opportunities for paid work for women in Agincourt?

6. Space for open questions and discussion.

Semi-structured interview: Traders and self employed

The purpose of this interview is to better understand work in the Agincourt area, and in particular any gendered differences.

1. Please can you tell me your name and age?

2. Work and income
   2.1. Please can you tell me more about the work you are doing here?
      2.1.1. What exactly do you do?
      2.1.2. Is this is your own business?
      2.1.3. Do you work here full-time or part-time?
      2.1.4. How long have you been working here?
      2.1.5. Do any members of your family help with the business?

3. Decisions to undertake paid or unpaid work (if the person is working)
   3.1. Can you tell me more about the main reasons why you started working here?
   3.2. What were the main barriers to your taking up paid work?

4. Unpaid work in your household
   4.1. Can you tell me who is part of your household, and what each of them do?
   4.2. Who takes care of your household while you are working here?

5. Women's employment in Agincourt
   5.1. Can you tell me about the barriers that women in Agincourt face when looking for work? Have you personally experienced these?
   5.2. Is it harder for men or women to find work? Why?
   5.3. Do you think it is getting easier or more difficult for women to find paid work in Agincourt?
   5.4. What do think can be done to address some of these challenges?

6. Space for open questions and discussion.

Appendix B: Informed consent form

Investigating the South African Labour Market: social reproduction and labour market participation in Agincourt

David Francis

I …….. agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO	(please circle)
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his research report	YES	NO	
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO	
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously by other researchers following this study	YES	NO	
I agree that the anonymized data may be used by other researchers, subject to their own ethical clearance	YES	NO	

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

David Francis

Researcher

Appendix C: Participant information sheet

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is David Francis, and I am a PhD student in Economics at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating the determinants of female labour force participation in Agincourt Village. The aim of this research project is to find out the factors that enable or prevent women from looking for and finding work in the labour market.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in an interview, either in person or telephonically. This activity will involve a short list of questions about your household, and will take around 45 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device and will be kept secure and confidential. It will be deleted after two years.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not disclose your name or any identifying information to anyone else, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you do not wish to participate in this research, neither you nor your organisation will be penalised in any way.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

David Campbell Francis

David Francis, david.francis@wits.ac.za, 0844336738
Imraan Valodia, imraan.valodia@wits.ac.za, 0836335069

Appendix D: Ethics Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Francis

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H21/03/06**
PROJECT TITLE	Investigating the South African Labour Market: Social reproduction and labour market participation in Agincourt
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr D Francis
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	School of Economics and Finance/
DATE CONSIDERED	19 March 2021
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Risk Level: Low
EXPIRY DATE	04 May 2024

DATE 05 May 2021 **CHAIRPERSON** _____ (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor I Valodia

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.**

Signature 06/05/2021 Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES