

**EXPLAINING POVERTY: A COMPARISON BETWEEN  
PERCEPTIONS AND CONDITIONS OF POVERTY IN  
SOUTH AFRICA**

**Yul Derek Davids**

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Promotor:

Professor Amanda Gouws

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## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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## SUMMARY

In this dissertation I explore people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. Literature reveals that there are three broad theoretical explanations of perceptions of the causes of poverty: individualistic explanations, where blame is placed squarely on the poor themselves; structural explanations, where poverty is blamed on external social and economic forces; and fatalistic explanations, which attribute poverty to factors such as bad luck or illness. Furthermore, the findings of studies reviewed showed that these explanations interact with socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, geographical location, education, lived poverty index (LPI), living standard measure (LSM) and employment. I therefore critically examine explanations of poverty among South Africans as measured by individualistic, structural and fatalistic dimensions and how it interacts with the socio-economic and demographic variables.

Employing a national representative survey of 3510 adults aged 18 and older conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council between 18 April and 30 May 2006 the findings of the present study confirmed most of the theoretical arguments cited in the literature. For instance, South Africans, in general, perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms, but a large proportion of respondents also perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. Access to basic necessities influenced perceptions of the causes of poverty since the poor mostly perceived poverty in structural rather than individualistic terms. White South Africans in contrast to black Africans perceive the causes of poverty mostly in individualistic terms. Coloured respondents are the most fatalistic in their perceptions of the causes of poverty. Further analysis show that respondents living in traditional areas compared to those in urban formal areas are less likely to have structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. This is a very interesting finding because my examination on the extent of lived poverty in showed that the urban formal areas have the smallest proportion of respondents that have gone without basic necessities over the past year if contrasted to the traditional, rural formal and urban informal areas. I found that education had no significant impact on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. In spite of my assessment of the extent of access to basic necessities which revealed that a

large proportion of respondents with primary education compared to those with tertiary education go without these basic necessities.

In addition, the study found that the relationship between the socio-economic and demographic variables and the structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty is considerably more complex and that it is possible for the race group, level of education, employment status and geographical location of the respondent all to interact in a multidimensional manner and have an impact on how the causes of poverty is perceived. However, the three linear regressions examining the relationship between the socio-economic and demographic variables and the structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty should be interpreted with caution because the explanatory power of the three regression models is quite weak (as indicated by Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>).

In sum, the present study is extremely relevant in many ways and makes a unique contribution at both a methodological and policy level. Methodologically, the findings showed that the LPI may contribute to the proposed poverty line suggested for South Africa. As such, the findings offer a valuable message for the country's decision makers about South Africans' perceptions of the causes of poverty.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek die persepsies van die publiek met verwysing na die oorsake van armoede. Die literatuur dui op drie breë teoretiese verklarings aangaande persepsies oor die oorsake van armoede: individualistiese verklarings wat die blaam vierkantig op die armes self plaas, strukturele verklarings wat armoede toeskryf aan eksterne sosiale en ekonomiese magte en dan fatalistiese verklarings wat armoede toeskryf aan faktore soos die noodlot of siekte. Navorsing toon dat hierdie verklarings in interaksie met sosio-demografies, ekonomiese veranderlikes soos ras, geografiese ligging, opvoeding, indiensneming; die 'Lived Poverty Index' en geslag verkeer. Die huidige verhandeling ondersoek dus krities die verklarings, in terme van armoede onder Suid-Afrikaners, soos gemeet deur die individualistiese, strukturele en fatalistiese dimensies en hul interaksie met sosio-demografiese en ekonomiese veranderlikes.

'n Nasionale verteenwoordigende opname van 3,510 volwassenes, 18 jaar en ouer wat tussen 18 April en 30 Mei 2009 deur die Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing uitgevoer het die meeste van die teoretiese argumente waarna in die literatuur verwys word bevestig. Byvoorbeeld, Suid-Afrikaners het oor die algemeen armoede vanuit 'n strukturele perspektief waargeneem. 'n Groot proporsie van respondente het armoede egter aan individualistiese faktore toegeskryf. Toegang tot basiese noodsaaklikhede het die persepsies van armoede beïnvloed aangesien die armes armoede meestal toegeskryf het aan strukturele eerder as individualistiese dimensies.

Blankes, in vergelyking met Swart Suid-Afrikaners, het individualistiese eerder as strukturele persepsies getoon. Kleurling repondente was die mees fatalisties aangaande hul persepsies oor die oorsake van armoede. Respondente wat in tradisionele landelike areas woon het armoede in 'n mindere mate toegeskryf aan strukturele persepsies in vergelyking met repondente woonagtig in formele stedelike areas. Dit was 'n baie interessante resultaat omdat daar verwag is dat respondente wat in tradisionele landelike areas woon armoede eerder sou toeskryf aan strukturele persepsies, terwyl repondente woonagtig in formele stedelike areas meer individualistiese persepsies sou openbaar. Die

studie het ook bevind dat opvoeding en indiensneming geen merkwaardige invloed het op persepsies oor die oorsake van armoede nie.

‘n Verdere bevinding van die studie was dat die verhouding tussen die sosio-ekonomiese en demografiese veranderlikes en die struturele, individualistiese en fatalistiese persepsies van armoede aansienlik meer ingewikkeld en kompleks is. Dit is dus moontlik dat die rassegroep, vlak van opvoeding, indiensnemingstatus en geografiese ligging van ’n respondent saam op ’n multi-dimensionele manier in interaksie kan verkeer en dus ’n impak kan hê op hoe armoede deur die respondent gesien word. Dit is belangrik om daarop te let dat die drie regressie analises wat die verhouding tussen die sosio-ekonomiese en demografiese veranderlikes en die struturele, individualistiese en fatalistiese persepsies van armoede ondersoek baie versigtig geïnterpreteer moet word aangesien die verklaringsterkte van die drie regressies baie swak is.

Ter opsomming was die studie onder bespreking uiters relevant ten opsigte van verskeie areas en het dit dus ’n unieke bydrae gemaak tot beide metodologiese en beleidskwessies. Metodologies het die bevindinge getoon dat die ‘Lived Poverty Index’ kan bydra tot die voorgestelde armoede-lyn vir Suid-Afrika. Die bevindinge bied waardevolle inligting vir die land se besluitnemers aangaande Suid-Afrikaners se persepsies oor die oorsake van armoede.

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## **DEDICATION**

*This work is dedicated to my wife, Michelle and two boys Gino and Antonio.*

*May this inspire you Gino and you Antonio to live your dreams to the fullest.*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
SUMMARY	iii – iv
OPSOMMING	v–vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
DEDICATION	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix–xvii
LIST OF TABLES	xviii
LIST OF FIGURES	xviii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xix–xxi
<b>CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1 – 17</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 GLOBAL AGENDA ON POVERTY	2
1.3 POVERTY ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT	4
1.4 POVERTY AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE	5
1.5 PRIOR RESEARCH	8
1.5.1 Perceptions of the causes of poverty	8
1.5.2 The diversity of perceptions of the causes of poverty	10
1.6 THE PRESENT STUDY	12
1.6.1 Aims of the study	12
1.6.2 Research questions	13
1.6.3 Research design	14
1.6.4 Structure of the dissertation	15
1.7 CONCLUSION	16
<b>CHAPTER 2 – CONCEPTUALISING AND DEFINING POVERTY</b>	<b>18 – 45</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION	18
2.2 THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF POVERTY	19
2.2.1 Money metric approaches	20
2.2.2 Relative approach	21

2.2.3	The capabilities approach	22
2.2.4	Social exclusion approach	24
2.2.5	Multidimensional approaches	25
2.3	PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEFINITION OF POVERTY	27
2.3.1	Relative and absolute poverty	27
2.3.2	Subjective and objective poverty	29
2.4	DEFINING POVERTY	31
2.5	DEFINING POVERTY WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA	33
2.5.1	Review of key poverty projects and research within South Africa	35
2.5.2	Availability and quality of data	38
2.5.3	Politics of defining and measuring poverty	39
2.5.4	Towards a democratic multidimensional poverty approach	41
2.5.6	Lived Poverty Index	44
2.6	CONCLUSION	45
 <b>CHAPTER 3 – PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY</b>		<b>46 – 89</b>
3.1	INTRODUCTION	46
3.2	WHY FOCUS ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY?	47
3.3	DEFINING PERCEPTIONS	48
3.4	PERCEPTION: INTERRELATED AND INTERDEPENDENT	49
3.5	PERSPECTIVES: PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	51
3.5.1	Individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	51
3.5.2	Structural perceptions of the causes of poverty	53
3.5.3	Fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	53
3.5.4	Psychological explanations of the causes of poverty	54
3.6	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS UNDERLYING PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY	55
3.6.1	Conservative Approaches explaining individualistic	

	perceptions of the causes of poverty	58
3.6.2	Liberal Approaches explaining structural perceptions of the causes of poverty	61
3.6.3	Theories explaining fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	62
3.7	EMPIRICAL FINDINGS OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	64
3.8.	POOR VERSUS NON-POOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	65
3.8.1	Non-poor perceptions of the causes of poverty	66
3.8.2	How do the poor perceive poverty?	68
3.9	PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY AS A FUNCTION OF RACE	70
3.9.1	Cross-country differences in perceptions of the causes of poverty	71
3.9.2	Differences in perceptions of the causes of poverty across race or ethnic groups	72
3.9.3	Intra-group differences in perceptions of the causes of poverty	73
3.9.4	Poverty attitudes are shaped by negative racial and ethnic perceptions	75
3.9.5	Personal versus group perceptions of poverty	76
3.10	THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES POVERTY	77
3.10.1	Education and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty	78
3.10.2	Education and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	79
3.10.3	Education as facilitator of positive / negative	

attitudes towards poverty / the poor	80
3.11 IMPACT OF GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES POVERTY	81
3.11.1 The distribution and access to resources within diverse communities	82
3.12 IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	84
3.12.1 Impact of employment on structural versus individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	85
3.12.2 Employment is interconnected with socio-demographic variables when explaining perceptions of poverty	86
3.12.3 Perceptions of poverty are divided along income levels even within groups	87
3.12.4 The role of the media in influencing perceptions of low-income people	88
3.13 CONCLUSION	88
<b>CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>90 – 120</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION	90
4.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY	90
4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	91
4.4 OVERVIEW OF THE HYPOTHESES	92
4.4.1 First set of hypotheses	92
4.4.2 Second set of hypotheses	93
4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	95
4.5.1 National representative survey	95
4.5.2 Study population	95
4.5.3 Sample	96
4.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	97
4.6.1 Application of the Feagin Scale	100
4.6.2 Measuring poverty and the Lived Poverty Index	102

4.6.3.	Translation of the questionnaire	105
4.7	<b>SAMPLING DESIGN</b>	106
4.7.1	Stage 1: Stratification and random selection of the primary sampling units	106
4.7.2	Stage 2: Selection of the visiting point	107
4.7.3	Stage 3: Respondent selection procedure and household roster	107
4.8	<b>DATA COLLECTION</b>	108
4.8.1	Data collection method	108
4.8.2	Recruitment of fieldwork teams	109
4.8.3	Fieldwork training	110
4.8.4	Fieldwork training manual	111
4.8.5	Gaining access to the subjects	111
4.8.6	Quality control	112
4.9	<b>CAPTURING AND EDITING OF THE DATA</b>	114
4.9.1	Field back checks	114
4.9.2	Questionnaire screening and coding	114
4.9.3	Data entry	115
4.9.4	Data cleaning and verification	115
4.10	<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>	116
4.11	<b>LIMITATIONS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF THE DATA</b>	117
4.11.1	Intra-household dynamics and the measurement of poverty	117
4.11.2	Limitations with regard to questionnaire content	118
4.11.3	General shortcomings of surveys	119
4.12	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	119
	 <b>CHAPTER 5 – PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS</b>	 <b>121 – 150</b>
5.1	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	121
5.2	<b>PRIMARY ANALYSIS RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY</b>	121
5.2.1	Perceptions of the causes of poverty indices	121

5.2.2	Primary analysis statistical methods	124
5.2.3	Presentation of the results of the primary analysis	125
5.3	SECONDARY ANALYSIS RESULTS: EXAMINING THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA	127
5.3.1	Construction of the LPI	128
5.3.2	Examining the extent and nature of poverty in South Africa	129
5.4	TERTIARY ANALYSIS RESULTS: INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	135
5.4.1	Examining the interrelationships among the variables employed in the regressions	136
5.4.2	Explaining perceptions of the causes of poverty	140
5.4.2.1	Model 1: Explaining structural perceptions of the causes of poverty	141
5.4.2.2	Model 2: Explaining individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	144
5.4.2.3	Model 3: Explaining fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	146
5.5	CONCLUDING INTERPRETATION	148
<b>CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS</b>		<b>151 – 176</b>
6.1	INTRODUCTION	151
6.2	SOUTH AFRICANS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	151
6.3	IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON STRUCTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	153
6.3.1	The impact of LPI on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty	155
6.3.2	LSM and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty	156
6.3.3	The impact of race on structural perceptions of the	

	causes of poverty	158
6.3.4	Geographic location and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty	159
6.4	IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON INDIVIDUALISTIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	161
6.4.1	Race and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	161
6.4.2	LPI and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	162
6.4.3	Geographic location and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	163
6.5	IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON FATALISTIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	164
6.5.1	Race and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	164
6.5.2	LSM and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	165
6.5.3	LPI and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	166
6.5.4	Geographic location and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	166
6.6	EDUCATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	167
6.7	EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY	168
6.8	MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY	169
6.9	LARGER RELEVANCE AND VALUE OF PRESENT DISSERTATION	171
6.9.1	Poverty is major priority for the South African government	172
6.9.2	Measuring poverty versus understanding the causes of poverty	172
6.9.3	People's perceptions contribute to pro-poor policy making	173
6.9.4	Lack of data based on people's perception of poverty	173

6.9.5	LPI contribution to the construction of the official poverty line	174
6.10	CONCLUDING COMMENTS	174
<b>CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		<b>177 – 200</b>
7.1	INTRODUCTION	177
7.2	OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION	179
7.3	SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS	180
7.3.1	Dominant impact of poverty on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty	181
7.3.2	Dominant impact of white on individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	182
7.3.3	Dominant impact of coloured on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty	183
7.4	RECOMMENDATIONS	184
7.4.1	Job creation	187
7.4.2	Social security	190
7.4.3	Community Development	193
7.4.3.1	Improved service delivery and infrastructure Development	194
7.4.3.2	Improving access to education within poor Communities	196
7.4.3.3	Investment in health within poor communities	197
7.4.3.4	Access to housing within poor communities	197
7.4.3.5	Social inclusion and social capital	198
7.5	CONCLUDING COMMENT	199



<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>200 – 215</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>216</b>
Appendix A: Survey Questions (Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3)	216
Appendix B: HSRC DOC household survey 2006 – definitions	222
Appendix C1: Stage 3: Respondent selection procedure and household roster	223
Appendix C2: Questionnaire format: Respondent selection procedure and Kish grid	225
Appendix D: Bar code number (sticker)	227
Appendix E: Department of Communications (DoC) Survey 2006 Introduction Letter	228
Appendix F: Project Information Letter for the Police DOC 2006 Survey	229
Appendix G: Consent form for the respondent	23-01
Appendix H1: Permission Letter to use additional questions of the DOC 2006 Survey	232
Appendix H2: Fieldwork and Data Management (Part of the Data Permission Letter)	233
Appendix I: Q-Q Plots	235
Appendix J: P-P Plots	237
<b>NOTES</b>	<b>239</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	Demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 3510)	97
Table 5.1	Factor Analysis Perceptions of the Causes of Poverty: Item Loadings	122
Table 5.2:	Fatalistic Index – Factor Analysis	123
Table 5.3:	Structural Index – Factor Analysis	124
Table 5.4:	Individualistic Index – Factor Analysis	124
Table 5.5	Perceptions of the causes of poverty (Mean scores)	125
Table 5.6:	Perceptions of the causes of poverty (percent)	127
Table 5.7	Lived Poverty Index: Factor loadings	129
Table 5.8	Poverty lines to estimate the proportion of people who are poor	130
Table 5.9	Mean scores of the LPI by race, education, geographic location, employment status, gender, age and LSM	133
Table 5.10:	Correlations among the variables	138
Table 5.11	Regression analysis summary for predicting structural perceptions	143
Table 5.12	Regression analysis summary for predicting individualistic perceptions	145
Table 5.13	Regression analysis summary for predicting fatalistic perceptions	147

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1:	Theoretical Frameworks for perceptions of the causes of poverty	56
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Agence France-Presse (An independent news agency)
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
AsgiSA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
BJW	Belief in a just world framework
Cosatu	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPCPS	Chinese Perceived Causes of Poverty Scale
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CTWPQ	Causes of the Third World Poverty Questionnaire
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
DOC	Department of Communication
EA	Census Enumerated Areas
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
GDP	Gross national product
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy
GPs	General practitioners
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
HPI	Human Poverty Index
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDP	Integrated Development Planning
IMATU	Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union

IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISRDP	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme
JWS	Just World Scale
KIDS	KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study
LPI	Lived Poverty Index
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NHI	National Health Insurance
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NSWS	Non-social work students
PCP	Perceptions of the causes of poverty
PCPS	Perceptions of the Causes of Poverty Scale
PIMD 2001	Provincial Indices of Deprivation for South Africa 2001
PPPS	Probability proportional to population size
PSLSD	Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development
PSU	Primary sampling unit
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SALDRU	South African Labour and Development Research Unit
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers' Union
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SAPA	South African Press Association
SA-PPA	South African Participatory Poverty Assessment
SAPS	South African Police Service
SASAS	South African Social Attitude Survey

SAUPM	South African Unemployed People's Movement
SPNA	Socially Perceived Necessities Approach
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
SWS	Social work students
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	World Bank
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a growing global problem, particularly in Africa, where a total of thirty countries are ranked as countries with low levels of human development across a range of indicators (Human Development Report, 2003). Most of the poorest countries are located in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Southern Africa numerous countries have been ranked as countries with low human development. South Africa is a middle-income country and yet it has a large proportion of its population living in poverty.

It is therefore important that research on poverty be continued and accelerated. However, most studies focus on popular perceptions of poverty, both in terms of what poor people think it means to be poor and what the general population considers it to mean (Noble, Wright, Magasela & Ratcliffe, 2007: 117; Wright, 2008: 2; ). In contrast, there are far fewer studies on popular perceptions of the causes of poverty (Hunt, 1996: 312; Shek, 2004: 273)

In this study I aim to understand how people explain poverty and the factors that drive these explanations. More specifically, I envisage that understanding how people perceive and experience poverty will generate a body of knowledge that would enable governments and poverty alleviation agencies to better target their interventions. Consequently, I hope that the findings of the study will contribute to improving the lives of poor people.

The overall purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the current study. In this regard, I start with an overview of the global importance of dealing with poverty. I elaborate that poverty has become one of the biggest challenges facing the entire world and that joint efforts are needed to prevent it from escalating. It is against this background that I

describe the growing concern of poverty in Africa and in particular South Africa. The geographical scope of poverty is followed by a synopsis of prior research on perceptions of poverty. Moreover, studies that deal with perceptions of why people are poor are highlighted in this section.

In addition, the chapter presents poverty as a multidimensional problem that is influenced by several socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, education, geographic location, living standard measure (LSM), lived poverty index (LPI), age, gender and employment status. In this chapter I also briefly introduce the aim and research questions of the study. In the final section I explain how the chapters are organised within this dissertation.

## **1.2 GLOBAL AGENDA ON POVERTY**

According to Haydar (2005: 240) a “significant number of people in the world today live under conditions of extreme poverty and most of them lack access to basic goods such as food, water and health care”. In addition, “everyone agrees that the conditions of the poor are atrocious” (Haydar, 2005: 240). We therefore urgently need to increase our efforts to reduce poverty. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) representatives also recognized that the world is at a crossroads and that people will have to unite in the fight against poverty.<sup>1</sup> The adoption of the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development was also a confirmation of the commitment of the people of the world from both rich and poor countries to the United Nations (UN) Millennium Declaration. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that emerged from the UN Millennium Declaration were very specific, with clear measurable targets such as reducing poverty among the more than 1 billion poor people worldwide by 2015 (Human Development Report, 2005: 17).

Despite widespread poverty and the commitment from the vast majority of countries there is no agreement as to who is supposed to do what and when to achieve the goal of alleviating poverty. It is generally reasoned that responsibility rests at one of two levels.

In a given location the responsibility of extreme poverty is attributed to domestic conditions such as the institutions, policies, practices and values of that location. In addition, national governments normally help local governments to improve the living conditions of people. However, there is also a view that global institutions and the practices and policies of various international actors must play a significant role in addressing extreme poverty (Haydar, 2005: 240).

From this perspective the fight against poverty requires the promotion of institutional and policy changes both at the local level and at international level. It is however difficult to determine which of the domestic or global institutions are more responsible to lead the fight against poverty. Nevertheless, I believe that international and multi-national organisations need to participate and contribute more to poverty projects. For example, aid donors representing the rich nations need to be increasingly interested in how poor people in poor countries understand poverty. However, it must be emphasized that addressing poverty from a global angle does not imply the rejection of the measurement of the impoverished local circumstances people are living in such as lack of access to food, clean water and shelter (Bastiaensen, De Herdt & D'Exelle, 2005: 979).

Indeed, I want to reiterate that poverty eradication campaigns should be approached from both a global and domestic perspective. Accordingly, global initiatives should establish factors that may impact on the well-being of communities, while governments at the domestic level should assist local communities to fight against local conditions that may prevent them from securing their basic necessities. A key question in this regard is what local communities themselves think contribute to poverty in their communities.

It is against this background that I focus on measuring people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, the study assesses people's perceptions of what they perceive to be poor or what kind of people they think are poor. By focusing on public opinion, besides the role played by national governments and global institutions, I hope that this study will provide ordinary citizens the opportunity to voice their concerns about poverty. The next two sections thus focus on Africa and South Africa as a way of



highlighting the poverty circumstances or conditions under which the poor in particular are living.

### **1.3 POVERTY ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT**

Although poverty is considered to be a universal problem, it is especially pronounced in Africa (Human Development Report 2005: 21). Note the 2003 Human Development Report which reported that 25 of the world's poorest countries are all in Africa and that most of these countries are located in Sub-Saharan Africa, with countries such as Uganda and Ethiopia receiving very low rankings in terms of human development (Human Development Report 2003: 200).

To further demonstrate the impact of poverty on the African continent the results of the Human Development Index (HDI) showed that twelve of the 18 countries that have registered lower scores on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2003 than in 1990 are in Sub-Saharan Africa (Human Development Report, 2005: 21).<sup>2</sup> Southern Africa recorded the steepest declines with South Africa falling 35 places and Botswana 21 places. This decline on the HDI are mostly contributed to economic stagnation, slow progress in education and the spread of HIV / AIDS (Human Development Report, 2005: 22). An alternative approach to understand the impact of poverty is to look at levels of undernourishment. Again high levels of undernourishment were found in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 24 of the 45 countries in Africa overall indicating that more than 25% of their population is undernourished (Human Development Report, 2003: 200).

It is evident that Africa is confronted with a major poverty problem and needs to increase its efforts to lessen the devastating impact it has on millions of people. Numerous initiatives have been implemented in recent years, including those by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and various debt relief schemes but it is uncertain whether these initiatives will meet the Millennium Development Goals (Williams, 2005: 532). The British Prime Minister Tony Blair's Commission for Africa suggested that three changes were needed if Africa wants to succeed in the battle against

poverty. There must be continued improvements in governance in Africa, a substantial increase in aid from the international community and a significant change in the way donors do business in Africa (Williams, 2005: 532). There are however some studies that have found that although foreign aid has increased, real per capita growth has not been present and that increased investment did not enable poor countries to break the vicious cycle of poverty (Erixon, 2003: 27). For example, aid has not boosted economic growth in countries such as Kenya and Tanzania (Erixon, 2003: 28). The overwhelming opinion among investors is that political stability and good governance is needed for any investment to make a significant return.

All considered, African countries need to build systems of good governance which are effective and accountable to Africa's people and simultaneously address areas of concern such as health, education, agriculture, infrastructure and corruption.

#### **1.4 POVERTY AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE**

South Africa presents a unique and important case for research on poverty alleviation. It is well documented that before 1994 the majority of South Africans were denied political rights and excluded from participating in the political process (Lund, 2008: 2-4). Black African, coloured and Indian people were excluded from participating not only in the political life of South Africa, but also in the economic mainstream, resulting in extreme social inequalities. The exclusion from political and economic mainstream placed black Africans at the bottom of the social ladder, followed by coloureds and Indians. A consequence of the apartheid laws was that black Africans were often used as a source of cheap labour, and denied access to good educational facilities and opportunities. These inequalities generated by the apartheid system were intense and led to gross human rights violations as well as wide spread social and economic problems including poverty.

The advent of democracy in 1994 was associated with major political and economic policy shifts. On the political front South Africa has laid the foundations for the design and implementation of policies to ensure democratic consolidation, competitive multi-

party engagement, and citizen participation. The framework created for political representation is laid out in the founding provisions of the Constitution in Chapter 1.

Furthermore, South Africa is a middle income country. Its economy includes a modern financial and industrial sector supported by a well-developed infrastructure, which operates alongside a subsistence informal sector. Over the last few years a large part of the nation's resources through the budgets of national, provincial and local governments have been allocated to the creation of jobs, the delivery of services, enhancing the productive capacity of the economy, and aiding the poor.

In spite of the political and economic advances since 1994, South Africa continues to be plagued by poverty and unemployment. Previous studies on the extent of poverty in South Africa show that almost half its population lives in poverty. Booyesen (2001: 23) used an asset index approach to measure poverty and applied it to data from international Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and found that poverty in South Africa has increased. Meth and Dias (2004: 62) in their analysis of the 1999 October Household Survey and the 2002 Labour Force Survey also showed that the number of poor people increased between 1999 and 2002. The 2003 report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) revealed that about 48.5 percent or 21.9 million of South Africans at the time lived below the national poverty line placed at R354 per adult equivalent per month (UNDP, 2003: 41). Another study by Borhat and Kanbur (2005: 4) found evidence to suggest that income poverty is on the increase since the headcount index rose nationally from 32 percent to 34 percent between 1995 and 2002.

In addition, South Africa continues to be characterised by significant levels of inequality and vulnerability to falling into poverty (May *et al.*, 1998: 2). For instance, the 2005 South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS) conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) found that after 10 years of democratic rule the majority of "black Africans still perceive themselves as lacking enough food and income that will meet all their household needs". On the other hand, whites, Indians and coloureds never or seldom experience shortages of food and income (Davids, 2006:16).<sup>3</sup>

A study by Hamel, Brodie and Morin (2005: 352) based on the Ten Years of Democracy Survey also demonstrated that poverty in South Africa is divided along racial lines and that black Africans are more frequently going without basic services and necessities than whites, coloureds and Indians. Furthermore, the study found that six in ten (60 percent) black Africans fall in the “frequent” or “some” shortages categories, while large majorities of whites (92 percent), Indians (89 percent) and coloureds (74 percent) fall into the “rare shortages” or “complete satisfaction” categories. Similar results were highlighted by the Afrobarometer 2002 survey that suggested that poverty has further deepened in post-apartheid South Africa, and that stark differences in the enjoyment of basic necessities still exist between black Africans and whites (Mattes, Bratton & Davids, 2002: 14).

Note a study by Aliber (2002: 2) who argues that the geographical, racial and gender dimension of contemporary poverty are a result of the legacy of apartheid. Adato, Carter and May (2004: 1) further argued that South Africa comprises two different economic worlds where the one is populated by black Africans with the HDI equivalent to Swaziland or Zimbabwe and the other world white with a HDI between Israel and Italy. Moreover, the performance of the South African economy in the last few years has been characterized by low growth, low investment and a static or moderate growth in employment (Cassim, 2006: 57).

The above studies provide support for the notion that poverty and inequality has further deepened in post-apartheid South Africa and as a consequence sustained the socio-economic polarization of the South African society where class and colour dominate whether you are poor or not. For this reason, I believe that poverty in South Africa should be understood from a socio-historical perspective. It is therefore hoped that the approach taken in the present study will further deepen our understanding of the extent and nature of poverty.

## **1.5 PRIOR RESEARCH**

In this section the emphasis is on perceptions of the causes of poverty. Next, it elaborates on the multidimensionality of poverty and the impact socio-economic and demographic variables have on the explanations of poverty. It is my intention that the preliminary review of the literature will begin to contextualize the present study.

### **1.5.1 Perceptions of the causes of poverty**

Most poverty assessments can be divided into three broad categories: construction of a poverty profile (who the poor are), causes of poverty (why people are poor) and poverty eradication strategies (what to do about poverty) (Ngwane, Yadavalli, & Steffens, 2003: 283; Hanmer, Pyatt & White, 1999: 796). In highlighting these poverty assessments categories, I want to be clear that the approach of the present study is to raise consciousness of the impact of people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. Du Toit (2005: 6) for example argued that "we need to know more about poverty: the factors that drive it and those that maintained it".

Literature on perceptions of the causes of poverty indicates that poverty is often explained according to three perspectives. The first theoretical perspective is that individuals are themselves to blame for their own poverty, the second explains poverty as a consequence of external economic, political and / or cultural factors that operate at a supra-individual or societal level, and the third often view poverty as a result of some unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or bad luck (Shek, 2004: 273; Shek, 2002: 789; Sun, 2001: 161; Halman & Oorschot, 1999: 3; Smith & Stone, 1989: 94).

The first perspective is often described as "individualistic" since it focuses on individual failings or shortcomings of some sort. Proponents of the individualistic perspective distinguish between two separate explanations in this category: the "culture of poverty", and the theory of the "underclass". The culture of poverty theory reasons that many poor people get accustomed to their deprived situation and then develop a way of life that

keeps them poor; the poor further exhibit feelings of marginality, helplessness, dependency and inferiority. The second explanation in this category is in the notion of the underclass, which is conceptualized “as a small group of people living in poverty with a distinct set of values and behaviours, and a strong propensity for crime and other anti-social behaviour” (Auletta, 1982: 12; Hunt, 1996: 312; Ward, 1989: 2; Wilson, 1987: 8). It is important that I clarify the distinction between the “moral underclass debate” and the “structural underclass”. The proponents of the structural underclass perspective emphasize that the poor should not be blamed for their deprived situation but rather the circumstances under which they live. On the other hand, Murray (1984: 29) based on his review of the American Social Policy between 1950 and 1980 made it clear that large scale structural changes to the system would not significantly address poverty particularly if it ignored individual effort or virtue. Furthermore, Murray felt that blaming the system and overlooking the deficiencies by the poor had a disastrous impact on the poor themselves. He argued that the moral imperative is to do something to correct the situation of the poor through the implementation of policies that would address the past injustices towards the poor but at the same time inform the poor if they are not taking advantage of their opportunities (Murray, 1984: 223).

The second theoretical perspective suggests that “structural” explanations are the cause of unequal conditions within society that create poverty, rather than the intellectual and cultural deficits of the poor. Within the structural framework, distinctions are made between social injustice (lack of social opportunities) and economic injustice (exploitation by capitalists, for example, poor people are exploited by the rich). In this category the poor are not to blame for their own circumstances, as external factors have placed them unfavourably in social structures, in a position often characterized by a lack of access to opportunities (Shek, 2004: 273).

A third perspective often attributed poverty to ill-health or social and economic consequences. Some scholars refer to these as accidental dimensions, while others refer to them as “fatalistic” dimensions (Bullock & Waugh, 2005: 1133; Shek, 2004: 273).

Here, perceptions of the causes of poverty are often viewed as a result of some unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or bad luck.

A number of theories have subsequently emerged to explain perceptions of the causes of poverty. These theories are often used to predict poverty along individualistic, structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. The individualistic explanation framework, belief in a just world, and victim blaming are considered as theories advancing the individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. These theories are discussed in Chapter 3.

### **1.5.2 The diversity of perceptions of poverty**

In describing the three broad perspectives on perceptions of the causes of poverty, I want to emphasize that poverty is a multidimensional problem and can seldom be explained in one dimension or even by a combination of the individualistic, structural or fatalistic dimensions. From this viewpoint, poverty is to be understood within a social context. Moreover, people's perceptions of the causes of poverty are influenced by both external and internal factors, as well as both conscious and unconscious processes. I therefore want to underline that how people perceive poverty is influenced by the person's current cultural context and cultural background and simultaneously by the person's genetic make-up that impacts on how the person engages with his/her environment.

A more advance analysis is therefore required from several perspectives, including demographic variables such as race, education, geographic location and employment status. A review of the literature showed that demographic variables such as race correlate with perceptions of the causes of poverty. For example, a study conducted by Nasser, Abouchedid and Khashan (2002: 111) found that South African students in general are more likely to blame poverty on structural explanations, and that white and coloured respondents in particular showed a high fatalistic inclination. Another study conducted in the United States by Hunt (2004: 843) showed that African Americans and Latinos are more likely than whites to see both structural and individualistic explanations

of poverty as important. On the other hand, Cozzarelli, Wilkinson and Tagler (2001: 223) found that white American college students were more likely to explain poverty in terms of internal attributions, while non-white students indicated external factors as responsible for poverty situations. A review of a number of popular perceptions of poverty studies in South Africa also show that race has an overwhelming influence on explanations of poverty (Hamel *et al.*, 2005: 352; Aliber, 2002: 2). For instance, Klasen (2000: 52) revealed that race impacted on people's expenditures, with whites having on average R1,300 more per month to spend (relative to a poverty line of R300) than black Africans.

Education is another variable that influences people's perceptions of the causes of poverty (Hunt, 1996: 300). Previous studies in this regard have hypothesized that people with high levels of education are more likely to view poverty in terms of individualistic rather than structural factors. These assumptions are located within the Cognitive and Learning Theories, which generally assume that education influences the way we perceive, interpret and interact with our world. Serumaga and Naude (2002: 570) also reported that "higher levels of education are associated with lower levels of poverty".

Furthermore, the inclusion of socio-economic and demographic variables such as geographical location is based on the assumption that people's values, preferences and behaviours are the result of their material or life circumstances (Mattes and Bratton, 2003: 7; Zhang and Thomas, 1994: 885). A sociological approach therefore emphasizes that demographic variables such as geographical location and gender may play a key role in determining how people explain poverty (Salmond, Crampton, King & Waldegrave, 2006: 1475; Mukherjee & Benson, 2003: 349; Seekings, 2000: 833). In this regard May, Woolard and Klasen (2000: 30) found that there are disparities in living standards and access to basic services between rural and urban areas in South Africa.

Employment status is another variable that has influenced how people perceive the causes of poverty. Past research has demonstrated that indicators such as employment interacted with a host of socio-demographic variables. Hunt (1996: 310), for example, demonstrated that employed minorities such as Latinos often ascribe their success to internal or



individualistic factors such as hard work. On the other hand, the same employed Latinos also contribute poverty to structural factors when they compare themselves with middle-class whites. Another study found that the African American community is increasingly becoming a more divided society than white Americans in terms of job status (employment), income and education (Hajnal, 2007: 560). I discuss the variation in perceptions of poverty among members of the same society on the basis of income further in Chapter 3.

This section shows that popular perceptions of poverty and perceptions of the causes of poverty are influenced by socio-economic and demographic variables. As a result, a sociological approach was advocated to examine people's perceptions within their interpersonal, social and cultural context. For this reason, I also examine whether people's economic situation as measured by the LPI and LSM impacts on their perceptions of the causes of poverty. In this regard, I show that those respondents that have a low LSM compared to those with a high LSM are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty differently. Furthermore, those respondents that lack access to basic necessities such as water and food are more likely to ascribe to structural rather than individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

## **1.6 THE PRESENT STUDY**

### **1.6.1 Aims of the study**

In this study I aim to understand how people perceive the causes of poverty. Literature reveals that there are three broad theoretical explanations of perceptions of the causes of poverty: individualistic perceptions, where blame is placed squarely on the poor themselves; structural perceptions, where poverty is blamed on external social and economic forces; and fatalistic perceptions, which attribute poverty to factors such as bad luck or illness. In other words, I want to establish whether South Africans perceive the causes of poverty in structural, individualistic, or fatalistic dimensions, or are there multiple dimensions when perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed.

My second aim is to examine the extent of poverty as measured by the LPI. Moreover, I want to assess the differences in the extent of lived poverty among the various demographic variables. I believe that the differences in the extent of lived poverty (lack of access to basic necessities) influence perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Thirdly, I aim to examine how the socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, geographic location (urban or rural location), education, employment, LSM, LPI and gender are interacting in respectively explaining structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Finally, I hope that this study will enable me to make recommendations on which level poverty intervention should take place.

### **1.6.2 Research questions**

The first research question explores South Africans' perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, are South Africans more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in terms of individualistic, structural, or fatalistic dimensions, or are there multiple dimensions?

The second research question examines how much variation there is in South Africans' perceptions of the causes of poverty. Moreover, are there differences among the respondents from the various groups in terms of race, levels of educational development, geographical location, employment status, gender, age and LSM categories in how they form their perceptions of the causes of poverty? In addition, does access to basic necessities (measured by the LPI) influence perceptions of the causes of poverty?

Thirdly, how do South Africans' perceptions of the causes of poverty compare with those found in previous research?

### 1.6.3 Research design

To examine perceptions of the causes of poverty as measured by individualistic, structural and fatalistic dimensions I use data from one of the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) national representative client surveys.

The survey focused on the communication sector but included two additional question sections drafted by me for analysis in the present study (see Appendix A). The first section focuses on the Perceptions of Poverty Scale developed by Joe Feagin (Bullock & Waugh, 2005: 1133; Shek, 2004: 273; Hunt 2004: 829; Hunt, 1996: 294). The second section uses the Lived Poverty Index (LPI) that assesses access to basic necessities such as food, water and cash income. I want to note that another section of the questionnaire included the demographic variables such as the respondent's race group, level of education, employment, marital status, LSM, gender and geographic location (see Appendix A).

The poverty perceptions questions (Section A) asked respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with 12 statements about why they think poor people are poor. The statements included "poor people are poor because: 1) they lack the ability to manage money, 2) they waste their money on inappropriate items, 3) they do not actively seek to improve their lives, 4) they are exploited by rich people, 5) the society lacks social justice, 6) distribution of wealth in the society is uneven, 7) they lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families, 8) they have bad fate, 9) they lack luck, 10) they have encountered misfortunes, 11) they are not motivated because of welfare, and 12) they are born inferior".

The LPI (Section 2 in the present study) was first implemented by the New Democracies Barometer surveys in Central and Eastern Europe. Mattes *et al.* (2002: 8) applied the LPI in South Africa and Southern Africa through the Afrobarometer project. I should like to point out that the present study uses the LPI to measure people's ability to obtain the

basic necessities of life such as access to food, potable water, medicines or medical treatment, electricity in the home, fuel for cooking, and a cash income.

Approximately 3510 randomly selected respondents across South Africa were surveyed between 18 April and 30 May 2006. The sample was based on the 1996 Census. Enumerator Areas were stratified by province, race, and geographical location and 600 were randomly chosen with the probability proportionate to population size. However, disproportionate over-samples were drawn in the Northern Cape and among Indian respondents to ensure sufficient numbers of cases for analysis. All interviews were then post-weighted to ensure that they were reflected proportionately. Interviewers traveled to the selected areas and conducted face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent.

My own view is that this study is unique since it uses a sample which is culturally and socio-economically diverse from the First World samples that have often been used to inform theory and intervention in much of the literature. As mentioned previously primary data are used to explain perceptions of the causes of poverty along structural, individualistic and fatalistic dimensions, while at the same time examining the interactions of these dimensions with the socio-demographic variables of race, education, geographic location, LSM, LPI, gender, age and employment status.

#### **1.6.4 Structure of the dissertation**

In this chapter I outline why a study on perceptions of the causes of poverty is of great importance. I further highlight that poverty is particularly pronounced in Africa. While South Africa may be relatively better placed than most other African countries it also faces the task of addressing poverty. In addition, I suggest that South Africa's political history has impacted tremendously on the nature and extent of poverty within its borders. I conclude Chapter 1 with an outline of the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 focuses on how poverty is conceptualized and defined. I indicate in this chapter that the way one conceptualizes and defines poverty has an impact on how you perceive, interpret and compare results. The chapter starts with an historical overview of poverty research, which is followed with a synopsis of the various approaches of how poverty is conceptualized and defined. The chapter is concluded with a review of key poverty research and projects within South Africa which informed the ANC-lead government's multidimensional approach to address poverty.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that poverty is a complex phenomenon that influences the lives of people in a multidimensional manner. In this chapter I introduce the concept of 'perception' and how it is defined within the context of the dissertation. Next, research on the perceptions of the causes of poverty is presented along individualistic, structural and fatalistic dimensions. In addition, I contrast the perceptions of the causes of poverty of the poor and non-poor. The final part of this chapter discusses the interaction between socio-demographic variables such as race, geographic location, education and employment with individualistic, structural and fatalistic dimensions of poverty.

In Chapter 4 I explain in detail the research design and methodology that was followed in the study. This includes an explanation of the hypotheses, sample design, measurement instrument, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

The research findings of the study are presented in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6. In the final chapter of this dissertation I draw major conclusions from the study and present a set of recommendations which I believe will strengthen the South African government's initiatives to eradicate poverty.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

As a relatively new area in South Africa, the findings of this study are extremely significant to understanding people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. I hope that this study will contribute to addressing the cycle of poverty and the stigma that surrounds it.

In this regard, individualistic perceptions of poverty were often used to stereotype the poor by labeling them as lazy or that they lack the ability to manage money. Similarly, if the poor believe poor people are poor because “they are not motivated because of welfare” it will have far reaching policy implications. I consider people’s perceptions of the causes of poverty as important, because they are likely to have significant implications for poor people themselves, especially in terms of their involvement in poverty eradication initiatives and projects. I therefore anticipate that this study will make a valuable contribution to the fight against poverty.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUALISING AND DEFINING POVERTY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Poverty research dates back as far as the late 1800s. Initially poverty researchers focused mostly on money metric measures to establish whether people are experiencing absolute levels of poverty. Although money metric measures are still widely employed by economists, other approaches using a range of indicators are more frequently applied to assess the multidimensional nature of poverty. Poverty research is consequently much more diverse and this has resulted in a wealth of information which continues to grow in importance and scope. While this large body of research regularly provides direction in the fight against poverty, a great deal more needs to be done since poverty remains widespread in many countries.

The main focus of the present study is on the perceptions of the causes of poverty. However, before embarking on a study of perceptions of poverty it is imperative that a detailed understanding of how thinking about poverty and the way to address it has evolved over time. In this way, I will show that poverty researchers have yet to fully utilise the wealth of information and experiences that ordinary people have on poverty.

In this chapter I present a review of the literature that focuses on how poverty is conceptualised and defined. This chapter further emphasises that the way one conceptualises and defines the concept of poverty impacts on how one measures it. The measurement of poverty is discussed in Chapter 4, but it is inevitable that comparisons are made in the current chapter between defining and measuring poverty. Nevertheless, the current chapter starts with an historical overview of poverty research and how this has evolved over time. A synopsis of various approaches to conceptualising and defining poverty is provided together with perspectives on the definitions of poverty. The final section of this chapter focuses on the conceptualisation and definition of poverty within

the context of South Africa. While an exhaustive account of poverty research is beyond the scope of this study, the purpose of this chapter is to provide the necessary context of how poverty is conceptualized and defined. I therefore acknowledge that the current chapter is extremely limited in its account of the conceptualization and definitions of poverty.

## **2.2 THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF POVERTY**

This section is about contextualising the present study's approach to defining and measuring poverty. Borrowing from a previous study, a distinction is made between concepts and definitions of poverty (Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004: 3). Noble *et al.* argues that one of the problems of poverty research in South Africa, and in many parts of the developed and developing world, is a clear lack of distinction between conceptualising, defining and measuring poverty. In the ensuing sections, I follow these arguments by Noble *et al.* (2004: 3) in an attempt to describe the various approaches to defining and measuring poverty. These approaches or frameworks provide the parameters out of which definitions are developed, while the definitions of poverty enable one to distinguish between people who are poor and people who are not poor within a specified framework.

Finally, the "measurements" operationalise the "definition" of poverty. I should like to emphasize that an effective measurement of poverty is one which flows from a rigorous conceptualisation and definition of poverty. However, not all poverty measurements are based on a sound conceptualisation and definition. Another critical point to make is that the concepts (approaches or frameworks), definitions, and measurements are not mutually exclusive (Noble *et al.*, 2004: 3). This section shows that a multidimensional measure of poverty may be based on two or more approaches.



### 2.2.1 Money metric approaches

Most of the well-known research on poverty was first registered in the United States and Europe. Glennerster (2002: 83) provided us with a historical account of poverty research in the United States by highlighting key studies that have contributed to the discourse on poverty. According to records at the Hull House and the Chicago School of Civics and Philosophy, poverty research in the United States started in Chicago. However, comparing the United States with the rest of the world it is evident that researchers from Europe and particularly England were ahead of the poverty researchers in the United States. Glennerster (2002: 84) pointed out that Charles Booth and Joseph Rowntree were the first in Europe to advance the conceptualisation and measurement of poverty at the end of the nineteenth century. Booth developed one of the first measures of poverty which literally involved counting the poor in each street of central London. Maps were used to label each household in each street of London according class. The number of households identified as poor were than calculated (Glennerster, 2002: 85).

The method pioneered by Rowntree on the other hand was based on income and consumption (Ravallion & Bidani, 1994: 77). Rowntree's method calculated the cost of a minimum basket of goods necessary for decent human survival (Glennerster, 2002: 85). The basic basket normally included the costs of food, clothing, heat, and other basic essentials. The main purpose of Rowntree's basket method is to classify people as either poor or non-poor on the basis of their ability to secure the identified minimal needs. In order to be able to categorise someone as poor or non-poor it was necessary to determine the income level needed to meet these minimum needs (van Praag, Hagenaaars & van Weerden, 1982: 345). If you were unable to meet all your minimum needs you were classified as poor since your income was below the threshold level considered to be poor. This threshold level was called the poverty datum line. According to van Praag *et al.* (1982: 345) a poverty datum line is defined "as an income level below which people are called poor, and above which people are called non-poor". The adoption of a poverty datum line is link to how poverty is defined. Most proponents of this approach normally measure poverty in absolute terms. The poverty datum line method and variants thereof

received widespread support from particularly economists and dominated poverty research throughout the first part of the 1900s until the 1970s when Peter Townsend raised concerns about this method (van Praag *et al.*, 1982: 345).

### **2.2.2 Relative approach**

Townsend criticised the poverty datum line method for its rigidity since it failed to link the level of the poverty datum line to the average welfare in society. In this way, Townsend argued that most people in a developed country such as Britain might be able to satisfy their basic needs despite being relatively poorer than most of their fellow citizens (McLachlan, 1983: 97). Townsend's critique of Rowntree gave rise to a relativist approach to measuring poverty. A relative approach to poverty stresses that one's poverty status depends on the situation of others in society (de Vos & Garner, 1991: 268). The relativists argue that there are disparities in the standard of living and that these differences in living standards are often referred to as inequality (Ravallion, 2003: 740).

By defining poverty in the context of inequality proponents of the relative approach have rejected the absolute measure of poverty in favour of the concept of relative deprivation (Room & Britton, 2006: 280; Room, 1999: 169; Golding, 1980: 169). According to the concept of relative deprivation a person or household is considered to be poor if they lack the ability to participate in activities and lifestyles which are normally common in the society they live (Golding, 1980: 169). Relative deprivation in this context refers to much more than cash income since other resources such as assets, literacy, education, land and access to services are all important. If people are deprived from satisfying their basic needs which is normally entitled to them it is an infringement of their rights which can be considered as socially unjust or unacceptable.

John Rawls' theoretical justice framework developed in the early 1970's was inspired by the concept of social justice. According to Morris (2002: 365) "social justice can be described as the fair distribution of society's benefits and responsibilities". Rawls distinguished between "natural goods" and "primary goods". Natural goods included

health, intelligence and imagination and were not considered under the control of the society. Primary goods on the other hand were goods such as food, cash income, education and shelter (Robeyns, 2005: 36). Rawls viewed the social primary goods as valuable resources necessary for well-being (Morris, 2002: 368). In essence the Rawlsian social primary goods is a rights based approach which advocates that primary goods are goods that every rational person is presumed to want regardless of whatever else the person wants. In other words, this view considers poverty alleviation as a major point of distributive justice, because the poor are unable or often hampered to fully access primary resources such as income in order to participate in civil and political life (Azam, 2003: 61).

### **2.2.3 The capabilities approach**

The capabilities approach pioneered by Amartya Sen deviated from Rawls's theory since it reasoned that resources such as income, education and literacy do not demonstrate what a person will be able to do with these resources. What Sen (1999: 78) argues is that "we need to establish whether people have the ability to use the resources at their disposal for the benefit of their own well-being". Sen (1999: 87) emphasises that "a person's quality of life or overall well-being depends on how capable or incapable he or she is of achieving goals, or of attaining the things he or she values". Sen distinguished between five different types of valuable things (substantive freedoms), namely: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. Furthermore, Sen's approach to measuring freedom is rooted in the concepts of "capabilities" and "functionings" (Morris, 2002: 368). Functionings refer to the various things that a person may value doing, while capabilities refer to the different sets or combinations of functioning that a person is able to achieve (Qizilbash, 1996: 144). It is important to note that Sen's capability perspective with regard to poverty analysis moved the focus away from the means of achieving freedom, to the actual satisfactions associated with these means, or to the enjoyment of these freedoms (Morris, 2002: 368; Sen, 1999: 90).

On the other hand, Qizilbash (1996: 143) argued, while Sen has succeeded to elevate the importance of non-money metric measures in the assessment of poverty, he failed to provide an adequate account of development. In Qizilbash's (1996: 143) opinion Sen's approach did not provide an appropriate account of the improvements in the quality of life of people since he (Sen) was reluctant to give a list of valuable functionings that could spell out his interpretation of a life that is not "poor" according to his substantive freedom measures. Sen's reluctance to provide a clear description of a "good" life was a consequence of the infinite views people have on what constitutes this. Qizilbash (1996: 146) also reasoned that Nussbaum challenges Sen's reluctance to define a good life by attempting to set out the functionings that constitute a good life.

According to Morris (2002: 368) Nussbaum viewed the concept of human dignity as the foundation of her capabilities perspective. Nussbaum (2002: 124) echoes that the basic driver of the capabilities approach, "in the political arena, is that human abilities exert a moral claim that they should be developed." She stresses that capability and not functioning, is the appropriate goal for human life (Nussbaum, 2002: 124). According to Morris (2002: 369) it is Nussbaum's view that human dignity forms the basis of each and every person's right to self-determination. Self-determination in this case refers to the individual right to make his or her own decisions to what constitutes a good life.

Furthermore, Nussbaum's approach distinguished between lower-level capabilities (which she refers to as basic capabilities) and high-level capabilities (Nussbaum, 2002: 131). Nussbaum claims that human beings are fully capable of performing lower-level capabilities if given the opportunity, which will enable them to perform high-level capabilities (Nussbaum, 2002: 132). In addition, it is important that once a person has secured a capability to act, it is necessary, as well, to prepare the material and institutional environment so that people are actually able to function (Nussbaum, 2002: 124; Wagle, 2002: 160). In essence, Nussbaum (2002: 130) indicates that the capabilities approach promotes "a society in which individuals are treated as each worthy of regard, and in which each has been put in a position to live really humanly".

Nussbaum (2002: 131) argues that it is necessary to produce a list of elements that would reflect what a complete good life for a human being would be. Such a list should according to her provide a focus for quality of life assessment and for political planning (Nussbaum, 2002: 131). For instance, Nussbaum argues that she has to “say a great deal more than he (Sen) does about the content of those entitlements (or list)”, since she is “constructing a (partial) theory of social justice, an account of basic entitlements without which no nation (or world order) can lay claim to justice” (Nussbaum & Faralli, 2007: 149). Sen, on the other hand, is “focusing on comparing the quality of life in different nations, and therefore asks about best space for comparison” (Nussbaum *et al.*, 2007: 149). Although I believe that Nussbaum is much clearer than Sen on what constitutes a good life, she also fails to discuss whether or not development occurs. In this regard, Qizilbash (1996: 148) contended that Nussbaum needs to expand the capabilities approach so that it is possible to measure whether one person’s loss of capability is another person’s gain. Finally, Qizilbash (1996: 149) indicated that when we are able to make an interpersonal comparison of capability, we should be in a position to assess whether human development has taken place.

#### **2.2.4 Social exclusion approach**

In the previous section Townsend argued that it is every citizen’s right to have access to basic necessities, which are customarily enjoyed by the community. Room (1999: 169) gave credit to Townsend for extending his view on poverty, but emphasised that the primary focus of his approach is on distributional issues (resource allocation) rather than relational issues (equal social opportunities). Distributional issues are seen as the lack of resources available to an individual to live an acceptable standard of life. Relational issues, on the other hand, refer to inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power. I should like to emphasize that the distinction between distributional and relational issues is evidence of the conceptual shift from poverty to social exclusion. More specifically, social exclusion approach emphasizes the lack of equal access to resources as well as social opportunities. In other words, those who

experience a lack of resources and are socially excluded often experience insecurity, feelings of powerlessness, and lack or limitation of access to services such as housing.

The social exclusion approach was first introduced in the 1990s by the European governments, especially the French, British and Dutch, to widen the concept of poverty (Wagle, 2002: 160). Chakravarty and D'Ambrosio (2006: 377) considered a person to be socially excluded if he is unable to “participate in the basic economic and social activities of the society in which he lives.” Wagle (2002: 160) similarly argued that the concept of social exclusion goes beyond economic and capability explanations of well-being because it also includes participation in political, cultural, and civic activities which are an essential part of well-being.

Chakravarty *et al.* (2006: 379) identified three types of social exclusion from the current available literature namely the lack of participation in social institutions, the denial or non-realization of rights of citizenship, and finally the increase in distance among population groups. It is my view that social exclusion includes economic, social and political aspects of life and can be regarded as a multidimensional phenomenon. Wagle (2002: 160) and Whelan, Layte and Maitre (2004: 288) also postulated that there is evidence in the literature which portrays social exclusion to be a more comprehensive picture of poverty. Du Toit (2004: 989) supported this view and argued that “social exclusion resonates with other approaches that extended the study of poverty beyond money-metric measures”.

### **2.2.5 Multidimensional approaches**

In the previous sections, I have attempted to show the various approaches to defining and measuring poverty. For instance, the money metric approach measured poverty mainly in monetary terms. More specifically, the money metric approaches attempted to establish whether people are poor because of insufficient income to acquire a basic level of consumption or human welfare. On the other hand, a relative approach to poverty stresses that one's poverty status depends on the situation of others in society. While the various

approaches all had their merits, I argue that a more holistic approach is better suited to address the multidimensional nature of poverty.

Since the 1970s there was wide consensus on the need to look at the multidimensionality of poverty. Room (1999: 169), for example, argued that multidimensional indicators are needed to identify the interrelationship that exists, for example, between financial poverty and poor housing; educational failure and a lack of skills on the job market; and between deprived childhoods and subsequent patterns of health and sickness.

The 1990 World Development Report on poverty and the 2000 World Development Report on poverty demonstrated the change in the World Bank's approach to poverty from a focus on low-consumption and low achievement in human capital to broader approaches dealing with opportunity, security and empowerment (Clert *et al.*, 2001: 1). To capture the multidimensional nature of poverty the World Bank began to employ its traditional quantitative analysis of poverty in conjunction with qualitative and participatory research (Clert *et al.*, 2001: 1). This multi-pronged approach to poverty analysis can be considered as an emerging trend of the twenty-first century. The Provincial Indices of Deprivation for South Africa 2001 (PIMD 2001) are other examples of indices that capture the multi-dimensionality of poverty. More specifically, the overall index for each province consisted of five domains measuring 1) income, 2) employment, 3) health, 4) education, and 5) living environment deprivation (Noble *et al.*, 2006: 24).

In summary, I tried to illustrate in the previous sections that researchers initially conceptualised poverty as a lack of income while other aspects of well-being were mostly excluded. A growing number of researchers particularly in the developing world became concerned about focusing exclusively on money metric measures. In the years that followed researchers attempted to broaden the concept of poverty by using methods which were much more people-centered and participatory in nature. Today a more holistic multidimensional approach to defining and measuring poverty has emerged that includes many aspects of well-being and inequality.

While there are many conceptual issues to be dealt with in a discussion of poverty, this section has attempted to provide essential background information towards an understanding of how thinking about poverty has evolved over time. In this section I did not define the concepts of well-being, quality of life and vulnerability as well as their relationship with poverty. It is also not my intention to expand on these concepts further.

### **2.3 PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEFINITION OF POVERTY**

In the previous section I emphasize that poverty is a multidimensional concept that consists of various dimensions. Because poverty is considered to be a multidimensional phenomenon various definitions are used to define poverty along each dimension. The result is that different definitions often identify different groups of people or different people as poor or non-poor. In other words, how poverty is defined is thus closely related to how it is measured. I also want to indicate that no single definition of poverty can include all aspects or all of its dimensions. This is important since it has implications for the design of policy measures to reduce poverty (Glewwe *et al.*, 1990: 803). In this section I discuss the various perspectives that should be considered when defining and measuring poverty, while the next section focuses on defining poverty.

#### **2.3.1 Relative and absolute poverty**

Poverty can be considered from an absolute or relative perspective. Absolute poverty is the condition of failure to meet the bare essentials of physical existence (Lok-Dessalien; 2002: 2; Ravallion, Datt & van de Walle, 1991: 346; Cutler, 1984: 1119). On the other hand, relative poverty takes into account societal norms so that the definition of the minimum socially acceptable level of consumption tends to rise with the country's overall standard of living (Hanmer, Pyatt & White, 1999: 799; Kanbur, 1987: 61; Hagenars & Praag, 1985: 139).

Why is it important to distinguish between absolute or relative poverty? Lok-Dessalien (2002: 2) concluded that these distinctions are important since poverty measurement, and



the subsequent policy implications will depend on what aspects or angles of poverty are being addressed. For example, policy makers have reasoned that absolute poverty may be reduced by economic growth and relative poverty through a reduction in income inequality (Hagenaars *et al.*, 1985: 139).

### ***Absolute poverty***

Wagle (2002: 156) described “absolute poverty as the most elementary level of economic well-being since the term classifies a person as poor if he lacks the basic means of survival”. Glennerster (2002: 85) indicated that these basic means of survival or basic needs normally includes food, clothing, heat, and other basic essentials.

De Vos and Garner (1991: 268) defined absolute poverty as a situation in which households are below an objectively defined absolute minimum. Lok-Dessalien (2002: 2) also characterised absolute poverty as subsistence below minimum, socially acceptable living conditions, usually established based on nutritional requirements and other essential goods. Cutler’s (1984: 1119) review of the measurement of poverty also concluded that absolute poverty is almost exclusively about whether people have adequate nutrition to keep themselves alive and to enable them to earn a living.

### ***Relative poverty***

There is much controversy and debate around whether poverty should be estimated with a cut-off line that reflects a level below which people are seen as “absolutely impoverished” or a level that reflects some minimum standard of living “common to that country” in particular (Boltvinik, 1998: 9). As I mentioned previously, the definitions of relative poverty have its roots in Europe with Peter Townsend as one of the most outstanding advocates (Boltvinik, 1998: 9; De Vos *et al.*, 1991: 268).

A definition of relative poverty is based on the concept of poverty as a state of relative deprivation and considers the general welfare within the society (De Vos *et al.*, 1991:

268; Cutler, 1984: 1119; Praag *et al.*, 1982: 345). From this perspective, people are defined as poor in terms of income as well as the commodities within the society (Hagenaars & De Vos, 1987: 212). Within the context of the relative income approach, people are classified as poor if they lack a certain amount of income derived from the mean or median income in a given society (Wagle, 2002: 157; Madden, 2000: 183). Golding (1980: 169) argued that from a commodities viewpoint of relative poverty “a person or household is considered to be poor if they lack the ability to participate in activities and lifestyles which are normally common in the society they live in”. Moreover, the relative definition of poverty considers people to be poor if they are deprived of sharing in the general welfare of a society, while others (non-poor) are able to do so. In other words, within the relative approach people are compared to an identified or agreed acceptable standard of living and than classified as poor or non-poor.

While the debate between absolute and relative poverty is still continuing many development partners have focus on the eradication of absolute poverty because of its links with starvation and malnutrition. On the other hand, most advocates of the rights-based approach to poverty have employed a relative poverty definition to ensure that everyone is treated fairly (Lok-Dessalien, 2002: 3).

### **2.3.2 Subjective and objective poverty**

Poverty can also be viewed from both an objective and subjective perspective. The objective approach to the measurement of poverty has traditionally been favoured over the subjective approach.

#### ***Objective perspective***

Lok-Dessalien (2002: 3) described the objective perspective as the conventional approach followed by economists to measure what constitute poverty and what is required to move people out of their impoverished state. Normally this involves some normative or value judgement. I should like to indicate that economists in particular reason that poverty

assessments are best made by experts since individuals are not always the best judge of what is best for them.

May, Woolard and Klasen (2002: 37), for example, indicated that reliance on a respondent's own perception of his or her health status often leads to biases since better-educated individuals are typically more concerned about their health status and report when they are sick even if they suffer from a comparatively minor ailments. Conversely, health awareness among poorer groups is often lower and leads to a lower reported incidence of ill-health (May *et al.*, 2002: 37).

### ***Subjective perspective***

De Vos *et al.* (1991: 268), on the other hand, indicated that proponents of the subjective perspective strongly believe that the opinions of people concerning their own situations should be the decisive factor when defining poverty. From this angle, De Vos *et al.* (1991: 268) computed poverty cut-offs (poverty lines) based on people's perceptions of the monetary amounts necessary for their households to make ends meet.

Kingdon and Knight (2003: 3) continue the debate with regard to the measurement of poverty, and prefer an approach that focuses on the individual's perception of his or her own well-being. They examined the South African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) national household survey of 1993. The survey produced a data set of about 8800 households and is somewhat similar to that of the World Bank's Living Standards Measurement Studies, with questions focusing on household demographics, employment, health, income, and expenditure, as well as community information. The findings of the Kingdon *et al.* (2003: 3) showed that indicators of subjective well-being can be used to add value to money-metric measures. The findings also demonstrated that subjective well-being can be explained through numerous socio-economic variables. I should like to point out that the approach of Kingdon *et al.* (2003: 3) used variables corresponding to the income approach, some to the basic needs (or physical functioning)

approach, some to the relative (or social functioning) approach, and some to the security approach.

Next I review the Quality Of Life Trends Project that has tracked subjective well-being and satisfaction with aspects of living standards over the past two decades in South Africa. The Project uses subjective indicators because it is felt that individuals, rather than outsiders or experts, are in the best position to report on their own situation (Moller, 2001: 34; Moller & Schlemmer, 1989: 280). Moller *et al.* (1989: 280) contested that the enormous differences between the First and Third World living conditions which exist in various parts of South Africa tend to render strictly objective comparisons meaningless. In support of this reasoning they proposed poverty measures that go beyond pure money metric measures (Moller *et al.*, 1989: 280).

Another body of literature has indicated that the combined use of subjective and objective measures is more sophisticated and theoretically robust. Eroglu (2007: 494), for example, developed a deprivation index which included three objective dimensions, namely monetary, consumption and work-related indicators and weighted them according to subjective perceptions of which items are more critical to deprivation. It was concluded that the substantive and methodological advantages of the deprivation index are particularly relevant for studies aiming to measure deprivation, poverty, capability, well-being or social exclusion on any scale in both developing and developed parts of the world.

## **2.4 DEFINING POVERTY**

But before turning to how poverty is defined within the current study, I should like to emphasize that this study is not about how poverty is defined and measured but about how it is perceived. Moreover, the present study is about perceptions of the causes of poverty. However, to understand how people perceive poverty it is crucial that an explanation of how poverty is defined and measured be provided. In this regard Glewwe

*et al.* (1990: 803) have demonstrated that “different definitions of poverty result in different population groups being identified as poor”.

As I argued previously, to define and measure poverty is extremely complex. I therefore want to reiterate that the present study does not view poverty definitions and measures based on single indicators as imperfect, but rather prefer definitions and measures that are multidimensional in nature. In addition, various agencies both at national and international level influence the decision making processes of governments when adopting poverty definitions and measurements for their countries. This section therefore provides background information on how poverty is viewed within the present study. More specifically, poverty is perceived as a more “direct measure” which assesses a number of dimensions such as someone’s standard of living, health, education, employment, income and so on.

In view of the aforementioned, I acknowledge that a definition focusing exclusively on a money metric measure or a single indicator will be insufficient in capturing the multidimensional nature of poverty. I therefore adopt a multidimensional definition of poverty. In adopting a multidimensional definition poverty is viewed along various dimensions including economic well-being, social exclusion and capability poverty. It is my opinion that the multidimensional nature of poverty is probably best described by the definition used by the 1995 World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen.

‘Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illnesses; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries: as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or

conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets. Women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, and children growing up in poverty are often permanently disadvantaged. Older people, people with disabilities, indigenous people, refugees and internally displaced persons are also particularly vulnerable to poverty. Furthermore, poverty in its various forms represents a barrier to communication and access to services, as well as a major health risk, and people living in poverty are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of disasters and conflicts. Absolute poverty is a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services' (Mattes *et al.*, 2002: 5).

I would like to point out that the above definition helps to shed some light on the multidimensionality of poverty, but it does not adequately explain the precise definition that the present study uses. In Chapter 1 I indicated that the LPI is used to measure people's ability to obtain the basic necessities of life such as access to food, potable water, medicines or medical treatment, electricity in the home, fuel for cooking, and a cash income. I want to indicate that the LPI is discussed in greater detail in the next section and in Chapter 4.

## **2.5 DEFINING POVERTY WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa is now well into its third democratic government and has witnessed unthinkable achievements such as hosting the World Conference Against Racism in 2001, winning the 1995 and 2007 rugby world cup, and looking forward to hosting the sporting world's biggest event in 2010 namely the soccer world cup. Despite these achievements and a stable political and economic environment, the country continues to be plagued by poverty and socio-economic problems such as crime and HIV / AIDS. The devastating impact of poverty on South Africa's democracy is particularly disconcerting

since it is well documented that “the prospects for sustaining a democratic government is much lower in a poor society than in a relative wealthy one” (Mattes *et al.*, 2002: 1).

Given South Africa’s particular history and the current challenges to overcoming poverty, what is the response of government to reversing rising levels of poverty and inequality? The government has adopted a comprehensive and integrated approach to poverty eradication, with the Department of Social Development as a key role-player. From this perspective, poverty is to be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that covers a wide range of socio-economic issues related to poverty, including levels of education and employment status among individuals and access to services such as clean water and electricity among households (Hirschowitz, Orkin & Alberts, 2000: 53).

The acknowledgment by the South African government that poverty manifests in a multidimensional manner is informed by several key studies and political processes. A review of the South African literature on poverty revealed a strikingly similar trend to the international literature. For instance, most of the earlier studies relied on money metric definitions and the more recent studies adopted multidimensional definitions to poverty measurement. I must however emphasise that the adoption of more multidimensional definitions did not substitute the money metric definitions or other definitions based on capabilities poverty. What has happened is that findings from a growing number of studies showed that a multidimensional definition of poverty is more appropriate within South Africa.

In this section I therefore first review key initiatives and projects that have inspired the adoption of a multidimensional definition to poverty eradication in South Africa. The main purpose of this review of key poverty research projects is to ensure that the preferred definition and poverty measure within the present study is contextualised. The next step, based on the review and the related international literature on poverty, is to describe how I define and measure poverty within the current study.

### **2.5.1 Review of key poverty projects and research within South Africa**

A review of previous research showed that a number of key initiatives and projects informed the current government's approach to the eradication of poverty and inequity. I believe that Magasela's (2005: 5) review of the African National Congress (ANC) lead government's initiatives and poverty research is probably one of the most extensive and comprehensive efforts to reflect the poverty discourse in South Africa. According to Magasela (2006: 52; 2005: 15) the ANC's efforts to address poverty started well before 1994 through three key initiatives: the first a document entitled "Preparing to Govern"; the second the "Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development" (PSLSD); and the third, the "Reconstruction and Development Programme" (RDP). The main purpose of "Preparing to Govern" was to provide information for policy makers to develop key social and economic policies to consolidate the new-found democracy and to enhance the fight against poverty and inequality.

The PSLSD was implemented by the World Bank and South African researchers in 1993 with the main objective of providing information on the living conditions of all South Africans (Moller & Dickow, 2002: 268; May & Norton, 1997: 96). The PSLSD study is "generally considered as the benchmark for comprehensive poverty-related data in the country" (Magasela, 2006: 52). The PSLSD gave rise to the very first official study on poverty in post-1994 South Africa and was called "Key Indicators of Poverty in South Africa" (Magasela, 2005: 15). This study was published in 1998 by the Ministry in the Office of the President: Reconstruction and Development (Magasela, 2006: 53).

The RDP had five key programmes: meeting basic needs, developing our human resources, building the economy, democratising the state and society, and reorganising the state and public sector (Lodge, 1999: 27; Magasela, 2006: 52; Towards a Ten Year Review, 2003: 2). The RDP was eventually replaced by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy (Everatt, 2003: 83). While the RDP is seen as the general framework within which specific policies and strategies are developed, the GEAR strategy was developed to create a framework to promote an enabling macroeconomic



environment for poverty eradication programmes (Bhorat, 2000: 791). GEAR was decisively different from the RDP and was criticised from within the tripartite alliance and civil society as domestic version of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme, where economic growth took preference over other considerations (Everatt, 2003: 83).

A key government initiative after 1994 was a comprehensive analysis of the state of poverty in South Africa, undertaken by the Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security for South Africa. This committee was referred to as the Taylor Committee and published a report in 2002 entitled "Transforming the Present – Protecting the Future". According to the report "The Measurement of Poverty in South Africa Project: Key Issues" compiled by the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (2007: 6), the Taylor Committee in essence recommended the adoption of a five pronged social protection system to address widespread poverty, lack of access to assets and basic needs, as well as widespread capabilities poverty". The adoption of a five pronged system was a clear indication that poverty must be considered as a multidimensional phenomenon.

The South African government has also worked closely with the United Nations to eradicate poverty. Former President Nelson Mandela on behalf South Africa in 1995 at the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen accepted the challenge to eradicate absolute forms of poverty and reduce all other forms of poverty. Countries at the summit were requested to develop a clear set of policies that would attack poverty in a comprehensive fashion. More specifically these policies should place the poor including vulnerable groups such as women and children first by involving them in participatory research projects. Further, countries should work with domestic, regional and international partners to develop and adopt official indicators to measure progress against poverty. Unfortunately, South Africa has yet to develop an official poverty measure, but researchers have developed and used different poverty measures. It is interesting to note that the former Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, announced as far back as 2005 in his Budget Speech that the government intendeds to adopt an official measure of poverty.<sup>4</sup>

According to the National Treasury of the Republic of South Africa the government has proposed an official poverty line for South Africa.<sup>5</sup> The National Treasury is currently planning to pilot a poverty line for an initial period to invite public comments and consultations before its design is finalized.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the “Measurement of Poverty in South Africa Project: Key Issues” report also showed that different government departments and agencies used different poverty measures. There is thus very little consensus among the various researchers and government departments about the use of an official poverty measure or measures (Oosthuizen, 2008: 1). On the other hand this lack of agreement on a common set of poverty indicators has forced some government departments to conceptualise and define poverty in a multidimensional way in line with their constitutional mandates.<sup>7</sup>

The Poverty and Inequality Report (PIR) published in 1998 is another significant contributor to understanding poverty in post-apartheid South Africa (May, 2000: 3; Magasela, 2006: 54). The PIR was commissioned in 1996 by the Office of the Deputy President with the objective of analysing the status of poverty and inequality and reviewing the impact and relevance of the then current policies and programmes designed to address poverty and inequality and to make recommendations on future direction (May, 2000: 3; Moller *et al.*, 2002: 269). The PIR found that South Africa continues to be characterised by significant levels of poverty and vulnerability to falling into poverty. Furthermore, the distribution of income and wealth in South Africa is extremely unequal, and many households still have unsatisfactory access to clean water, energy, health and education (May *et al.*, 2000: 26). In essence, the PIR suggested that a more holistic approach to poverty and inequality is needed that captures the different dimensions of poverty (Magasela, 2006: 54).

More recently, the government introduced AsgiSA (Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa) in February 2006. The main objective of AsgiSA is to enhance (accelerate) economic growth through joint partnerships with government, business, and other major stakeholders. The government “identified six binding

constraints on growth” that severely hampers the government’s target of halving unemployment and poverty between 2004 and 2014. These binding constraints were: 1) “deficiencies in government’s capacity”; 2) “the volatility of the currency”; 3) “low levels of investment infrastructure and infrastructure services”; 4) “shortages of suitably skilled graduates, technicians and artisans”; 5) “insufficiently competitive industrial and services sectors and weak sector strategies”; and 6) “inequality and marginalisation, resulting in many economically marginalised people being unable to contribute to and / or share in the benefits of growth and development (the Second Economy)”.<sup>8</sup> According to the AsgiSA 2007 Annual Report the South African government experienced major successes in economic growth and investment with a growth rate of more than 4.5 percent for four consecutive years. The report, however, acknowledged that much more needs to be done if government wants to achieve its ambitious objectives.

There are also numerous other non-government studies and projects that have been initiated and implemented to understand the nature and extent of poverty within South Africa. The KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study (KIDS) is probably one of the most widely used studies in this regard. The KIDS study is a panel survey tracking households in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Hoogeveen and Ozler (2006: 61) reviewed some of the studies that made use of the KIDS data and indicated that most of these studies point to overall increase in poverty, inequality and that those measuring inequality found increases within the racial groups and slight decreases between the groups.

### **2.5.2 Availability and quality of data**

My review of the poverty projects shows that South Africa’s government’s commitment to fight poverty is laudable. However, the development of a poverty measure particularly a multidimensional measure is greatly challenged by the availability of data sets. In addition, the lack of data sets makes it also extremely difficult to facilitate comparative poverty studies. On the other hand the government of South Africa should be acknowledged for generating a range of data sets since 1994 under the auspices of the national statistical agency (Statistics South Africa). These data sets included the household surveys from 1995 to 1999, Censuses 1996 and 2001, the income and

expenditure surveys in 1995 and 2000, as well as the bi-annual labour force survey conducted since 2000 (Bhorat *et al.*, 2005: 2; Woolard & Leibbrandt, 1999: 4). It is well documented that these data sets as well as their predecessor in 1993, the Living Standards Measure Survey (LSMS), contributed heavily to the policy formation process and it is anticipated to continue to be a valuable source of reference (Bhorat *et al.*, 2005: 2; Moller *et al.*, 2002: 268). Statistics South Africa recently implemented a Community Survey to further advance the fight against poverty (Stats SA, Community Survey, 2007, Statistical Release PO301).

I want to emphasize that there is a large body of research findings that have frequently debated the quality of these data sets. For example, the Income and Expenditure Surveys of 1995 and 2000 have been criticised for their lack of price data, as well as the Census of 1996 and 2001 for large numbers of missing income variables (Bhorat *et al.*, 2005: 2). It should however be noted that Statistics South Africa before releasing the 2001 Census “adjusted for non-response using a logical imputation method and a single ‘hot-deck’ imputation. The former replaces missing data using information from other variables available in the dataset. Single ‘hot-deck’ imputation involves matching, as closely as possible, individuals with missing data on some variables to individuals who have complete records, and using the information from the latter to replace the missing values in the former” (Noble *et al.* 2006: 6).

### **2.5.3 Politics of defining and measuring poverty**

Apart from the data complexities I want to indicate that some scholars have begun to raise their concern with studies that are preoccupied with the conceptualisation, definition and measuring of poverty. Everatt (2003: 89), for instance, argues that “most poverty experts argue for a detailed definition of poverty as a prerequisite for appropriate policy selection, but ignore the political realm and balancing act it requires.” It is further argued that a “balance between political and technical considerations is needed” if one compares government emphasis on delivery, performance management and impact monitoring against a clear lack of a common definition of poverty, or a coherent anti-

poverty strategy to guide its work and its officials. In this regard, Everatt (2003: 90) highlighted the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) as well as the Urban Renewal Programme failure as a consequence of lack of specificity and focus.

Padayachee (2006: 3) also warns that poverty research into “measurement, data and definition issues should not be allowed to deflect the discourse into narrow, technical culs-de-sac”. There are a many recent and current studies that focus on issues such as “What is the level/rate of unemployment? How big is the informal economy? Are poverty and inequality getting worse? How large is the social wage? How accurate are the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and growth figures?” which demonstrates the preoccupation with measurement, definitions and data (Padayachee, 2006: 3). However, what is even more problematic is when some of these studies are knowingly drawing conclusions based on unreliable data sources.

Contrary to some of the views held by Everatt and Padayachee, some studies have showed that measures and indicators are vital: “they can help take poverty debates beyond rhetoric, and can bring a great deal of concreteness and specificity into discussions that could otherwise be rather ungrounded” (The Measurement of Poverty in South Africa Project: Key Issues, 2007: 7). Furthermore, poverty in South Africa can be addressed through a basic needs approach to cater for the lack of access to food and other essentials, while others acknowledge the impact of equality and inequality because of stark economic divisions between the different race groups. Hence, it is not surprising that findings from a growing number of studies reported against the reliance on a single indicator such as income to assess the state of poverty in South Africa (The Measurement of Poverty in South Africa Project: Key Issues, 2007: 7).

A fundamental question that has emerged in South Africa with regard to poverty research is “what are the key indicators that would ensure that all dimensions of poverty are measured”?. Magasela (2006: 62), in this regard succinctly outlined that “we must ask, therefore, whether the income and absolute definitions of poverty used in poverty

research reflect what South Africans, and not just experts, view as capturing the quality of life, which every citizen must, by right enjoy.”

#### **2.5.4 Toward a democratic multidimensional poverty approach**

The review of poverty studies and projects as well as the lack of data sources revealed that South Africa and in particular its government is faced with a huge challenge of addressing widespread poverty which has an impact on its citizens in a multidimensional manner. It is therefore my opinion that one of the key tasks of the government is to ensure that appropriate measurement tools be developed and implemented to eradicate poverty.

The review of South African studies and projects has demonstrated that the government’s intention is to define and measure poverty in a multidimensional way. For example, the RDP was one of the first policy frameworks of the new democratic government that attempted to address five key areas: basic needs, developing our human resources, building the economy, democratising the state and society, and implementation of the programme. Each of the first four areas was seen as central to poverty eradication. In addition, the Taylor Committee recommended a comprehensive social security strategy to address widespread poverty, lack of access to assets and basic needs, as well as widespread capabilities poverty; at the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen South Africa accepted the challenge to eradicate absolute forms of poverty and reduce all other forms of poverty; and the PIR further recommended that a more holistic approach to poverty and inequality is needed that captures the different dimensions of poverty.

The report ‘Measuring Poverty in South Africa’, published in 2000 by Statistics South Africa can also be considered as the first step in presenting a more holistic approach to poverty which examines the various dimensions of poverty. This report by Statistics South Africa viewed poverty “in a broader perspective than merely the extent of low income expenditure in the country” (Statistics South Africa – A Discussion Note, 2007:

2). Hirschowitz, Orkin and Alberts (2000: 54) in this regard view poverty as the “denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development to lead long, healthy, creative life and enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-esteem and respect from others”.

While a multidimensional approach aims to capture all the dimensions of poverty, it is necessary that such a measure also represents the views of ordinary citizens. This is exactly the reason why Magasela (2006: 62) appealed that a multidimensional measure should also include the views of the South African public. He emphasized that asking people directly what they think about poverty is not new, but will certainly provide a voice to ordinary citizens. A definition and measurement that is characteristic of both expert and non-expert can contribute to a more democratic approach to addressing poverty. A democratic approach that measures the multidimensional nature of poverty will be of great value to South Africa.

Noble *et al.* (2004: 13) in this regard believe that a more comprehensive and democratic approach to the defining and measuring of poverty is warranted since 1) it will accommodate the extensive social and economic inequality left by apartheid rule, and 2) it will have the “stamp of democratic legitimacy”, since it will reflect the views of ordinary South Africans of poverty. The authors therefore developed a definition and measurement that asked people directly about “what they think all South Africans should have, or have access to, in order to achieve an acceptable standard of living”. Moreover, the South African project used the “socially perceived necessities” approach which was first implemented in Britain in 1983 when a survey called Living in Britain was undertaken to define poverty in relation to the minimum living standard that the majority of people believe to be essential in Britain (Wright, 2008: 1).

Although the “socially perceived necessities” approach was developed in Britain it has subsequently been applied to other countries across the world and more recently explored in South Africa. The South African project comprised of three stages. The first stage involved 48 focus groups conducted “across South Africa to explore what possessions,

services and activities people regarded as essential that everyone should have, have access to, or be able to, in order to have an acceptable standard of living”. In the second stage “a pilot module was included in the 2005 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) to obtain a nationally representative definition of necessities”. For the final stage “a full module was included in the 2006 SASAS which asked the same set of questions and also measured whether people lacked each of the items” (Wright, 2008: 2; Noble, Wright, Magasela & Ratcliffe, 2007: 117-141).

I want to state that it is impossible to discuss in detail the Socially Perceived Necessities Approach (SPNA) applied in South Africa, but in essence the SASAS 2006 definitional questions comprised 50 questions: 33 about possessions, 4 about activities, 8 about the neighbourhood and 5 about relationships with friends and family. The SASAS 2006 was a nationally representative survey with a total of 2904 cases. “People were asked to say whether they think each item or activity is essential for everyone to have in order to enjoy an acceptable standard of living in South Africa today. They were given four options as responses: “essential” if they regarded the item or activity in this way; “desirable” if they regarded the item or activity as desirable but not essential; “neither” if they regarded the item or activity as neither essential nor desirable; and “don’t know”. Overall, the results revealed that in spite of high levels of income poverty and inequality, South Africans have a remarkably common view about what it means to have an acceptable standard of living (Wright, 2008: 1 – 2).

Although the SPNA aimed to develop a definition of poverty that takes into consideration the views of ordinary people, it does it only during the focus group stage of the project. It is acknowledged that there are several ways in which the SPNA involves researcher judgment. Wright (2008: 18) indicated that the research team designed the focus group schedule and determined what questions to ask the participants; the research team decided which items arising from the focus groups should be included in the survey definitional module; and the research team designed the questions and determined the possible responses for the pilot of the definitional module in SASAS 2005.



### 2.5.6 Lived Poverty Index

As I argued in the previous sections, poverty in South Africa is a multidimensional phenomenon that should be captured by a range of indicators. In addition, any measurement or indicator that is used to assess poverty within South Africa should be able to better reflect whether every citizen enjoys a good quality of life. In other words, I aim to measure poverty in a multidimensional way by asking people directly about what they perceive to cause poverty. To measure poverty in a multidimensional manner would require multiple measures. Following from the last point and given government's commitment to measure poverty in a comprehensive way, I propose to use the LPI as a poverty measure.

The LPI is a poverty measure that assesses the actual lived conditions of people. The index consist of seven survey items that assess people's ability to obtain basic necessities of life: "access to food, clean water for home use, medicines or medical treatment, electricity in your home, fuel to cook your food, home safety and a cash income" (Mattes *et al.*, 2002: 6). From this lived conditions perspective people are ask directly to assess their ability to secure basic necessities of life, rather than inferring it from things such as income, expenditure, assets, or access to services. In Chapter 4 I provide further details of the LPI and how it is used in this study.

It is my view that the LPI taps several aspects related to poverty. For example, it assesses people's ability to secure an income. Although the LPI is not a money metric measure, the question item on access to 'cash income' thus allows you to gauge whether people have the necessary monetary resources to purchase basic or essential services to lead a good quality life. The LPI also includes question items on access to "medicines or medical treatment" and "cash income" which is often used in the World Bank's Living Standards Measurement Studies. These two questions are thus indicative of living standards people maintain. The question item on access to "electricity" may provide information on the level of development of the area within which the respondent lives. Logically, this may refer to some aspect of structural poverty.

Although the LPI assesses several aspects related to poverty and is a direct poverty measure, I must acknowledge that it has certain limitations. For example, ordinary people had no input as to what they consider to be basic necessities. In addition, the researchers decided which question items to include in the index. The researchers also revised and finalized the questions based on the New Democracies Barometer surveys in Central and Eastern Europe and then applied in South Africa through the Afrobarometer project (Mattes *et al.*, 2002: 8).

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I argue that how one conceptualises poverty influences how you define and measure it. I further show that poverty researchers in the world as well as those in South Africa are increasingly employing multidimensional measures to capture all aspects related to poverty. It is against this background that I adopt the LPI, a uni-multidimensional poverty measure to capture various dimensions of poverty. The next chapter examines literature on perceptions of the causes of poverty as well as the influence of socio-demographic variables on these perceptions of the causes of poverty.

## CHAPTER 3

### PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Poverty is inherently a complex phenomenon that has an impact on the lives of people in a multidimensional way. Understandings and explanations of poverty will accordingly differ from country to country and from one individual to the next. Consequently, different explanations exist as to what causes poverty. Wilson (1996: 414), for instance, argued that people have different perceptions for different types of poverty. Also refer to chapter 2 where a multidimensional approach for the eradication of poverty is advocated. In this chapter I therefore focus on the perceptions of the causes of poverty from a multidimensional perspective.

To contextualize the chapter, arguments are put forward as to why one should study perceptions of the causes of poverty. Background information is also provided on how perception is defined as well as the interrelated and interdependent nature of perception with other cognitive processes.

Next, research that focuses on perceptions of the causes of poverty is discussed along fatalistic, structural and individualistic dimensions. In addition, I discuss a number of theories that have been used to describe and to predict perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Lastly, I contrast perceptions of the causes of poverty by the poor and non-poor. I believe that understanding how the poor and non-poor perceive the causes of poverty appears to be an important avenue for future research. I conclude this chapter with an examination of the interaction of socio-demographic variables such as race, education, geographical location, and employment status with fatalistic, structural and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

### 3.2 WHY FOCUS ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY?

Numerous studies have indicated the importance of the causes of poverty to inform poverty eradication strategies. For instance, Shek (2004: 273) indicated that studies focusing on how people's perceptions of poverty contribute to social scientists' understanding of the stigma associated with poverty. Furthermore, understanding poor people's perceptions about the causes of poverty help them to break the poverty cycle, which prevent them from escaping poverty.

Halman *et al.* (1999: 3) observed that studying people's perceptions of the causes of poverty help researchers understand the impact it could have on welfare and poverty relief programs. Campbell *et al.* (2001: 412), for example, concurred that subjective and psychological theories of poverty are extremely important for social policy formulation particularly for the developing world. Past studies in this regard found that if people were made aware of their biased perceptions, they were more likely to change their behaviour and in some instances even prepared to help the poor (Campbell *et al.*, 2001: 412).

May and Norton (1997: 98) demonstrated through the South African Participatory Poverty Assessment (SA-PPA) study that people's understanding of their lived experiences of poverty is an essential element to formulating policy which will assist the poor to improve the quality of their lives and security of their livelihoods. Also see the findings of a study by De Haan and Zoomers (2003: 350), which recognized the value of a livelihoods perspective in poverty analysis since it provides an active role for people to explore opportunities and to cope with change.

To date, however, the literature shows that the scope of research conceptualizing, defining and measuring poverty is far more than that of research that determines and explains perceptions of the causes of poverty (Halman *et al.*, 1999: 3). In this dissertation I therefore attempt to bridge the gap between studies which focus on perceptions of the causes of poverty and those that concentrate on defining and measuring poverty.

### 3.3 DEFINING PERCEPTIONS

In the previous sections of this chapter I used at least three terms to describe people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. The three terms are "understandings", "explanations" and "perceptions". Baldwin (2007: 6) in this regard argued that there is a "plethora of idioms for describing perception". For example, the verbs "perceived that" and "sees that" are often used to explain people's perceptions.

More importantly, these phrases or words are not only used to describe what we perceive but also to describe what one infers from one's perception. The study by Baldwin (2007: 6) suggested that a distinction should be made between "direct realism" and "causation". According to this study direct realism is the perceptual experience between a subject and the real physical objects they normally take to perceive. Simply stated, I believe this view proposes a model of perception to which objects are just presented directly to us without any mode of presentation or any specific appearance. However, this view is contrasted with the causal theory, which claims that one's perception depends on the transmission of information from the object to the subject. The causal theory therefore argues that there is a connection between the objects perceived and the people's perceptions of them.

Noë (2003: 95), however, indicates that the causal theory fails to be explicit about the nature of the connections between the perceiver and object. In this study by Noë perceptual content is defined as the process of how one's experience of what one sees is represented. The perceptual content in turn is two-dimensional with a factual dimension, which considers things as they are (Noë, 2003: 95). The perceptual content also has a perspectival dimension, which refers to how things look from the vantage point of the perceiver. Noë (2003: 94; 2002: 185) therefore concluded that "perception is a way of keeping track of how things are, but is also a way of keeping track of one's relation to how things are".

I believe that the distinction between direct realism and causation and / or between what one perceives and one's relation to one's perception has direct bearing on the current

study. In the first instance, indicated by Baldwin (2007: 6), perception is more than just observing phenomena. Perception also refers to the connection between the object and the perceiver. In the second example, proposed by Noë (2003: 94; 2002: 185), perceptual content is considered to be two-folded with a factual component namely what you perceive and another component that values the relationship of the perceiver and the object being perceived. In other words, both these interpretations attached a great deal of importance to the unique relationship between perceiver and object. In the next section I therefore show that this unique relationship is influenced by a multitude of factors such as a person's culture, race and level of schooling. Much later in this chapter the definition of perception is applied to poverty.

### **3.4 PERCEPTION: INTERRELATED AND INTERDEPENDENT**

Based on the arguments advanced in the previous section, I decided to focus on the second dimension of perception: one's relation to how things are when perceiving objects. For instance, how do the poor (those with a lack of access to basic necessities) compare to the non-poor (those that never or seldom lack access to basic necessities) perceive the causes of poverty? I believe that the poor view the causes of poverty very differently from the non-poor since they come from very different backgrounds and geographical contexts. This is one of the reasons why I am interested in how people perceive the causes of poverty from their own perspective.

In general, findings from some studies suggest that people's explanations, perceptions, behaviour and attitudes are just a partial picture since evidence suggests that before you express an opinion or perform a task that there are a number of cognitive processes informing what and how you are going to formulate your views or execute your behaviour (Burdein, Lodge & Taber, 2006: 360). These cognitive processes can influence our perception both consciously and unconsciously (Bargh & Williams, 2006: 1). Our perception in turn influences our behaviour and preferences (Ishii, 2005: 280).

Note a study by Diamond (2007: 152) who is of the view that human beings are involved in a multitude of relationships at any given time and that we need to make far more progress in understanding those interrelations. A literature review by Diamond (2007: 152) demonstrated that cognition, perception and emotion are influenced by a person's current cultural context and cultural background. The same review found that a person's unique genetic make-up mediates how environmental factors affect one's mind and body. The review also showed that a person's genetic expression is malleable and shaped by experience and the environment. The study therefore concluded that 'who we are and what we think is a product not only of our genes, but also of our social, cultural and physical environments, and their interactions with another as well as their interactions with our genes'.

Bandura (1999: 24) also stressed that there is a clear interdependence between people and the environment within which they live. According to the theory of triadic reciprocal causation human behaviour should be understood in terms of sociostructural (also referred to as environmental factors within the present dissertation) and psychological (also referred to as internal factors or characteristics that is unique to a person) factors. More specifically, it is believed that sociostructural influences have to pass the psychological mechanisms of an individual to produce the desired behaviours. Bandura emphasized that this is not a straightforward process, since the individual himself can exercise self-influence to determine the desired behaviour. In other words, the individual has human agency which makes it possible to act independently within a social system.

It is against this interrelated and interdependent nature of human behaviour that I conducted a review of the literature to show that people's perception of the causes of poverty is simultaneously influenced by both internal and external factors, by both conscious and unconscious processes, and that these factors and processes all operate as interacting determinants that influence one another bidirectionally. In short, I decided to examine people's perceptions of the causes of poverty in its interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts. I therefore view poverty mainly from a social perspective since it impacts on people's lives in a multidimensional way. To make sense of people's

perceptions of the causes of poverty within this social context, I use psychological perspectives and theories, especially those related to social cognition.

In this section I discussed the importance of social cognition as the process by which people think and make sense of their social surroundings. The next section outlines three perspectives of perceptions of the causes of poverty, which is followed by a discussion of the theories underlying the poverty perspectives.

### **3.5 PERSPECTIVES: PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

Research focusing on perceptions of the causes of poverty indicates that poverty is normally perceived along three perspectives: fatalistic, structural and individualistic (Hunt, 2004: 829; Shek, 2004: 273; Shek, 2002: 790; Sun, 2001: 164). In this section I look at these perspectives more closely.

#### **3.5.1 Individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The first perspective is often described as individualistic since it focuses on individual failings or shortcomings of some sort. Theorists from this perspective see poverty as a kind of pathology, in which the poor are blamed for their own circumstances (Appelbaum, Lennon & Aber, 2006: 390). Wilson (1996: 413) observed that from an individualistic perspective people are considered poor because of their lack of ability, efforts or morals.

We find two separate explanations in this category: the culture of poverty and the underclass. The culture of poverty theory reasons that many poor people get accustomed to their deprived situation and then develop a way of life that keeps them poor. According to this explanation, the poor exhibit feelings of marginality, helplessness, dependency and inferiority (Hunt, 1996: 295).



The second pathological explanation is in the notion of the underclass, which is conceptualized as a small group of people living in poverty with a distinct set of values and behaviours, and a strong propensity for crime and other anti-social behaviour (Hunt, 1996: 295; Wilson, 1987: 13). The individualistic explanation can often be used to justify expressions of racism, sexism and individualism. These negative views about the causes of poverty have been deconstructed by more comprehensive explanations of the causes of poverty, which include influences such as social structure and lack of opportunities.

Besides adopting a negative individualistic perspective for the causes of poverty, other scholars have focused on a more positive approach. It is particularly evident in the United States that wealth is attributed to individualistic characteristics such as hard work or motivation (Hunt, 2004: 829).

Wilson (1987: 4) categorizes these positive and negative descriptions of the causes of poverty into two distinct groups. In his analysis of the inner city underclass he refers to those scholars who advocate a more positive approach as “liberals”; and those that believe that the poor (“ghetto family”) has a history of welfare dependency and that their children will lack ambition and a sense of self-reliance as “conservatives”. I believe these approaches (Liberal and Conservative Approaches) represent two typical groups into which we can group the theories explaining perceptions of the causes of poverty. In the sections that follow I describe the various theories of perceptions of the causes of poverty first according to the Conservative Approach and then the Liberal Approach. Auletta’s (1982: 18) review of the underclass also commented on these two categories: conservative and liberal. Furthermore, Auletta suggested that this distinction between the conservatives and liberals are founded on different assumptions about human nature, where the liberals believe you have to change the systems and the conservatives argue you have to change the individual.

### **3.5.2 Structural perceptions of the causes of poverty**

Another perspective suggests that structural explanations are the cause of unequal conditions within society that create poverty, rather than the intellectual and cultural deficits of the poor. In this category the poor are not to blame for their own circumstances, as external factors have placed them unfavourably in social structures, in a position often characterized by a lack of access to opportunities (Shek, 2004: 273).

Within the structural framework, distinctions are made between social injustice (lack of social opportunities) and economic injustice (exploitation as a consequence of capitalism, for example, poor people are exploited by the rich) (Hunt, 1996: 295). Ascribed deprivation in particular is seen as a lack of access to opportunities, mostly for poor people living in under-resourced and impoverished circumstances (Shek, 2004: 273).

I elaborate on the theories that explain structural perceptions of the causes of poverty in the section “Liberal Approaches to explaining perceptions of the causes of poverty”.

### **3.5.3 Fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The third perspective recognized that poverty is often contributed to ill-health or social or economic consequences (Bullock & Waugh, 2005: 1133). Some scholars refer to these causes as accidental causes, while others refer to it as fatalistic factors such as bad luck or misfortune (Shek, 2004: 273). The fatalistic perspective also views poverty as a result of some unforeseen circumstances normally beyond the individual’s control (Bullock *et al.*, 2005: 1133).

I should like to indicate that far fewer studies have focused on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty than individualistic and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. However, Bègue and Bastounis (2003: 436) have indicated that fatalistic perceptions is more frequently used to interpret how individuals perceive themselves when faced with

situations of injustices and victimization. In these instance individuals argue that the unfair discrimination or injustice towards them is due to bad luck or a mistake.

#### **3.5.4 Psychological explanations of the causes of poverty**

Weiss and Gal (2007: 894) reasoned that apart from individualistic, structural and fatalistic perceptions one can also distinguish psychological perceptions of the causes of poverty. Psychological perceptions of the causes of poverty focus on issues such as emotional problems and lack of interpersonal abilities. The causes of poverty in the case of psychological explanations are most often attributed to the individual's personal emotional state of mind.

The findings of the study by Weiss *et al.* (2007: 905), for example, showed that although social workers and middle-class professionals in general perceived the causes of poverty in structural terms, the social workers ascribed more importance to psychological perceptions of the causes of poverty. In other words, the difference between the social workers and other middle-class professionals was a result of social education.

It should be emphasized that I do not see these perspectives to be mutually exclusive because poverty is a result of a multiple factors that often operate simultaneously. Smith *et al.* (1989: 101), for example, studied beliefs about the causes of poverty and identified four metatheories from which beliefs about poverty and wealth emanate. These four metatheories are individualism, culturalism, structuralism and fatalism.

In addition, perceptions of poverty have often been characterized by ambivalence. For example, some studies showed that the poor should be treated with dignity and respect, while other studies revealed that negative stereotypes exists about the poor (Underlid, 2005: 274).

### **3.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS UNDERLYING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

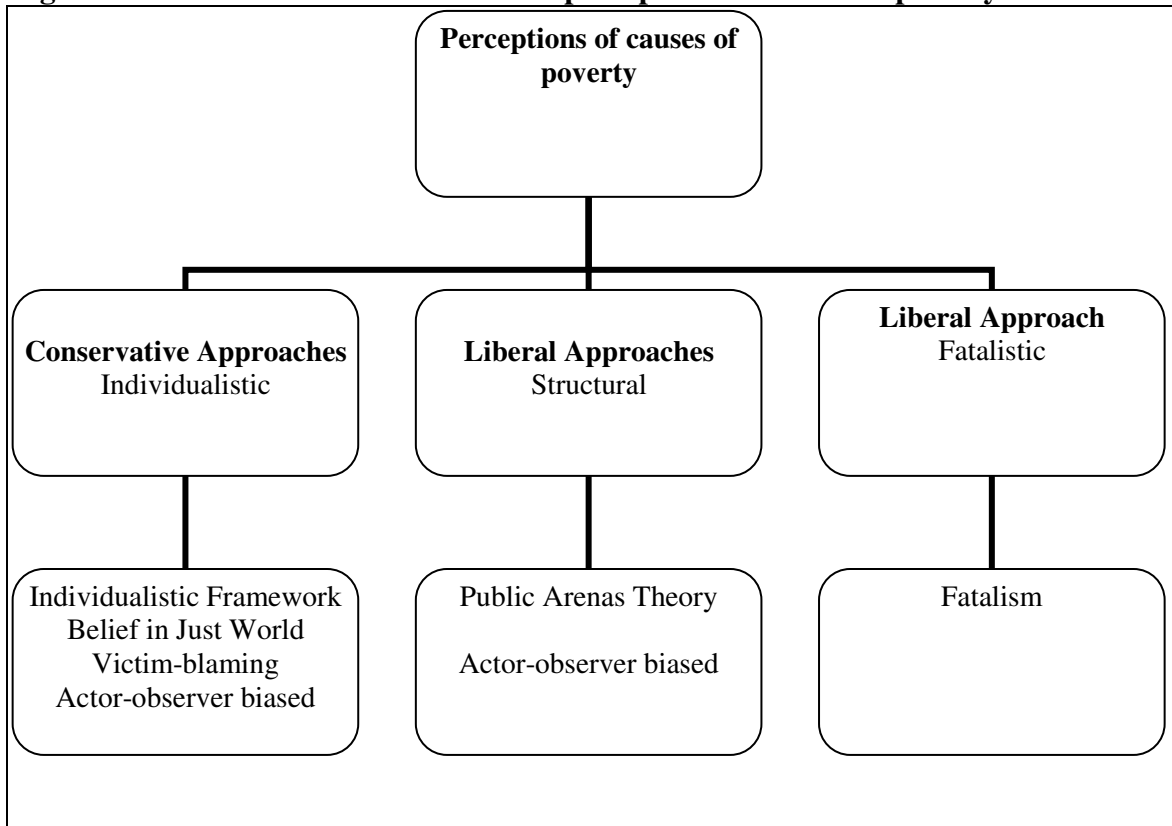
A number of theories have been used to describe and predict peoples' beliefs or perceptions of the causes of poverty (see Figure 3.1). I group these theories according to two distinct approaches: conservative and liberal approach<sup>9</sup>. The individualistic explanation framework, belief in a just world, and victim-blaming are considered as theories advancing the conservative approach. More specifically, the conservatives mostly support individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

The public arenas theory is used to explain structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, the public arenas theory can be classified as a liberal approach to explaining perceptions of the causes of poverty.

On the other hand, the actor-observer biased theory is useful since it can be used to explain both individualistic and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. In other words, the actor-observer biased theory can be categorized as both a conservative and liberal approach.

One of the major drawbacks that I have encountered is the limited literature on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. However, it is my opinion that the fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty may be grouped under the liberal approach. I show that the liberalist does not perceive the poor to be responsible for their own situation but rather external circumstances such as a deteriorating environment (in the case of structural perceptions) or some unforeseen circumstances such as bad luck (in the case of fatalistic perceptions). Although both the fatalistic and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty can be classified under the liberal approach, it is distinctly different because the one is based on chance or luck (actually bad luck) and the other on external circumstances or influences.

**Figure 3.1: Theoretical Frameworks for perceptions of causes of poverty**



*Note: This is my own categorization of the various theories according to these approaches.*

Lastly, I believe that the distinction between the conservative- and liberal approach has a direct bearing on the poverty policy formulation process. For instance, Wilson (1987: 16) indicated that the conservatives considered the liberal policies during the 1980s to be counter-productive to tackling poverty in the United States. More specifically, the conservatives felt that the liberal changes in the criminal justice system during that era decreased the sanctions against deviant behaviours and thereby contributed to the rise in serious inner-city crime since 1965. Furthermore, the conservatives believed that the affirmative action pressures are a direct result of the deteriorating plight of the underclass, because it increased the demand for highly qualified minority members but at the same time decreased the demand for less qualified members. In addition, the conservatives argued that social welfare programmes made people less self-reliant and often promoted joblessness (Wilson, 1987: 16).

Ward (1989: 21) also found that policies to address poverty are often vigorously contested. For instance, by the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century the moral distinction between the worthy and unworthy poor gained prominence and as a result the worthy poor were often considered eligible for relief. On the other hand, the unworthy poor (those who were undeserving of charity) seldom got any help because they lacked self-discipline. My own view is that a stark similarity exists between the conservative versus liberal approach and the worthy versus the unworthy poor. More specifically, I believe that the conservatives prefer policies that will benefit the worthy poor only, while the liberals prefer policies that benefit all those who are considered to be poor.

I am also of the opinion that the conservative versus liberal approach can be contrasted with cash (for example social grants) or in-kind transfer (for example free health care) poverty assistance programmes. For instance, I believe that conservatives are more likely to prefer in-kind transfers because they worry more about how the poor spend the money they receive, while liberals prefer giving the poor the money to decide for themselves how to spend it. I must acknowledge that this is a very crude or simplistic assumption that conservatives prefer in-kind transfers compare to liberals' preference for cash transfers. In this regard Lang (2007: 78) argues that there is sometimes merit in preferring in-kind transfers. For example, there are strong reasons for investing in children and it is possible to target in-kind transfers to children. In the United States the government implemented school lunch programmes and some medical care programmes. In South Africa children receive free basic health care up six years of age. The South African government also instituted school feeding schemes to ensure that school going children particularly in poor areas are well nourished. According to Lang (2007: 78) in-kind transfers for children is often open for criticism because critics argue that the government must support children because poor people do not take care of their children or do not know how to take care of their children. Nevertheless, Lang believe that when families, regardless of their economic status receive additional income, they add it to the consumption of all members of the family and not just the children.

In this section I mentioned that perceptions of the causes of poverty theories can be grouped according to a conservative or a liberal approach. I have argued that proponents of the liberal approach is much more in favour of cash transfers to eradicate the plight of the poor, while those supporting the conservative approach is more likely to prefer in-kind or non-monetary transfers. Lastly, that each approach, conservative or liberal, has a distinct way of assisting the poor. I am continuing the discussion of policy preferences for the poor in Chapter 7 based on the results of the current study. In the next section I briefly elaborate on the various theories within each approach.

### **3.6.1 Conservative Approaches explaining perceptions of the causes of poverty**

All the theories that are grouped within the conservative approach tend to explain perceptions of the causes of poverty in individualistic dimensions.

#### ***Individualistic explanation framework***

Historically the individualistic explanation framework has been favoured by the American public. According to this theory a capitalist society such as the United States have ample opportunities and it is up to the individual to work hard to acquire the necessary material wealth on which the society thrives (Bullock & Limbert, 2003: 696; Smith *et al.*, 1989: 94). Conversely, those who fail to take advantage of the possibilities and land up in poverty are themselves to blame. In other words, wealth and poverty in terms of the individualistic explanation framework rest squarely on the shoulders of the individual and not the society, or any other forces (Smith *et al.*, 1989: 94). I am therefore not surprise that statements such as lack of ability, low intelligence, low ambition, or morals are closely associated with individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

I believe this theoretical perspective represents the typical view that rich people are hard working and possess more drive to get ahead in life. However, I strongly feel this theory fails to acknowledge that most rich people or non-poor people are privileged in terms of resources such as adequate income, housing, medical care and family support. In other

words, I concur that non-poor people have the skills and knowledge to utilize the available resources and opportunities much better than their poor counterparts.

Bandura (1999: 35) from a social cognitive perspective distinguished between individualism and collectivism. In some countries collectivism is more appreciated, while in others people prefer to operate on their own to achieve their goals. For example, the United States can be considered as a country where an individualistic culture dominates, while China is characterized as a country with a group-orientated system. However, both individualistic and collective cultures are not static nor are they homogenous. In other words, there are collectivists in individual societies and individualists in collective cultures. Furthermore, people achieve their greatest personal efficacy and productivity if their personal orientation is aligned with the social system. This implies that an American individualist will achieve much better under an individually oriented system, while a Chinese collectivist will do better under a group-orientated system. The personal orientation rather than the cultural orientation matters most in explaining one's drive for success.

To explain the individualistic framework further, I explore people's beliefs of inequality. Lopez, Gurin and Nagda (1998: 305), for example, review group differences about the beliefs of the causes of inequality and demonstrate that inequality is either attributed to individual dispositions such as lack of motivation or character, or to structural differences among groups. Lopez *et al.* (1998: 305), for example, claims that institutions treat different groups of people unequally, thus making success less attainable for some groups and more for others. Further, people often favour individualistic over structural explanations since individualistic attributions is "an automatic and natural human cognitive process, which is very difficult to interrupt, change, or unlearn".

### ***Victim-blaming framework***

It is my view that the victim-blaming framework is an extension of the individualistic explanations framework. The term "victim-blaming" in itself is very sensitive and



numerous debates and research projects have questioned the usefulness of the use of the concept. Some scholars have argued that it is simply a short or catchy phrase to refer to more complex social categories, while others have described the term as undeserving since it is a racial code which simply hides anti-African American or anti-Hispanic feelings. This theoretical perspective predicts that perceptions of poverty stems from individualistic factors such as people are poor because they are lazy or dependent on welfare (Wright, 1993: 3).

### ***Belief in Just World Framework***

It is reasoned by Campbell *et al.* (2001: 411) that the tendency to blame poverty on individualistic factors (to blame victims of poverty for their own plight) is consistent with the belief in a just world framework (BJW). According to Bègue and Bastounis (2003: 435) and Campbell *et al.* (2001: 411) the belief in a just world framework is based on the hypothesis that individuals believe that the world is a just and orderly place where people usually get what they deserve. Furthermore, Bègue and Bastounis (2003: 436) indicated that the belief in a just world framework has been employed in the investigation of a number of social phenomena which included altruistic behaviour, the perception and justification of inequalities, and social discrimination.

A study conducted by Campbell *et al.* (2001: 411) employed the Just World Scale (JWS). The sample consisted of 98 Malawian and 100 Australian respondents. The JWS was developed to investigate individual and group differences in the strength to which people believe in a just world. People were asked to respond to a 20 item JWS such as “by and large, people deserve what they get”, “many people suffer through absolutely no fault of their own”, and “people who keep in shape have little chance of suffering a heart attack” (Campbell *et al.*, 2001: 415). Nine of the question items reflected belief in an unjust world while 11 items reflected belief in just world.

The same respondents had to complete an 18 item Causes of the Third World Poverty Questionnaire (CTWPQ). The respondents had to rate from 1 to 5 the importance of 11

situational and 7 dispositional items as causes of poverty in the developing world. The results of the JWS was than compared with that of the CTWPQ and revealed that the Pro-Just World factor, which loaded on items such as “people who meet with misfortune have often brought it on themselves”, correlated significantly with the Blame the Poor factor of the CTWPQ, which loaded on items attributing poverty to dispositional factors (e.g. “the population of such countries make no attempt at self-improvement”) (Campbell *et al.*, 2001: 415).

In general, the study showed that the Australian respondents believed that poor people are to blame for their own poverty circumstances, while the Malawian respondents attributed the poverty to structural factors. However, among the Australian respondents it was found that those who are involved in donating money and goods are more likely to attribute poverty to structural factors.

### **3.6.2 Liberal Approaches explaining structural perceptions**

#### ***Structural and situational factors framework***

Wright (1993: 2) indicated that the “individualistic explanation of poverty is often contrasted with the “structural explanation of poverty”. It is my understanding that within the structural explanation perspective a person’s poverty is regarded as a direct result of outside or environmental factors such as the availability of employment and education. In most cases the individual is unable to manipulate these factors; as a result it has a direct bearing on his poverty status. Bullock *et al.* (2003: 695) in this regard showed that poor immigrant Mexican women were unable to access good quality education because of a lack of money and transport.

Smith *et al.* (1989: 95) similarly considered structural (or situational) factors as the key drivers of wealth and poverty. I want to emphasize that these structural and situational factors exist independent of the personal characteristics of the poor and the wealthy. As a consequence, it is a matter of who is capable of utilizing the available opportunities (in

the case of the wealthy) or limited opportunities (in the case of the poor) to the best of their ability. Ultimately, however, the wealthy through their ownership or control of structures such as capital and labour is able to maintain and legitimize their control over other segments of the population.

### ***Public arenas theoretical framework***

The public arenas theory is often used to interpret structural beliefs in the causes of poverty. Wilson (1996: 414) argued that “beliefs about poverty are much more complex and that poverty can not simply be attributed to individualistic or structural reasons”. In this study Wilson criticize previous research because of the reliance on a generic conceptualization of poverty. The findings of his study show that people have different causal beliefs or perceptions for different types of poverty.

Wilson (1996: 415) explained that the burgeoning public arenas theory provides an alternative to the individualistic explanation framework that views individualistic factors as the causes of poverty. The burgeoning public arenas theory indicated that at any point in time many issues compete with each other in institutional “arenas of public discourse” to explain poverty. Wilson (1996: 415) cited governmental agencies, private foundations, media as examples of structural issues that all compete with each other to explain poverty.

### **3.6.3 Theories explaining fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

Fatalistic framework describes poverty and wealth as a result of luck, bad fate, chance, or other related forces which people have absolutely no or very little control over (Smith & Stone, 1989: 95). While fatalistic explanations are most often seen as lay explanations for the causes of poverty, social sciences have frequently used these factors to explain social phenomena. For example, both Shek (2004: 273) and Sun (2001: 164) based their work on the Feagin Poverty Scale which measures perception of the causes of poverty in terms of individualistic, structural and fatalistic dimensions.

In this section I discussed a number of theoretical perspectives that are often used to explain people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. However, I acknowledge that these theories are extremely limited and that more comprehensive theoretical frameworks are needed to understand why people hold certain perceptions of the causes of poverty and why some hold other perceptions of the causes of poverty. Nevertheless, I want to emphasize that the current study is about popular perceptions of the causes of poverty and not popular perceptions of poverty. Unfortunately there is far less research on popular perceptions of the causes of poverty than research on popular perceptions of poverty. I initially raised this concern in Chapter 1 but feel it is important to repeat that I am restricted with regard to research about popular perceptions of the causes of poverty. In addition, most of the literature that I have used is based on first world countries such as the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia, whereas research on popular perceptions of the causes of poverty in developing countries such as South Africa is almost non-existent. In some instances I also used literature on popular perceptions of poverty to advance my arguments on popular perceptions of the causes of poverty.

In spite of the limitations I strongly feel that literature surveyed enabled me to formulate my own ideas as to why certain groups of people perceive the causes of poverty in their own peculiar way. For example, in the first part of this chapter I argued that people's perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed within a social context. Furthermore, their immediate environment plays a key role in shaping how they perceive the world. I therefore believe that poorer people, because of the lack of basic necessities, perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. Conversely, I suspect that non-poor people or those who have a greater degree of access to basic necessities perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. Similarly, I want to suggest that people living in traditional, rural formal and urban informal areas in South Africa are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural rather than in individualistic terms, because access to basic necessities is much better in formal areas than in the rural formal and traditional areas. I also believe that white South Africans compared to blacks are more likely to perceive poverty in individualistic rather than structural terms. I expect the above hypotheses to be true because the findings from previous studies showed that white Americans compared

to African Americans are more likely to perceive poverty in individualistic rather than structural terms (Hunt (1996: 312). In addition, African Americans that live in ghettos are more likely to perceive poverty in structural dimensions because of the deteriorating and adverse areas they live in (Wilson, 1987: 14).

In total, the arguments which I put forward demonstrate that perceptions of the causes of poverty in the South African context can predominantly be explained through external and internal factors. More specifically, the system of apartheid created a very unequal society in terms of access to political and socio-economic goods. As a result poverty in South Africa has an unequal spatial character along socio-economic and demographic strata such as race, geographic location, gender and education. I believe these unequal conditions of the apartheid system lead to a situation where the poor (mostly black Africans) blame the causes of poverty on the system and the non-poor (mostly white) perceive the causes of poverty in individual terms.

### **3.7 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

The theories in the previous section explain, predict or describe perceptions of the causes of poverty, while this section introduces the research instrument that is used to measure perceptions of the causes of poverty. I believe the main motivation for the sections that follow is to provide information on the indicators that are used to measure the various perceptions of the causes of poverty indexes.

In Chapter 2 I outline my approach of how poverty is conceptualization and defined, while in Chapter 4 I describe in detail how perceptions of the causes of poverty are measured. I believe knowledge of the indicators at this juncture is necessary to understand how poverty impact on people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. Information on the indicators is also important in order to understand the influence socio-economic and demographic variables on perceptions of the causes of poverty discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Joe Feagin is considered as one of the pioneers of research exploring perceptions of the causes of poverty. Feagin was instrumental in the development of a scale measuring peoples' perceptions of the causes of poverty (Sun, 2001: 164). This scale became known as the Feagin Poverty Scale and consisted originally of 11 items that were subdivided into three categories.

In brief, the first category assesses whether people perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms and include statements such as "lack of thrift and proper money management by poor people". The second category assesses whether people perceive the causes of poverty as a result of bad luck or fate and employs question items such as "lack of ability" and "just bad luck". The third category measures whether people perceive the causes of poverty in terms of structural factors and include question items such as "low wages in some businesses and industries" and "prejudice and discrimination against minority groups" ((Feagin (1972: 103) cited in Sun (2001: 164)). Respondents are normally asked to rate these statements along the following response options: "very important explanation of poverty", "important explanation", and "non-important explanation".

### **3.8 POOR VERSUS NON-POOR PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY**

The literature review on the impact of socio-economic and demographic variables on perceptions of the causes of poverty revealed that most studies have examined only a small number of socio-economic and demographic variables as predictor variables. For example, the majority of the studies investigated the influence of education and race, while relatively fewer studies have focused on employment and geographic location. The literature review also showed that studies which focused on economic variables such as people's poverty status and LSM to predict perceptions of the causes of poverty are limited. For these reasons and because prior research has sometimes yielded conflicting results, I deem it important to determine whether socio-economic variables such as people's access to basic necessities (measured by the LPI) have an impact on individualistic, structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

In this study I distinguish between the poor and non-poor on the basis of access to basic necessities. Chapter 4 explains in detail how the LPI is employed to separate the poor from the non-poor. The LPI used in the present study consists of six survey items that assess people's ability to obtain basic necessities of life: access to food, clean water for home use, medicines or medical treatment, electricity in your home, fuel to cook your food and a cash income (Mattes *et al.*, 2002: 6).

### **3.8.1 Non-poor perceptions of the causes of poverty**

Research into how the elite or non-poor perceive their wealth and social status has also been very limited. Clarke and Sison (2003: 216) insisted that an understanding of elite perceptions of poverty and the poor will provide insight into the social dynamics of poverty and inequality and inform pro-poor public policy.

In their study they interview eighty members of the Filipino elite. "Elite" was broadly defined as those individuals who occupy prominent positions within society and who have a significant capacity to influence anti-poverty debates at national and local level. The study advances the use of participatory and qualitative research methods in contrast to large-scale poverty studies which rely primarily on quantitative methods. It should be noted that Filipinos in general see a close relationship between poverty and inequality and blame poverty primarily on the elite. Even among the well-off it is found that Filipinos are concerned about poverty and inequality.

However, the study by Clarke *et al.* (2003: 215) demonstrated that the perceptions' of the Filipino elite is somewhat conflicting, since some of the elite see the poor in a positive manner while others view the poor in negative way. For example, some sectors of the Filipino elite described the poor as those who lack money and who are unable to meet their basic needs. On the other hand, some of the elite also "condemned the poor as being lazy, opportunistic and fatalistic" (Clarke *et al.*, 2003: 228). Consequently, the Clarke study found that the elite perceived the poor in both a positive and negative manner.

Willems *et al.* (2005:178) conducted telephone interviews with 21 general practitioners (GPs) from deprived areas of Ghent in Belgium to examine the GPs' perception of poverty and their perceived attitude of deprived patients. The study emphasized that very little is known about how people from high-income occupations (such as GPs) define poverty, their attitude towards deprived patients, and their perceptions of the attitude of those patients towards health and the health care system. The findings of the study showed that most of the GPs identified limited communication skills, addiction, laziness, fear of what might happen in the future and lower health status as individual determining factors in poverty. The study concluded that further research is needed to understand how high income earners' perceptions of poverty are influenced by their relationships and interactions with people living in poverty.

To further understand the positive and negative perceptions of the poor it is useful to review the impact of socio-economic status on perceptions of poverty; how exposure and encounters with the poor impact on perceptions of poverty; and how stereotypical perceptions of the racial composition affects beliefs of the causes of poverty (Wilson, 1996: 417). In this regard the public arenas theory predicts that exposure of the non-poor to the poor is a crucial way in which perceptions of poverty of the non-poor are formed. Furthermore, two types of exposure to poverty and the poor are distinguished. First, it postulated that media exposure to issues of poverty can help shape people's perceptions of the poor and poverty. Secondly, exposure to the poor or experiences of poverty is another way of constructing and reinforcing peoples' perceptions of poverty.

Reutter *et al.* (2005: 528) have also demonstrated that people's perceptions of poverty are influenced by their relationships and interactions with people living in poverty. I would like to emphasize that the present study values the importance of people's lived experiences of poverty and people's experiences with poor people in contributing or shaping one's own perceptions of the causes of poverty.

The studies reviewed, demonstrated that the non-poor perceive the poor both in a positive and negative manner. To understand the perceptions of the non-poor it was argued that



future research is necessary to investigate the impact of exposure to poverty on the non-poor (Reutter *et al.*, 2005: 528). I believe that this initial review of the literature reveals that the non-poor can learn about the poor through direct experience and through the media.

### **3.8.2 How do the poor perceive poverty?**

The perceptions of non-poor should be contrasted with those of the poor or those people who live in poverty. The literature in this regard also offers the opinions of the broader public when perceptions of poverty are examined (De Haan *et al.*, 2003: 352; May, 2000: 5; Moore, Choudhary & Singh, 1998: 3; May *et al.*, 1997: 96). Accordingly, a growing body of literature on lay or poor people's perceptions of poverty has surfaced. In this section I review studies that have focussed on poor people's perceptions of poverty.

Literature with regard to poor people's perceptions of poverty is characterized by a number of features. Probably the most important feature is that poor people perceive poverty in a multidimensional way. Moore *et al.* (1998: 3), for example, conducted a literature review on poor people's perceptions of poverty in Asia and found that "rural, agrarian populations mostly defined poverty as a lack of assets (land, housing, agricultural equipment)". The rural population also defined poverty in terms of income sources (type of wage employment), living standards (type and frequency of food intake, children not attending school); and demographic / labour variables (high dependency ratios or large numbers of children, lack of able-bodied males, sickness or disability). By contrast, in less rural areas people defined poverty in terms of the type of jobs. It was established that people in the urban areas considered secure access to residential accommodation as a correlate of poverty.

I also want to highlight a participatory poverty study which involved about 1400 people in South Africa. The study indicated that the poor are seen as being isolated from their communities, that children in poor households are malnourished with poor quality food, that houses are crowded and not maintained, that basic forms of energy is used and there

is infrequent energy supply, that no one in poor households is employed and families are fragmented with no father figure present. The findings of this study demonstrated that even though the respondents came from different communities with very divergent circumstances, they provided a relative uniform description of the living conditions of poor people (May *et al.*, 1997: 96).

The findings of the study by May *et al.* (1997: 96) also demonstrate that the poor mostly identified poverty at the household or individual level such as the amount of land or assets they owned and types of employment or personal abilities. External factors such as remoteness from the town and public services were seen as less important pointing to the fact the poor tended to compare themselves with other locals or with their immediate less-poor neighbours. Another interesting finding from this study is that poor people are heterogeneous. The poor are most often wrongly described as one big group rather than a diverse group with a wide range of understandings about the causes of poverty among themselves.

A study conducted in the United States by Appelbaum *et al.* (2006: 388) examined the public's views about the poor and their circumstances. More specifically, this study was interested in the role that psychological orientations (individualistic, structural and fatalistic attributions for poverty) of the evaluators play in judgments of the families in need. To understand both the characteristics of the poor families and the characteristics of the people evaluating the needs of the poor a nationally representative survey of 1570 adults in the United States was completed in 2002. The study analyzed three vignette characteristics: Lisa's working status (whether she is working versus on welfare or her status is not indicated); whether Lisa attends school to improve her job skills; whether she is looking for a job (or a better job if she already has one).

The results by Appelbaum *et al.* (2006: 392) indicated that about 46 percent (somewhat) and 38 percent (very deserving) of the sample thought that Lisa deserved to receive aid. The overall results here support previous research on Belief in Just World (BJW). It was found that respondents with a high score on the BJWS tended to see Lisa as deserving of

her situation if she was not working and struggling to survive. Similarly, respondents with a high BJWS still considered Lisa as deserving even if she was working, looking for a better job but just failed to survive. Literature suggested that the BJW will be threatened when one is confronted with an individual who remains needy despite striving to better their situation. This demonstrated a negative relationship between judgments of personal responsibility for one's situation and judgments of deservingness to receive aid. In my opinion the study demonstrated that the harder those in need try to escape poverty the more negative they are perceived.

The results of the above three studies from Asia, South Africa and the United States further showed that poor people's perceptions of poverty manifest in various forms. In reviewing the above studies I learn that poor people's perceptions of poverty are clearly interconnected and interrelated within a socio-economic context. I therefore argue that when people's perceptions are formed, their socio-economic environment plays an important role in shaping the way they think about poverty. For example, their race group, geographical location, employment and socio-economic situation, as well as educational level all determine how they perceive the causes of poverty.

In the next few sections I review literature that demonstrates that perceptions of the causes of poverty are influenced by (1) race or ethnic differences, (2) education, (3) employment status, and (4) geographical location.

### **3.9 PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY AS A FUNCTION OF RACE**

Research indicates that race influences people's perceptions of poverty at various levels and in a multidimensional way. Some research shows that poverty perceptions differ at a cross-country level, while other research demonstrates that race has an impact at group level and intra-group level.

### **3.9.1 Cross-country differences in perceptions of the causes of poverty**

It is important to understand that a country's political and economic system and a host of other macro and micro governance factors impact on how various racial or ethnic groups perceive poverty. An analysis by Campbell *et al.* (2001: 424) provides support for this notion and indicates that people in developed countries often view poverty differently from those in developing countries.

Campbell and his colleagues studied causal attributions to poverty in the developing world from the perspective of "actors" living in a "developing country" (Malawi) and "observers" living in a "developed country" (Australia). The study generally established, consistent with the actor-observer bias theory, that Australians were more likely to attribute poverty to individualistic characteristics of the poor, rather than to structural factors of the poor. This finding was also consistent with past studies and revealed that those from the developing nation (actors) attribute developing world poverty to individualistic factors (blaming the poor). Conversely, Malawians generally perceived the causes of poverty in structural terms.

Another cross-country study by Nasser, Abouchdid and Khashan (2002: 103) examined perceptions of poverty among Portuguese, Lebanese and South African college students along individualistic, structural and fatalistic dimensions. The results of this study indicated that South African students were relatively more individualistic in their explanations of the causes of poverty than Portuguese and Lebanese students respectively. The study further found that South African students compared to Portuguese and Lebanese expressed more fatalistic explanations of the causes of poverty. These results should be viewed from a comparative perspective since one would expect that most South Africans would be more structural in their perceptions of the causes of poverty. It is therefore not surprising that the same study found that perceptions of poverty vary across the different race groups in South Africa (Nasser *et al.*, 2002: 111). The findings of this study are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

In my review of the literature on perceptions of the causes of poverty I found that a smaller proportion of studies examine cross-country differences in perceptions with the majority focusing on differences across groups within a given country. To find support for cross-country differences in perceptions of the causes of poverty, I discuss Marshall *et al.*'s (1999: 351) investigation about beliefs about inequality in thirteen established Western-democratic and newly post-communist industrial nations.

The study by Marshall *et al.* (1999: 351) indicated that capitalist countries in the West and Japan (considered together) were more likely to support question items such as 'people get rewarded for their effort', while countries that have recently emerged from socialism were less likely to agree with this question item. This result showed that the capitalist societies compared to previously socialist countries are more in support of individualistic explanations of the causes of inequality. I should like to suggest that the findings of this study are consistent with perceptions of the causes of poverty in first world countries such as the United States and Canada where the non-poor attributes perceptions of the causes of poverty more to individualistic dimensions.

### **3.9.2 Differences in perceptions of the causes of poverty across race or ethnic groups**

I have established that there is a growing body of literature that focuses on studies which examine differences in perceptions of poverty across racial or ethnic groups (Bullock *et al.*, 2005: 1134). However, most of these studies are conducted in the United States and Britain, while relatively few studies are located in Asia or other parts of the developing world. Almost all the studies from the United States and Britain indicate that Blacks in general perceive poverty in structural terms, while whites attached more importance to individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Hunt (1996: 312), for instance, investigated whether race or ethnic differences in the United States impact on beliefs about the causes of poverty and showed that African Americans perceived poverty mostly in structural terms.

Note another study in the United States that investigated the relationships among beliefs about the poor and poverty, stereotypes of the poor, attributions to poverty, and sociopolitical ideologies (as assessed by the Protestant Ethic, Belief in a Just World, and Right Wing Authoritarian Scales). About 209 students from a Midwestern college responded to a questionnaire consisting of socio-demographic variables (gender, age, ethnicity, and political affiliation), an assessment of core American values and ideologies, and an estimate of the number of poor people in various categories, and attitudes toward and attributions to poverty. Consistent with most literature, three factors (internal, external/ societal and fatalistic) were extracted with regard to the perceptions of the causes of poverty. Reviewing the socio-demographic variables it was found that white participants were more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in terms of internal attributions, while non-white participants indicated external factors as responsible for poverty situation (Cozzarelli *et al.*, 2001: 224).

A study based on an Israeli sample of 647 participants (482 social workers and 165 middle class professionals) found that the social workers as well as the professionals attributed poverty to structural causes (Weiss *et al.*, 2007: 905). However, the same study showed that social workers compared to the middle class professionals were more in support of psychological than structural causes of poverty. This result indicated that social work as a subject contributed decisively to social work students' support for psychological causes of poverty. This result is discussed in greater detail in the section on the impact of education on perceptions of the causes of poverty.

### **3.9.3 Intra-group differences in perceptions of the causes of poverty**

There is a vast body of research that focuses on intra-group differences with regard to perceptions of the causes of poverty. Most of these studies reveal that racial differences are most often attributed to the characteristics of the individuals who belong to these groups. It is increasingly important that the interaction between race and other socio-

demographic variables such as gender, class, age, residential locale and employment be reviewed to understand intra-group differences with regard to perceptions of poverty.

See a study by Hunt (2004: 833), which examines ideological beliefs about wealth and poverty using a sample of white, African American, and Latino residents of Los Angeles County. The findings of this study suggested that individuals belonging to a group that is disproportionately poor normally identify with the generalized experiences of the group they belong to when compared to how other groups explain the causes of poverty. For example, while an African American person with high socio-economic status would be expected to attribute poverty to individualistic determinants, he or she might instead conform to a structural explanation of poverty if this is the predominant approach of his or her group identity. In addition, both Hunt's 1999 and 2004 studies concluded that American whites are more likely to view poverty in terms of individualistic factors rather than structural factors.

Another leading researcher found that income was a stronger negative predictor of individualism for African Americans than whites or Latinos (Bullock *et al.*, 2005: 1134). In other words, African Americans with a high income often viewed poverty in individualistic terms, while those with a low income reasoned that structural perceptions are the main causes of poverty. It was therefore emphasized that an examination of the impact of contextual and demographic variables within and across these ethnic groups is necessary to fully understand how perceptions are formed and influenced.

### ***Age group differences and perceptions of poverty***

It is well documented that age impacts on people's perceptions of poverty. Shek (2004: 277), for instance, investigated the beliefs about the causes of poverty in parents and adolescents from 199 poor Chinese families. These parents and their adolescent children participated in a longitudinal study, which responded to the Chinese Perceived Causes of Poverty Scale (CPCPS) in 2000 and 2001. The study found parent-adolescent differences and parental differences regarding explanations of the causes of poverty along personal

problems of the poor, exploitation and fatalistic explanations. It was further demonstrated that Chinese mothers held stronger fatalistic explanations of poverty than Chinese fathers. The study also revealed that there was a general decline amongst both the adolescents and parents surveyed about explanations whether poor people themselves are to blame for living in poverty.

An earlier study by Shek (2002: 790) also showed that adolescent respondents who held strong views about external causation of poverty tended to have poorer existential well-being, lower levels of control over their own life, lower levels of life satisfaction, and higher levels of psychometric symptoms.

#### **3.9.4 Poverty attitudes are shaped by negative racial and ethnic perceptions**

Another body of research indicates that poverty attitudes are strongly shaped by negative perceptions of African Americans. Winter (2006: 402), for example, examined the relationship between welfare attitudes and race, and found that the structure of Americans' race schemas influence their attitudes. According to their research on racial schemas they divide the world into in-group and out-group where each group is associated with very distinct attributes. Consequently, the findings of the study revealed that racial conservatives normally attribute inequality towards individual level characteristics such as merit and effort, whereas racial liberals attribute inequalities to discrimination and racism.

To establish further support for the impact of race on perceptions of poverty and welfare among the American public, Federico (2004: 375) conducted a study based on three separate surveys namely the 1992 National Election Study, 1990 General Social Survey and 1991 National Race and Politics Study. The findings of the study suggested that opposition to welfare may be linked to American whites' perceptions of African Americans, despite the fact that the program is not race orientated. In this regard studies have shown that perceptions of African Americans as lazy, undependable, and overly demanding have a sizable influence on American whites' welfare attitudes, the magnitude



of which often rivals that of generalized motives and predispositions like self-interest, egalitarianism, and individualism. In conclusion, it seems that welfare has become a racial issue.

Also note a study by Wright (1993: 5) that demonstrated that the victim-blaming concept discussed previously is just another way of portraying anti-African American or anti-Hispanic feelings. For example, African Americans are normally considered to be lazy, dependent or poor, while whites are seen as hardworking, independent, and well-off or potentially prejudiced (Winter, 2006: 402). From a victim-blaming perspective, the poor is mostly considered negatively since they are themselves to blame for their poverty status. Linked to the victim-blaming framework is the concept of social devaluation. Because the poor are sometimes viewed negatively they start to develop a lack of self-esteem (Underlid, 2005: 274). It is my opinion that this lack of self-esteem impacts on their overall quality of life and mental health.

### **3.9.5 Personal versus group perceptions of poverty**

Research that has investigated personal versus group perceptions of poverty shows that minority group members perceive more discrimination directed at their group than at themselves. Ruggiero (1999: 521), for example, argued that members from minority groups often perceive less discrimination directed at them individually than at the group they belong to as a defense mechanism. In other words, the individual member often argues that discrimination experienced by the group is not directed at him or her personally but rather to the other group members. In so doing, I believe the individual group member hopes to minimize their personal experience with discrimination. In some instances the personal discrepancy between group and personal discrimination is seen as the need by the individual to have control over their lives.

Similarly, Feagin and Cobas (2008: 39) discussed the concept of assimilation, which refers to “immigrant and subordinate racial-ethnic group adaptation to the dominant culture and institutions of the host society”. The study conducted by Feagin and Cobas

(2008: 41), for instance, revealed that middle class Latinos are more likely than working-class Latinos to give up their cultural heritage and accept the white dominant culture. It was explained that middle-class Latinos are more exposed to contacts with whites through the workplace, neighbourhoods, political organizations and higher education.

In this section I considered the impact of race on perceptions of the causes of poverty. The review of the literature in this regard suggested that race does play an influential role in shaping people's perceptions of poverty. More specifically, it was found that race interacts with other socio-demographic variables such as class, education, gender, geographic location, age and employment status when perceptions of poverty are formed. It was also demonstrated that the country people live in and the group they belong to play a crucial role in the way people perceive poverty.

### **3.10 THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION ON PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY**

I now turn to why education is a useful context for examining perceptions of the causes of poverty. For example, Hunt (1996: 296) found that people with high levels of education are much more likely to view the poor in a positive light. In this respect, poverty is normally perceived as a consequence of structural factors. The same study also showed that people with higher education often associated wealth with hard work and personal drive. Conversely, education also promotes individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

In support of this reasoning, Federico (2004: 387) also indicated the ambiguous nature of the influence of education on perceptions of the causes of poverty. To this end, it was argued that even though education may generally be associated with racial tolerance, it can also connect people with negative predispositions, such as that African Americans are lazy. For example, it was found when college educated individuals are exposed to a racial cue their responses to welfare may be influenced by their perceptions of the racial group. African Americans in particular were often stereotypically linked to welfare dependency (Federico, 2004: 387).

The results by Federico's 2004 study were supported by a follow-up study which found that education may reduce the prevalence of negative racial perceptions (by virtue of its effects on learning of racially tolerant values), but it also provides people with the cognitive skills needed to connect whatever negative perceptions they do have with policy evaluations (Federico, 2005: 694).

### **3.10.1 Education and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty**

I want to emphasize that education can have both a positive and negative impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty. It is also evident that the influence of education on perceptions of poverty is heterogeneous, and that education interacts with a number of factors to explain poverty. However, evidence suggests that most of the research indicates that people with higher education normally perceive poverty in structural terms. In comparison Reutter *et al.* (2004: 305) investigated nursing students' beliefs about the relationship between poverty and health, and factors that influence these beliefs. This study concluded that students with higher education were more likely to ascribe to structural than individualistic factors of health and poverty.

Sun (2001: 167) also investigated people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. In terms of education, the study found that the impact of race on perceptions of the individualistic factor changes in moving from a social work group of students to the non-social work group of students. In this instance, the white social work students surveyed assigned more weight to structural explanations about the causes of poverty. The initial individualistic views among the white students changed significantly when the variable of the major (taking social work as a major) was included in the analyses. For example, the white social work students believed much more than white non-social work students that the causes of poverty are related to structural factors. The differences in the perceptions of poverty among the white social and non-social work students were therefore ascribed to the influence on social work education. This result by Sun is consistent with the findings from a study by Weiss *et al.* (2007: 905), which also highlighted the influence of social work education on racial or ethnic perceptions of poverty.

### **3.10.2 Education and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

Numerous other studies particularly in the United States and Britain have showed that poverty is often perceived in individualistic terms with structural causes seen as secondary or less important. Hunt (1996: 296), for example, argued that education played a significant role in determining individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty among European Americans and Latinos compared to African Americans. Wilson (1996: 416) supported this view that status advantages such as higher education, being white or employed enhanced individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Smith and Stone (1989: 100) also analyzed perceptions of the causes of poverty and wealth and found that respondents ascribed wealth towards individualistic factors such as hard-work, drive, better schools and perseverance.

Another study by Campbell *et al.* (2001: 424) studied causal attributions to poverty in the developing world from the perspective of “actors” living in a “developing country” (Malawi) and “observers” living in a “developed country” (Australia). The study showed that “education plays a decisive role in shaping perceptions of poverty since it is capable of moving or altering students’ perceptions from actors to those of observers”. For example, the Malawian students in a developed country such Australia were more likely to attribute the causes of poverty to individualistic characteristics of the poor, while those in a developing country like Malawi perceived the causes of poverty in structural terms. Ironically, the Malawian students attribute their success to individualistic characteristics rather than structural deficiencies. This reasoning is explained in terms of blaming the victim theory which serves as an ego-protecting function that makes observers feel more comfortable and secure in their own situations. I want to emphasize that the same study, in general, concluded that Malawians perceive poverty in structural terms, while Australians perceive poverty in individualistic terms.

### **3.10.3 Education as facilitator of positive / negative attitudes towards poverty / poor**

Related to the individualistic perceptions of poverty is the notion that education can lift people out of poverty. Bullock *et al.* (2005: 1144) assessed attributions to poverty and beliefs about upward mobility in California among 124 Mexican immigrant farm workers. This study evaluated education as a more effective advancement (wealth generation) strategy than starting a business or moving up through current work or joining a union. Accordingly women immigrants were especially likely to believe that education will improve their children's overall poverty situation.

Some researchers, however, have argued that the type of education is critical in determining perceptions of poverty. Wilson (1996: 417) used survey data from Baltimore, Maryland to assess predictions based on the individualistic explanation framework and public arenas theory concerning causal beliefs about three types of poverty namely welfare dependency, homelessness and impoverished migrant labourers. This study established that different types of exposures of poverty have distinct beliefs about poverty. For example, formal learning of poverty and long-term relationships with poor people was seen as more effective in creating positive attitudes than brief encounters with the poor. I believe that these findings have major policy implications because they suggest that if government authorities provide formal education programmes about poverty it may enhance the prospects of more positive attitudes and behaviours towards the poor. More specifically, I think that the non-poor are more likely to help poor people if they are aware of the negative impact of poverty on the lives of poor people.

It is interesting to note that a study by Federico (2004: 375) also examined the effectiveness of education to influence perceptions of poverty. The investigation revealed that the media in America often portrays negative images of African Americans in the context of the 'unsympathetic' forms of poverty such as depicting African Americans to be dependent on welfare rather than showing the negative impact of poverty among the elderly. The study, nevertheless, questioned whether education can eliminate intolerance with regard to negative stereotypes of the poor. It was felt education did very little to

influence negative perceptions of welfare since there are still considerable differences among the most well-educated citizens in America.

My review of the literature on the relationship between education and poverty can be categorized into those who believe education enhances structural perceptions, or individualistic perceptions or both structural and individualistic perceptions of poverty. Prior research is also divided on whether education can produce positive attitudes towards poverty or more negative attitudes. Either way, it is evident that education interacts with a range of socio-demographic variables to explain perceptions of poverty.

### **3.11 IMPACT OF GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION ON PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY**

It is my opinion that most previous studies investigated urban and rural differences with regard to poverty and welfare. For example, a study conducted in Malawi on the determinants of poverty concluded that the causes of household welfare varied by location (Mukherjee & Benson, 2003: 349). May *et al.* (2000: 30) also found that there are vast differences in living standards as well as access to basic services between rural and urban areas in South Africa.

In this section I focus on whether urban and rural differences have an influence on how people perceive the causes of poverty. An appraisal of the literature on the impact of residential location on perceptions of poverty revealed that very few studies investigated the dynamics of such a relationship. However, a number of prominent works examined how the distribution of economic resources within a community or the socio-economic conditions within an area impact on people's attitudes and perceptions of poverty and the poor.

### **3.11.1 The distribution and access to resources within diverse communities**

Gay (2006: 983), for example, examined how the level and distribution of economic resources within diverse areas affect attitudes of African American people toward Latinos. The results indicated that access to economic resources (economic environment) matters more for minority groups than the mere size of the racial or ethnic group. There are two aspects with regard to the economic environment of how African Americans respond to an increasingly diverse urban landscape namely the material condition of the neighbourhoods and the material conditions of group life. If resources and opportunities are not distributed equally across neighbourhoods (for example, some residential areas enjoy better services, safer streets, more open space, and higher home values than others) it may activate negative perceptions among the deprived group. In this regard African American antagonism may be derived from the frustration of the stigma and stress of life in decaying neighbourhoods. Accordingly this antagonism is often directed to out-groups perceived as competitors and in this instance Latinos. I should like to deal with the implications of the findings of this study, by recommending that government authorities put in place community improvement programmes. In other words, services, safer environments, more open space, and higher home values should be a priority for all groups and in particular among the disadvantaged groups of South African. I will return to this discussion in Chapter 7.

The second aspect of the study by Gay (2006: 995) relates to group members' access to important socio-economic resources such as jobs, education and housing. The basic principle here is that when people perceive themselves to be worse off than other groups within the community it may often lead to negative attitudes towards such a group. For example, if African Americans perceive themselves as secondary in terms of jobs, housing and education this creates feelings of fear and hostility towards the dominant group. The fear and anxiety created by the Latino population which has greater access to these resources (education and housing) may spark African American antagonism. It is important to note that the distinction is between material resources such as services within the immediate environment, and group access to economic resources at macro

level such as jobs, housing and education. It was argued that it is more the “local” environment in which African Americans live that sparks antagonistic attitudes rather than the ‘macro’ economic resources the dominant group commands that influences African American attitudes.

Branton and Jones (2005: 359) also found that racial and ethnic divisions are shaped or influenced by the socio-economic context within which an individual resides. This study conducted in the United States used the 1990 Census data for every county’s white, African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American populations to create a measure of county-level racial and ethnic diversity. Socio-economic status was measured as the percentage of college educated individuals within the county, although median income or unemployment was considered as other possible indicators of socio-economic status. The dependent variables included in the study involved white, non-Latinos’ responses to questions such as preferential hiring of African Americans, education quotas, welfare assistance, government assistance, and support for bilingual education. Each of these question items, besides the questions assessing bilingual education, required the respondent to place him or her on an ordinal scale along individual level attributes, individual core values, and contextual attributes. The racial and ethnic diversity as well as the proportion of college educated people within the community were also included in the analysis.

The study by Branton *et al.* (2005: 359) found that the relationships between attitudes and the context within which a person lives is extremely complex and is conditional on the socio-economic status of the area. More specifically, it was found that racial attitudes depend on whether people live in a racially diverse and high socio-economic context or a racially diverse and low socio-economic context. From an inter-group perspective it was found that competition for resources among racially diverse and low socio-economic conditions lead to increased perceived racism of other groups and policies that would benefit these groups. Conversely, high levels of socio-economic conditions coupled with high levels of diversity lead to more positive relationships and less racial tension. The positive relationships were attributed to a lack of competition for resources. In this study



it was reasoned that there is far less or no negative racial attitudes in areas where socio-economic conditions are good or equally distributed.

I believe that both the studies by Gay (2006: 983) and Branton *et al.* (2005: 359) support the proposition that socio-economic conditions and resources play an important role in shaping people's perceptions.

### **3.12 IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY**

This section reviews research that focuses on the influence of economic factors such as employment on perceptions of the causes of poverty. In South Africa it is well documented that employment has influenced the level of poverty. MacFarlane (2005: 1), for instance, indicated that “while the employed have in general made substantial income gains, the poor and the unemployed have suffered a great deal”. May *et al.* (2000: 38) also showed that poverty and unemployment are linked, with 55 percent of the unemployment located within poor households compared to 14 percent in non-poor households.

It is my view that the literature on the impact of economic factors such as employment and income on perceptions of poverty has concentrated mainly on the activities and interactions of low-income, unemployed or low-socio-economic individuals. In most instances these studies took place within select primary institutions such as schools, the family, the community and a host of groupings such as the individuals' ethnic or race group.

In addition, the empirical findings which I presented in this chapter have demonstrated that socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, education, employment and geographical location are not mutually exclusive when one examines explanations about the causes of poverty. These socio-economic and demographic variables interact in a multidimensional way to predict perceptions of the causes of poverty. I previously mentioned that education and race overlap and interact when explaining structural

perceptions of poverty. For example, African Americans with low levels of education often perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms (Hunt, 1996: 296).

In this section I show the interrelated nature of employment with other socio-economic and demographic variables in predicting perceptions of the causes of poverty. But before turning to a discussion about employment and its impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty, I would like to discuss employment as one aspect of class. Bullock *et al.* (2003: 694), for example, argued that researchers have regularly debated on how to operationally define class and the merits of the class indicators like income, educational attainment and occupation. Further, researchers frequently treat class as a stable or even a static experience, and consequently, the psychological impact of losing one's job, or income, and/or social status are often neglected.

I therefore examine whether one's employment, socio-economic status and income influence people's perceptions of poverty. Furthermore, I want to acknowledge that this section may in some instances overlap with the previous section, which considered the influence of the geographic location and particularly the distribution of economic resources within communities on perceptions of the causes of poverty.

### **3.12.1 Impact of employment on structural versus individualistic perceptions**

Past research shows that people attached to low-income groups normally perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. Bullock *et al.* (2003: 695) examined how 69 women with low income perceived poverty, their class status as well as beliefs about class mobility. In terms of attributions to poverty the respondents were asked to answer 45 statements that could be categorized into structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. The results showed that low-income women perceived poverty in structural instead of individualistic terms.

Consistent with previous research on perceptions of the causes of poverty, Bullock *et al.* (2005: 1132) in a later study examined views about poverty and opportunity among 124

Mexican immigrant workers and found that low-income respondents endorsed structural attributions more strongly than other explanations of poverty. Furthermore, structural attributions were positively correlated with the belief that racism is a problem and that Mexican immigrants have fewer opportunities than African Americans do. Interestingly, this later study by Bullock also revealed relatively strong support for individualistic explanations, suggesting that perceiving poverty as both a structural and individual problem is not incompatible or uncommon, especially among socially and economically marginalized groups. In reviewing the above studies, I want to be clear that people's perceptions of the causes of poverty are very complex. In other words, people normally perceive a number of factors to simultaneously contribute to poverty and normally prioritize them in an order of importance in their view.

Further support for structural perceptions of poverty by people with a low income are demonstrated by Reutter *et al.* (2005: 527), who investigated lay understandings of the effects of poverty and the factors that potentially influence these perceptions. In general, the study confirms the main discourse that low-income people prefer structural and socio-cultural explanations over individualistic explanations. The study further emphasized that these perceptions of poverty and its effects are important in influencing poverty policy. For example, the findings of the study showed that people who perceive poverty in external terms tend to support welfare policies and social security, while those in favour of individualistic perceptions do not. I want to note this important finding because it will inform my discussions on "poverty policy recommendations" in Chapter 7.

### **3.12.2 Employment is interconnected with socio-demographic variables when explaining perceptions of poverty**

My overview of the literature on economic indicators such as employment towards perceptions of the causes of poverty shows that employment interacts with a host of socio-demographic variables. For example, Hunt (1996: 310) demonstrated that employed minorities such as Latinos are often confronted with conflicting perceptions with regard to the causes of poverty. On the one hand, employed Latinos compared to the

unemployed or poor Latinos ascribe their success to internal or individualistic factors such as hard work. On the other hand, employed Latinos also contribute poverty to structural factors when they compare themselves with middle class whites. Moreover, this complex perception of the causes of poverty is characteristic of minority groups since it is further shaped by competing socio-economic and demographic variables such as race.

Heflin and Pattillo (2004: 2) investigated the relationship between race and socio-economic status. More specifically, the study among other examine whether being an African American middle class youth significantly predict having a poor sibling. The results of the study indicate that low-income African Americans are less likely to have a middle class sibling than are low-income whites. Conversely, the study showed that middle class African Americans are more likely to have a low-income sibling than middle class whites.

I want to point out that the study by Heflin *et al.* (2004: 15) is important and related to the present study because it emphasizes that social networks such as the family within which individuals are embedded are fundamental when one examines social stratification. This finding by Heflin also suggests that there are more poor families among African Americans than whites. From this perspective the study supports group-based disadvantage rather than individual differences. Poverty in this regard is therefore often seen as a result of structural instead of individualistic causes.

### **3.12.3 Perceptions of poverty are divided along income levels even within groups**

Past research also indicates that there is great variation in perceptions of poverty among members of the same society on the basis of income. Hajnal (2007: 560) in this regard argues that the “African American community is increasingly becoming a more divided society than white Americans in terms of job status (employment), income and education”. Although no major division has been found in terms of how they vote, there are concerns that economic diversity will increase conservatism among African American middle class members since they would be less willing to support a liberal pro-African

American agenda. I believe this study by Hajnal also highlights the reluctance of conservative people to support pro-poor policies such as increased welfare.

#### **3.12.4 The role of the media in influencing perceptions of low-income people**

Numerous studies have been conducted on the role of the media in shaping perceptions of the poor and particularly low-income groups. It is my opinion that some studies are very critical of the media and argue that the media is to blame for the negative stereotypes about the poor. For example, Bullock, Wyche and Williams (2001: 230) reasoned that media outlets in the United States reflect the interest of dominant social groups much more than less powerful groups such as poor people, people with a low income, people of colour and women. As a consequence, the poor and in particular low-income men are portrayed by the media as people that threaten the well-being of the community since they are involved in drugs, crime, and gangs.

### **3.13 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide the most relevant and appropriate theories, models and definitions of perceptions of the causes of poverty. In this chapter I organized the review according to definitions of perceptions, different perspectives of the causes of poverty, the theoretical frameworks that underlie how people perceive poverty, measures of perceptions of the causes of poverty, and a comparison of the views of poor people and non-poor people. The chapter is concluded with a review of the literature on the impact of socio-demographic variables on perceptions of the causes of poverty.

In summary, I have attempted to emphasize that poverty is perceived very differently by the poor and non-poor and that these perceptions are influenced by race, geographical location, education, and employment status. In Chapter 4 I provide a detailed plan of the research design and methodology to understand how the study was conducted. More specifically, I want to underline the need for a systematic analysis of the influence of

socio-economic and demographic variables on people's perceptions of the causes of poverty.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research design and methodology followed in this study. A discussion of the research design and methodology is fundamental to understanding how the research problem is investigated. I therefore start with the aim of the study, and a formulation of the research questions and hypotheses. Next, the measurement instrument is discussed, followed by the sample design and sampling methods, as well as the data collection, capturing and analysis procedures. The chapter is concluded by recognizing the shortcomings and limitations in the study.

#### **4.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to examine people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. Literature and research indicate that people's perceptions of the causes of poverty are important to inform the policy formulation processes. As such, I hope that the present study will make a valuable contribution to the eradication of poverty and ultimately the improvement of people's lives. More specifically, it is hoped that the present study will:

- Provide an insight into whether poverty is viewed in structural, individualistic and fatalistic dimensions, or a combination of all three.
- Enhance our understanding of whether people's lived experiences (access to basic necessities) of poverty influence how they perceive poverty. Moreover, the study examines whether access to basic necessities such as food or medicine (measured by the LPI) impact on how people perceive the causes of poverty.
- Help us to understand how race, geographic location, educational level, gender, LSM, LPI and employment status impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty.
- Help us to generate information that may strengthen the South African government's poverty eradication policies and strategies.

### 4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first research question explores whether there is any difference among the respondents' perceptions of the causes of poverty. Moreover, whether respondents prefer individualistic, structural or fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty, or whether respondents have multiple perceptions of the causes of poverty.

The second research question investigates whether socio-economic and demographic variables such as LPI, race, geographical location, education, employment status, gender, age, and LSM influence perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, the study explores the following:

- Whether access to basic necessities such as water and food (measured by the LPI) determines perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic perspectives.
- Whether an individual's LSM determines perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic perspectives.
- Whether an individual's race group determines perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic perspectives.
- Whether an individual's level of education influences perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic perspectives.
- Whether an individual's geographical location determines perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic perspectives.
- Whether an individual's employment status determines perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic perspectives.
- Whether an individual's gender determines perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic perspectives.
- Whether an individual's age determines perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic perspectives.



## **4.4 OVERVIEW OF THE HYPOTHESES**

### **4.4.1 First set of hypotheses**

In Chapter 3 the studies that I reviewed demonstrated that perceptions of the causes of poverty can be explained in individualistic, structural, and fatalistic dimensions. The studies that attributed poverty to individualistic factors showed that people are poor because of individual failings or shortcomings of some sort. In these studies people were also considered poor because of their lack of ability, efforts or morals.

On the other hand, some studies demonstrated that poverty is perceived in structural terms where poverty is blamed on unequal conditions within society, rather than the intellectual and cultural deficits of the poor. Moreover, the causes of poverty are seen as a lack of access to opportunities, since the poor live mostly in under-resourced and impoverished circumstances. A third category of studies reviewed found that poverty is a consequence of bad luck or misfortune. These findings are often referred to as fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty because it is a result of some unforeseen circumstances normally beyond the individual's control.

Lastly, some of the reviewed studies also showed that perceptions of the causes of poverty can be explained through a combination of these categories. In other words, some people perceive the causes of poverty in both individualistic and structural terms, while others may view poverty as a consequence of bad luck (fatalistic) or lack of motivation (individualistic).

In addition, it is acknowledged that numerous theories have been used to explain perceptions of the causes of poverty. These theories were discussed in Chapter 3. In brief, the individualistic explanation framework, belief in just world, and victim-blaming theories advanced arguments about individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty, while the public arenas theory is often used to explain structural perceptions of poverty. The actor-observer biased theory has been found to explain both individualistic and

structural perceptions of poverty. In this regard hypothesis 3 tests whether the respondents are likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural as well as individualistic dimensions.

The first set of hypotheses is therefore based on findings from the studies and theories reviewed that emphasized that perceptions of the causes of poverty can be explained in individualistic, structural, and fatalistic perspectives. See the first set of hypotheses below:

Hypothesis 1: Respondents are likely to perceive the causes of poverty in terms of structural factors.

Hypothesis 2: Respondents are likely to perceive the causes of poverty in terms of individualistic factors.

Hypothesis 3: Respondents are likely to perceive the causes of poverty in terms of individualistic and structural factors.

Hypothesis 4: Respondents are likely to perceive the causes of poverty in terms of fatalistic factors.

#### **4.4.2 Second set of hypotheses**

In terms of the second set of hypotheses various studies supported that perceptions of the causes of poverty is influenced by socio-economic and demographic variables such as race and education. For example, in Chapter 3, the literature review showed that African Americans are more likely to support structural perceptions of the causes of poverty compared to white Americans that believe the causes of poverty is determined by individualistic factors such as hard work and motivation.

The literature review also showed that a person's level of education influences how people perceive the causes of poverty. Some studies showed that education enhances structural perceptions, while others indicated education advances individualistic perceptions of poverty. Furthermore, previous research is divided on whether education can produce positive attitudes towards poverty or more negative attitudes.

Besides education and race, research indicated that geographical location plays a significant role in how people's perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed. With regard to geographical location a number of prominent works revealed that how the economic resources is distributed within a community or the socio-economic conditions within an area impact on people's perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Employment status is another variable that impacts on how people perceive the causes of poverty. For instance, a study in the United States found that employed minorities such as Latinos are often confronted with conflicting perceptions with regard to perceptions of the causes of poverty. On the one hand, employed Latinos compared to the unemployed or poor Latinos ascribe their success to internal or individualistic factors such as hard work. On the other hand, employed Latinos also contribute poverty to structural factors when they compare themselves with middle class whites.

The literature in Chapter 3 highlighted that people's poverty status influences their perceptions of the causes of poverty. Findings from these studies show that the non-poor perceive the poor both in a positive and negative manner (Clarke *et al.*, 2003: 215). Other studies found that the non-poor perceive the poor as responsible for their own poverty status, while those who are poor perceive the causes of poverty as a consequence of external circumstances beyond their control such as failure of government to provide jobs (Cozzarelli *et al.*, 2001: 224). It is against this background that the current study investigates whether access to basic necessities (measured by the LPI) and an individual's LSM determine perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic perspectives.

Based on the arguments advanced in the literature the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 5: There are statistically significant differences among the respondents from the various race groups on how they perceive the causes of poverty.

Hypothesis 6: There are statistically significant differences among the respondents from the various geographical locations on how they perceive the causes of poverty.

Hypothesis 7: There are statistically significant differences among the respondents with different levels of education on how they perceive the causes of poverty.

Hypothesis 8: There are statistically significant differences among the respondents with different levels of employment on how they perceive the causes of poverty.

Hypothesis 9: There are statistically significant differences among the respondents with different LSM levels on how they perceive the causes of poverty.

Hypothesis 10: The respondents that have high access to basic necessities are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in terms of individualistic factors.

Hypothesis 11: The respondents that lack access to basic necessities are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in terms of structural factors.

Hypothesis 12: The respondents that lack access to basic necessities are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in fatalistic dimensions.

Hypothesis 13: There are statistically significant differences among the male and female respondents on how they perceive the causes of poverty.

## **4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The study is an empirical study that uses primary data to answer causal questions about perceptions of the causes of poverty.

### **4.5.1 National representative survey**

To test the hypotheses I employ national representative household survey data collected by the HSRC in 2006.

### **4.5.2 Study population**

The target population for the survey was adult residents of South Africa aged 18 and older with no upper age limit regardless of their nationality or citizenship.<sup>10</sup>

### 4.5.3 Sample

A total of 3510 randomly selected respondents across South Africa participated in the study between 18 April and 30 May 2006. The sample was based on the 1996 Census. More specifically, the HSRC Master Sample of 1000 Enumerator Area (EA), which was developed using the Census 2001, was used as the sampling frame. The 1000 EAs were stratified by province, race, and geographical location. Overall, 354 EAs were randomly chosen with the probability proportionate to population size from the list of 1000 EAs. However, disproportionate over-samples were drawn in the Northern Cape and among Indian respondents particularly in KwaZulu-Natal to ensure sufficient numbers of cases for analysis. All interviews were post-weighted to ensure that they were reflected proportionately. Interviewers travelled to the selected areas and conducted face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent.

When the sample of 3510 is disaggregated the results show that 76 percent of the participants are black African, 12 percent are white, 9 percent are coloured and 3 percent are Indian / Asian (Table 4.1). Further, the sample is almost evenly divided between male (49 percent) and female (51 percent) respondents. Fifty nine percent of the participants live in urban formal areas, 4 percent in urban informal areas, 31 percent live traditional / in traditional areas and 6 percent in rural formal areas.

The biggest proportion of the respondents come from Gauteng (22 percent), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (20 percent), Eastern Cape (14 percent), Western Cape (11 percent) and Limpopo (11 percent). About 39 percent of the respondents are categorized as unemployed, 29 percent not working and 32 percent employed. More than two-thirds of the sample (67 percent) attended secondary school while 9 percent had some tertiary education or completed tertiary education. Lastly, less than a quarter (23 percent) had no formal education or some primary school.

**Table 4.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 3510)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Race</b>	black African	2179	76%
	coloured	488	9%
	Indian / Asian	340	3%
	white	452	12%
<b>Education</b>	primary	908	23%
	secondary	2287	68%
	tertiary	284	9%
<b>Geographical location</b>	urban formal	2195	59%
	urban informal	160	4%
	traditional	961	31%
	rural formal	194	6%
<b>Employment</b>	employed	1043	32%
	not working	1191	29%
	unemployed	1238	39%
<b>Gender</b>	male	1190	49%
	female	2320	51%
<b>Age</b>	18 – 24 years	724	23%
	25 – 34 years	799	28%
	35 – 44 years	689	18%
	45 – 54 years	517	14%
	55 – 64 years	396	9%
	65 years +	381	8%
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	1424	37%
	Widower / widow	396	7%
	Divorced	132	3%
	Separated	53	1%
	Never married	1487	52%

#### **4.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The research instrument was a questionnaire that measured attitudes and perceptions of information communication technologies (ICT), the South African media as well as perceptions of poverty. More specifically, the first part of the questionnaire assessed views about postal services (e.g. post offices), broadcasting services (e.g. television, radio including community radio stations) and wireless services (e.g. mobile phones and the internet).

The second part of the questionnaire included a section of questions that measured perceptions of the causes of poverty (PCP) (Section 1 – see below for the verbatim depiction of the actual survey questions of the PCP). In addition, the second part also included the LPI (Section 2 – also see below for the verbatim depiction of the actual survey questions on the LPI) which assesses the actual lived conditions of people. It should be noted that I obtained permission from the HSRC to add the two sections to the survey to implement the present study (see Appendix A for the two question sections). As an HSRC staff member I had access to other relevant indicators as well as the demographic indicators (Section 3) included in the survey. The dissertation therefore focuses exclusively on the poverty and demographic questions, but provide some information on the ICT questions to further contextualize the study.

Section 1 which included question items that measured perceptions of the causes of poverty was drawn from the Perceptions of the Causes of Poverty Scale (PCPS) developed by Joe Feagin (Bullock & Waugh, 2005: 1133; Hunt 2004: 829; Shek, 2004: 273; Hunt, 1996: 294). It is important to emphasize that the set of poverty perception questions were refined and added as a separate section on the questionnaire. More specifically, the poverty perceptions questions asked respondents to indicate on a Likert scale whether they agree or disagree with 12 statements about why they think poor people are poor. The response options on the Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with the higher values indicating a greater importance as to why people are perceived to be poor. The statements included “poor people are poor because”:

- 1) “They lack the ability to manage money”,
- 2) “They waste their money on inappropriate items”,
- 3) “They do not actively seek to improve their lives”,
- 4) “They are exploited by rich people”,
- 5) “The society lacks social justice”,
- 6) “The distribution of wealth in the society is uneven”,
- 7) “They lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families”,
- 8) “They have bad fate”,
- 9) “They lack luck”,

- 10) “They have encountered misfortunes”,
- 11) “They are not motivated because of welfare”, and
- 12) “They are born inferior”.

Statements 1 to 3 measure individualistic perceptions, statements 4 to 7 measure structural perceptions and statements 8 to 12 measure fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Next, the second section on poverty is discussed. I decided to use Afrobarometer LPI as an indicator to measure poverty. The LPI (Section 2) was borrowed from the New Democracies Barometer surveys in Central and Eastern Europe and applied in South Africa (Mattes et al., 2002: 8). The LPI measures people’s ability to obtain the basic necessities of life. More specifically, respondents were asked “Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or your family gone without”:

- 1) “Enough food to eat?”
- 2) “Enough clean water for home use?”
- 3) “Medicines or medical treatment?”
- 4) “Electricity in your home?”
- 5) “Enough fuel to cook your food?”
- 6) “A cash income?”

The response options employed by Mattes and his colleagues ranged from 0 (never) to 4 (always) with the higher values indicating a greater degree of lack of access to these basic necessities. For the present study the LPI response options ranged from 1 (= never) to 5 (= always) and 6 (= do not know).

It should be emphasized that the PCP questions and the LPI were not part of the pilot study. The pilot study only included the questions that assessed public perception with regards to the ICT. However, the PCP questions and the LPI were used in previous studies which showed that both are reliable and valid measures.



In the next section I therefore highlight a number of studies that have used questions from the PCPS in order to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the questions. This section is followed by a discussion on poverty measurement methodologies to show why I opted for the LPI to measure poverty.

#### **4.6.1 Application of the Feagin Scale**

Since the development of the PCPS by Feagin it has been applied in various countries under different circumstances. Sun (2001: 163), for example, administered a revised version of the PCPS to determine how American social work students (SWS) and non-social work students (NSWS) perceived the causes of poverty. The study concluded that overall American SWS believe that poverty is more a cause of structural factors within the environment than individualistic factors. This result is contradictory to the general opinion of ordinary Americans. Nevertheless, I have discussed this study in more detail in the previous chapter.

Another study described the CPCPS. The CPCPS was developed to measure perceived causes of poverty in the Chinese culture (Shek, 2002: 792). The primary focus of the study was on the psychometric properties of the CPCPS. It was found that the scale was reliable and valid and measured the underlying poverty dimensions. CPCPS covered four categories of explanations: personal problems of the poor, lack of opportunities to escape from the poverty cycle, exploitation of poor people, and bad fate.

A follow-up study by Shek (2004: 277) investigated the beliefs about the causes of poverty in Chinese parents and adolescents experiencing economic disadvantages. A total of 199 parents and adolescents from poor families participated in a longitudinal study and responded to the CPCPS in 2000 and 2001. Four factors were abstracted from the scale of the explanations of the causes of poverty and showed that these factors (personal problems, exploitation, lack of opportunity and fate) were stable across time and across different samples.

More recently, a study by Weiss and Gal (2007: 900) used measures similar to those found on the Feagin Scale in order to assess attitudes toward the causes of poverty. The authors constructed the questionnaire based on their previous studies and argued that the internal consistency of the revised questionnaire increased since some items were removed, some rephrased and some added. In addition, a panel of three social work researchers reviewed the questionnaire items for face validity and found that the items adequately measured the attitudes to the causes of poverty.

Interestingly, the Weiss *et al.* (2007: 900) study examined causes of poverty according to four perspectives, namely “structural, individualistic, fatalistic and psychological”. As indicated in the previous chapter, psychological explanations of poverty focus on issues such as emotional problems and lack of interpersonal abilities. More specifically, the questionnaire used in the study included seven items which measured perceived psychological causes of poverty. The following items are examples of perceived psychological causes of poverty: “poverty is generally a symptom of mental difficulties”, “the roots of poverty are to be found in intra-personal problems”, and “various personality disorders are generally the reason why people become poor”. The respondents were asked to rate these statements along a five point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

In a much earlier study Marshall, Swift, Routh and Burgoyne (1999: 351) investigated beliefs about inequality in thirteen established Western-democratic and newly post-communist industrial nations. Although poverty and inequality is not the same it is related, I therefore examined the questionnaire items used to measure people’s perception about inequality to contrast it with those assessing perceptions of the causes of poverty. The first 30 attitudinal question items used, seek evidence about people’s perceptions of inequality. These items are also categorized into individualistic, structural and fatalistic dimensions. For example, the following reasons are given as to why people are poor: “lack of equal opportunity” (structural), “lack of effort by poor themselves” (individualistic), and “bad luck” (fatalistic).

The above studies have showed that perceptions of the causes of poverty are normally measured according to three dimensions: individualistic, structural and fatalistic. Weiss *et al.* (2007: 900) assessed attitudes toward the causes of poverty and added a fourth dimension: psychological explanations of the causes of poverty. Based on the review of the poverty perception measures I opted for the Feagin poverty indicators to measure perceptions of the causes of poverty. The review of the poverty perception measures and preliminary analysis made it possible for me to conclude that the PCPS is a reliable and valid measure.

#### **4.6.2 Measuring poverty and the Lived Poverty Index**

A review of the literature on poverty reveals that there are many approaches to measuring poverty. What is evident from this literature is that there is no perfect or correct way to measure poverty (Creedy, 1998: 82). Orshansky (1993: 27) has probably summed up the choice of method for measuring poverty the best when she coined the phrase “poverty is in the eyes of the beholder”. What is implied in this statement is that poverty is a normative concept and that the choice of measurement method is based on value judgements of those who are doing the counting and why (Hans-Jurgen, 1998: 3). It is therefore important that the “choice of measurement method be explicit, clear, and verifiable to ensure some sense of objectivity” (Hans-Jurgen, 1998: 3).

I already indicated in Chapter 2 that poverty is multidimensional and that multiple measures are required to measure and capture each dimension (Saunders & Bradbury, 2006: 342). In this section I focus on how to observe poverty and all its dimensions. A panorama of the available poverty methods suggest that three categories of poverty measures can be distinguished: antecedent (or resources or means), securing basic needs (or actual behaviour) and consequences (or results or ends or outcomes) (Lok-Dessalien, 2002: 3; Mattes *et al.*, 2002: 37; May, *et al.*, 2002: 21; Hans-Jurgen, 1998: 4). Antecedent measures are considered to be indirectly observable while securing basic needs and consequences are directly observable. The antecedents are seen as useful tools for monitoring poverty in the short term particularly within countries. The consequences

approaches to measuring poverty are mostly useful for long-term comparison especially across countries.

### ***Means or antecedent methods***

Lok-Dessalien (2002: 7), for example, distinguished between “means” and “ends” poverty indicators or measures. “Means” are indicators of inputs intended to achieve an end result. The cost of a minimum food basket is an example of a “means” poverty measure. Hans-Jurgen (1998: 3) separated poverty measures into “indirect” and “direct” measures. The indirect approach measures poverty in terms of an individual’s access to different resources. The resource approach is comparable with the means classification by Lok-Dessalien since it defines resources as the means that a person uses to achieve certain aims.

Lok-Dessalien (2002: 7) indicated that poverty has traditionally been measured using the “means” indicators of which the most common is the money-metric measures. Mattes *et al.* (2002: 38) provided other examples of “means” indicators in the form of assets (more specifically household assets), literacy levels, education, land and access to services. Hans-Jurgen’s (1998: 5) analysis of indirect poverty measures presented three types of resources namely human, material and social resources. Various indicators are used to measure people’s access to human, material and social resources. For instance, the number of household members, education and health are mentioned as human resources; money, financial assets, property as material resources; and public infrastructure and the availability of the market as social resources (Hans-Jurgen, 1998: 5).

### ***Consequences or outcomes or ends***

Ends or direct poverty measures refer to the results of individual behaviour after employing the available resources or means (Hans-Jurgen, 1998: 8). In other words, direct poverty measures assess the living standards of people at a certain point in time within a given community (Hans-Jurgen, 1998: 8).

Mattes *et al.* (2002: 37) indicated that health, longevity and happiness are poverty measures of consequences or outputs. The Human Poverty Index (HPI) adopted by the UNDP is another example of an output poverty measure. The HPI measures, in a synthesised form, longevity (percentage of the population expected to die before age 40), adult illiteracy, access to health services and to safe water, and under five malnutrition rates (Lok-Dessalien, 2002: 8). The UNDP also created the Human Development Index (HDI) that measures longevity (life expectancy), educational attainment (adult literacy and national school enrolment rates) and standard of living (GDP per capita) (Mattes *et al.*, 2002: 40).

### ***Securing basic necessities***

Mattes *et al.* (2002: 37) reasoned that literature on poverty often fails to separate antecedent causes (means or resources) and measures of consequences (ends) operationally from poverty measures that assess the actual enjoyment of life's basic necessities. The authors contested whether antecedent causes, often referred to as resources, assets or capabilities, may enable people to secure basic necessities. It is reasoned that access to water and electricity by itself does not ensure that basic needs have been met since people with no formal access may never go without these resources if they have a range of informal strategies. The study, for example, found that people with no access to piped water may be able to get it from other means, and people who are not hooked up to an electricity grid may have a portable generator (Mattes *et al.*, 2002: 40). Similarly, I found that resources per se do not have intrinsic value and that it only becomes useful if you use it for certain purposes (Hans-Jurgen, 1998: 4).

In turn, measures of consequences may or may not result from securing these basic necessities. Mattes *et al.* (2002: 40) therefore argued that "income based, consumption and access based measures all suffer the same flaw: they do not measure the enjoyment of life's basic necessities, but rather draw inferences from plausible proxy measures". The authors created the Afrobarometer LPI that asks people directly to assess their ability to

secure basic necessities of life. This is different from most approaches that prefer to infer it from things such as income, expenditure, assets, or access to services. As indicated in the previous section this dissertation adopted the approach taken by Mattes *et al.* (2002: 41).

Boltvinik (1998: 4) also argued that a direct approach is useful since it can measure unsatisfied needs. For example, one can find out if somebody is able to read and write or one can calculate the calorie intake of a person to define if he or she is meeting this measure of nutritional requirements. Boltvinik (1998: 4) considered this approach as the direct or basic-needs approach to poverty measurement. Glewwe *et al.* (1990: 805) have criticised the basic-needs approach since it fails to aggregate the various aspects of basic needs into one composite index of welfare, which complicates the classification of households as poor or non-poor. The basic-needs approach is also criticised for its reliance on household members to make their own assessments of whether they have adequate levels of these basic necessities (Glewwe *et al.*, 1990: 805).

### **4.6.3 Translation of the questionnaire**

The previous section discussed the content and structure of the questionnaire, while this section focuses on questionnaire translation. The questionnaire was translated into all official national languages of South Africa.<sup>11</sup> The questionnaires were first translated from English into the various official languages and then back translated into English. This back translation ensured that there were no inconsistencies in the question wording and all other relevant language issues.

Each respondent was therefore given the opportunity to do the interview in the language of his choice. As a result, the interviewers were selected and trained if they were fluent in the languages of the areas in which they conducted the interviews.

## **4.7 SAMPLING DESIGN**

The sample design is a clustered, stratified, multi-stage, area probability sample. The main purpose of the sample design is to yield a representative sample of 3500 adults, aged 18 and older (with no upper age limit), regardless of their nationality or citizenship, in households geographically spread across South Africa's nine provinces, all geographical locations and all four major race groups. The sampling design has three stages and this section deals with each of these in turn.

### **4.7.1 Stage 1: Stratification and random selection of the primary sampling units**

The primary sampling units (PSU's) are the smallest, well-defined geographic units for which reliable population data are available. In South Africa it is referred to as Census Enumerated Areas (EAs). The HSRC Master Sample of 1000 EAs, which was developed using the Census 2001 and with the Enumerator Area (EA) as the PSU, was used as the sampling frame. The value of using the HSRC Master Sample is that a nationally representative sample can be drawn and the results of the survey can be properly weighted to the 2001 census population figures. A total of 350 EAs were drawn from across South Africa using the 2001 Census data. More specifically, the 350 EAs were stratified by the socio-demographic domains of province, geographical location (urban formal, urban informal, rural formal and traditional areas), and the four population groups (African black, coloured, white and Indian / Asian). Within each stratum, an allocated number of EAs were drawn using probability proportional to population size (PPPS) sampling.

It should be noted that over-sampling was done within the Northern Cape population as well as the Indian / Asian population to compensate for the relative small numbers of EAs. More specifically, over-sampling of EAs that was predominantly Indian / Asian was done especially in KwaZulu-Natal. In the Northern Cape the number of EAs were increased disproportionately to accommodate the small number of EAs in the province. The final sample therefore yielded 354 EAs as a result of the over-sampling.

#### **4.7.2 Stage 2: Selection of the visiting point**

For each of the 354 EAs route maps were produced. Using the maps the fieldworkers together with the help of the fieldwork supervisors had to identify and mark the boundaries of each EA. Once the boundaries were determined the fieldworker had to select the first visiting point at random anywhere in the EA. This was the visiting point where the fieldworker selected the first respondent for an interview. Within each of the EAs a total of 10 visiting points were selected for the survey.

Since all visiting points and households are not marked in the EA the fieldworkers had to calculate a selection interval to select all 10 visiting points. The selection interval is obtained by dividing the total number of households in the EA by 10. For example if the selection interval was 15, the second visiting point is selected by counting 15 of the visiting points in any direction from the first. Thus the 15<sup>th</sup> visiting point was the second place where an interview was conducted. The third visiting point was selected in a similar fashion by counting 15 more from the second visiting point and therefore the 30<sup>th</sup> visiting point was the third place where an interview was conducted. This procedure was repeated in the EA until a total of 10 visiting points were selected.

#### **4.7.3 Stage 3: Respondent selection procedure and household roster**

There were four basic steps in the respondent selection procedure (see Appendix C1, C2 and D for a detailed explanation):

##### ***Step 1: Number of households at visiting point***

In Step 1 the fieldworker must determine how many households there are at the visiting point.



***Step 2: Number of people 18 and older at visiting point***

In Step 2 the fieldworker must determine how many people are 18 and older at the visiting point.

***Step 3: Listing the names of all the people 18 years and older***

In Step 3 the fieldworker must list the names of all the people 18 and older at the visiting point on the questionnaire.

***Step 4: Selection of the interview respondent***

Once the fieldworkers completed the list of names, a Kish grid is used to select the respondent.

## **4.8 DATA COLLECTION**

### **4.8.1 Data collection method**

The survey research method used to collect the data was the personal face-to-face interview with the respondents in their own households. Approximately 3510 randomly selected respondents across South Africa were surveyed between 18 April and 30 May 2006. Interviewers traveled to the selected areas and conducted face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent. A scheduled structured interview was employed to ensure that the questions, their wording and sequence are fixed and identical for every respondent. The interviews lasted about sixty minutes.

The data collection process involved a number of procedures: recruitment and training of the fieldwork teams; logistical arrangements which include gaining access to the respondents and inform consent; and quality control. It should be noted that the participants did not receive any reward to participate in the study.

#### **4.8.2 Recruitment of fieldwork teams**

It should be acknowledged that the HSRC has developed a network of locally based fieldwork supervisors and fieldworkers in all parts of the country. The fieldwork supervisors and fieldworkers for the HSRC Client Survey were therefore selected from this network. In general, the fieldwork teams consisted of a supervisor, sub-supervisor with a team of 3 to 4 fieldworkers.

The main responsibilities of the supervisor entailed organizing logistics, travel, and accommodation of fieldworkers; negotiating with and accessing communities; managing fieldwork and fieldwork teams; ensuring ethical guidelines are followed; and dealing with problems, difficult cases, and referrals.

The sub-supervisors were responsible for transporting their team to selected communities, and dropping off and collecting fieldworkers from visiting points. Their responsibilities also included managing, supervising and supporting their specific fieldwork team; providing on-site quality control; and ensuring that the fieldworkers adhere to ethical guidelines. Lastly, sub-supervisors had to deal with problems, difficult cases, and referrals prior to moving on to the next community.

The fieldworkers' exclusive task was to administer the questionnaire. This involved: selecting the respondent for the interview, introducing himself/herself to the respondent, recording all answers correctly and as completely as possible. The fieldworker was responsible to submit the questionnaire to the sub-supervisor for control and quality check after each completed interview.

The profiles of the HSRC network of supervisors and fieldwork teams reflected the demographics of South Africa. It should be noted that supervisors were encouraged to recruit fieldworkers from the local areas who have a thorough understanding of the area. Fieldworkers were consequently recruited from all the provinces. However, the supervisors were instructed to make sure that fieldworkers do not visit households if they

personally knew members from the selected households, as this has obvious consequences for the reliability and quality of the data. It is important to emphasize that the fieldworkers, wherever possible, were matched with their respondents in terms of gender, race and language. For instance, female fieldworkers mostly interviewed female respondents, and white fieldworkers interviewed white respondents.

The HSRC senior research staff also formed part of the field research teams. Each province was assigned an HSRC research staff member to oversee the data collection within that specific province. The main task of the HSRC senior staff was to coordinate the fieldwork and to ensure that all research protocols are implemented as set out in the training manual.<sup>12</sup>

### **4.8.3 Fieldwork training**

To ensure that the information collected is of a high quality training was conducted with all the supervisors and fieldwork teams prior to the implementation of the questionnaire interview process. This was done to ensure that the field teams understood the aims and objectives of the study.

The first training session was conducted with all the provincial field supervisors in Pretoria. The main purpose of the supervisor training was to ensure that the various training sessions around the country would be uniform and focused on the same key issues. The supervisor training session was followed by the fieldworker training sessions in the various provinces. The field supervisors, sub-supervisors and fieldworkers of each of the different provinces attended their respective provincial training sessions.

The training sessions were very participatory, practical and interactive, and gave the fieldworkers an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification. The training involved going through the various sections and questions systematically. This ensured that fieldworkers understood the intended meaning of all the questions, and further helped in identifying more complex questions for discussion. This part of the training was very

important since the questionnaire was administered in all official languages of South Africa.

In addition, fieldworkers were conducting interviews during the training session through role-play. This enabled the fieldworkers to familiarize themselves with the content of the questionnaires as well as refine their interviewing skills. It also gave the field supervisors the opportunity to assess the fieldwork teams and to determine which of the fieldworkers either needed more training or needed to be replaced.

During the training sessions, fieldworkers were issued with name tags and letters of introduction to be used in the field. Log sheets to be used by fieldworkers to record possible challenges, interesting experiences and obstacles whilst in the field were also distributed.

#### **4.8.4 Fieldwork training manual**

A comprehensive fieldwork training manual was developed for use by the fieldwork teams during the training as well as during the data collection period. The manual covered a wide range of issues, and included an introduction and background to the study, interviewing techniques, the content of the questionnaire, rules and suggestions on how to handle questions that are particularly difficult, sensitive or unclear. Ethical issues such as informed consent and confidentiality also formed a very important part of the training. In addition, the sampling procedures were reviewed and maps provided for the selection of the visiting points, households and respondents. All supervisors and fieldworkers were issued with manuals as well as a hard copy of the questionnaire.

#### **4.8.5 Gaining access to the subjects**

Gaining access to the subjects of the study was probably one of the most important aspects of the data collection process. I therefore in collaboration with the HSRC ensured that all the relevant authorities were notified before the implementation of the

questionnaire. Even before the start of the study the project leader and the researcher had to get ethical clearance from the HSRC's Ethics Committee. This entailed a description of the project and all the necessary steps that would be followed to safeguard the integrity and privacy of the subjects of the study. More specifically, the current study used 1) a letter of introduction (Appendix E), 2) a letter to the local station commander of the South African Police Service (SAPS) (Appendix F), and 3) a respondent consent form (Appendix G).

The letter of introduction was used to inform the relevant local authorities as well as the respondents about the aim of the study. The letter also served as a notification to the relevant local authorities that the HSRC aims to speak to people within the local community. In brief, the letter informed the reader that the study elicited respondents' opinion with regards to ICT and poverty. Further, that the respondents' rights would not be infringed upon and that they could at anytime during the interview refuse to answer a question or terminate the interview.

The second letter was directed to the local Station Commander of the SAPS. The main aim of this letter was to inform the SAPS that the HSRC would be working within the area to implement a survey. The letter spelled out that the HSRC would conduct personal interviews with respondents at their premises. In addition, the HSRC requested through the letter any assistance from the police in the event of an emergency.

The respondent consent form was used to inform the selected respondent about the purpose of the study; sampling design including the respondent selection procedure; issues of confidentiality and anonymity; who will use the information; and the length of the interview.

#### **4.8.6 Quality control**

The quality of the information collected is critical for every project because it impacts on the validity of the results or inferences drawn. Quality control of the present study was done at three levels: first, during training so that each fieldworker applied protocols of the

data collection as stipulated in the Fieldwork Manual; second, in-field monitoring of the data collection by field supervisors and HSRC researchers was done to ensure all procedures were followed to the letter; and thirdly, during data processing where programmatic methods were used in data cleaning. One of the previous sections discussed the fieldwork training, this section discusses the in-field monitoring process, and the next section discusses the quality control during the data management process.

The sub-supervisors and the supervisors were responsible for the monitoring of the fieldworkers during the data collection period. In addition, the presence of the sub-supervisors in the field provided on-going on-site support to fieldworkers. This further ensured that the performance of fieldworkers was continuously monitored and feedback was continuously transmitted to regional supervisors.

Even though the fieldworkers were well trained, in order to improve the quality of the data collected, spot checks were conducted by the senior research staff of the HSRC. This process involved researchers from the HSRC visiting the selected areas across the country and working alongside the fieldworkers for a number of days to ensure that they adhere to ethical research practices, and select the identified households and respondents correctly. This process also entailed observing how fieldworkers conduct the actual interviews, and if they asked questions correctly, to pick up misunderstandings of concepts due to translation difficulties and to check whether they followed all the stipulated procedures. The in-field spot checks by the HSRC senior researchers were done during the first two weeks of the fieldwork to evaluate and improve the performance of fieldworkers.

It is clear from the previous sections that the data collection process involved a number of activities that required field teams to be accurate and very meticulous. For example, the data collection process involved payment of fieldworkers, hiring of cars, booking of accommodation, keeping track of all expenditures and so on. All these arrangements needed to be in place before the implementation of the interview process.

## **4.9 CAPTURING AND EDITING OF THE DATA**

Once the fieldwork was completed all the questionnaires were sent to the HSRC data management team and prepared for data entry. Stringent quality control checks were carried out at all stages of the data management process. Moreover, the data management process in particular involved 1) field back checks, 2) questionnaire screening and coding, 3) data entry and 4) data cleaning and verification.

### **4.9.1 Field back checks**

During the course of the questionnaire administration period, a series of field back checks was conducted on randomly selected respondents to ascertain whether fieldworkers actually visited them. A minimum of 10 percent of the total amount of cases in the database was back checked, either using a telephone or physically visiting the areas of interest. This process involved asking the respondent whether a HSRC fieldworker visited his or her household. In addition, the respondent was asked whether the fieldworker provided information with regard to the background of the study.

### **4.9.2 Questionnaire screening and coding**

Before the data entry took place all the questionnaires were checked to determine if they were fully completed. The main purpose of this pre-data entry check was to ensure that the questionnaires accurately reflect the responses made by the participants. Furthermore, whether there were no missing answers. In addition, this process also involved making sure that the fieldworkers followed the instructions throughout the questionnaire and in particular if the skip instructions were adhered to correctly.

The quality checks of the individual questionnaires were followed by the questionnaire coding process. All the questions used in the analysis of the present study are closed-ended questions. Consequently, the procedures for coding the open-ended questions are not discussed here. However, coding clerks under the supervision of the data manager

checked whether all the closed-ended questions were correctly coded. In addition, I checked a random sample of questionnaires to verify whether the coding was done correctly.

#### **4.9.3 Data entry**

The data was directly captured from the questionnaires into Microsoft Excel. Although the data entry clerks were all very experienced, they received additional training to familiarize themselves with the questionnaire. In addition, the data manager and data supervisors monitored the work of the data entry clerks carefully and did random checks to examine the quality of the data entry. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to import the data set from Microsoft Excel (Brace, N., Kemp. R. & Snelgar, R, 2003). SPSS was therefore used to analyze the data.

#### **4.9.4 Data cleaning and verification**

Once the data was entered into Microsoft Excel it was ready for cleaning and verification. The main purpose of the cleaning and verification process was to ensure that the final product was of the highest quality before it was analyzed. In sum, the data cleaning determined, for every case, whether each variable contained only the valid response categories. For example, mistakes were found for some cases with regard to the gender of the respondent. This error was determined by comparing question 64 (sex of the respondent: Male = 1 and female = 2) with the household schedule (used to select the respondent) which required information in terms of age, sex and race. Moreover, for each case both question 64 and the household schedule (indicating the sex of the respondent) should be the same. Similar quality checks were done for the rest of the data set.

For the present study the LPI response options ranged from 1 (= never) to 5 (= always) and 6 (= do not know). For each case it was determined whether the respondents only selected 1 to 6. If there were any response options above 6, meaning 7 or more, it was recorded as a mistake and treated as missing data. The same procedure was followed to



test the quality of the responses of the poverty perceptions questions, which ranged from 1 (= strongly disagree) to 5 (= strongly agree) and 6 (= do not know). Consequently, all values outside the range of 1 to 6 were therefore excluded from the data set and treated as missing data. In general, the data cleaning and verification procedures revealed that the data set was of a very good standard.

#### **4.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis of the present study is conducted at three levels using a range of statistical analysis methods.

The primary analysis employs basic univariate statistics to determine whether respondents perceive the causes of poverty in structural, individualistic or fatalistic dimensions.

The secondary level analysis examines the extent of lived poverty. The LPI is used to calculate poverty lines to estimate the proportion of people who are poor in South Africa. The final step of the second level of analysis is the calculation and examination of the mean LPI scores among the various socio-demographic variables (for example, race and education).

The tertiary level of analysis examines the influence of race, education, geographical location, and employment status, gender, living standard measure (LSM), LPI and age on perceptions of the causes of poverty. To examine the impact of the explanatory variables on the dependent variables I employ a series of ordinary least square regressions to test the joint and relative effects of the predictor variables on the dependant variables.

It should be noted that the statistical analysis methods and procedures are discussed in detail in Chapter 5. It is hoped that the discussion of the statistical analysis methods and procedures together with the presentation of the results will be more informative.

#### **4.11 LIMITATIONS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF THE DATA**

Ensuring the validity and reliability of the results is an important aim of the study. This chapter in particular has outlined the various measures that were implemented to produce a reliable and accurate data set for analysis. Despite the quality control measures, I want to recognise the shortcomings and limitations of the data collection method as well as the gaps in the dataset.

##### **4.11.1 Intra-household dynamics and the measurement of poverty**

I believe it is probably appropriate to first acknowledge some limitations when implementing national representative household surveys. For instance, it has been found that household members' poverty status impact on other members of the household (Woolard & Leibbrandt, 2006: 4). In this regard, it is anticipated that intra-household dynamics influence how respondents may perceive and experience poverty. For instance, researchers must be aware of the size of a household as well as the total income of the household when analyzing and interpreting data. Other factors to consider are whether the household is a female-headed household, and whether food and incomes are shared among household members. Furthermore, to assess individual well-being, one would require information on specific consumption of each individual household member. Regrettably, this information is rarely available or complete when selected respondents have to answer questions on behalf of the entire household. The LPI consists of a series of questions that require the respondents to answer questions on behalf of their entire family. It is therefore important that I emphasize that respondents in the present study had to estimate whether everyone in the family, for example, had enough food to eat over the past year.

To address this concern some researchers select the most knowledgeable person from the household or the head of the household for the interview. Although the selected respondent in this case may be more familiar with the overall circumstances of the household such as the income earned for the year, this approach is criticized for a lack of randomization. I opted to randomly select the respondent within the household and not to interview an individual on the basis of his position within that household.

#### **4.11.2 Limitations with regards to questionnaire content**

The study could be improved through the implementation of a questionnaire that exclusively focuses on perceptions of the causes of poverty. The mixture of questions about ICT and poverty may have impacted on how the respondents answered the various sections. Nevertheless, I made sure that the shift between the content areas was appropriate by asking the poverty questions after the demographic section which included some personal information as well as characteristics of the household.

Because of lack of questionnaire space I was unable to include other relevant indicators such as the impact of religion and politics on people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. A study by Nasser *et al.* (2002: 113) found that religion as a belief system may play an instrumental role in shaping perceptions of poverty. Lee (2000: 202) highlighted that homogeneous and stagnant poor neighbourhoods are particularly vulnerable to crime. I therefore acknowledge that a range of variables may impact on perceptions of poverty, but limited questionnaire space and budgetary constraints only allowed for the inclusion of a few demographic variables.

Furthermore, I want to emphasize the use of primary data collected by the HSRC to answer the research questions. In doing so, it may have opened the door for criticism about using a secondary data source. However, I must reiterate that the questions used to inform this study were revised and then administered in the field. In addition, I fully participated in all aspects of the survey from the questionnaire construction process up to the data analysis. Despite personally being involved in the study, it is obvious that a

public opinion survey of this magnitude required a large project team if it was to be successfully executed. It is against this background that the role played by other researchers and research assistants to implement a survey of about 3500 respondents is recognized.

#### **4.11.3 General shortcomings of surveys**

In general, surveys are often criticized for their lack of in-depth information. This criticism is mainly a result of the over-reliance on close-ended questions, which provide little scope for exploration that is needed to gather new information. In addition, survey questionnaires are often exposed to high refusal rates, high non-response rates, interviewer effects, respondent effects, fieldwork and data capturing errors as well as sampling errors. In this chapter I emphasized that a number of quality mechanisms were built into the study to ensure that the survey minimized most errors related to data collection and data capturing. In Chapter 5 I show that the quality mechanisms employed by the study yielded a very reliable and valid data set with very few missing data.

Finally, while the study provided data on perceptions of the causes of poverty and on several socio-demographic variables, further research is needed to understand how these perceptions influence respondents' support for poverty-related policies and programmes. Nevertheless, chapter 7 of this dissertation discusses the impact of the perceptions on poverty-related policies and programmes, and how the results of the present study can be used to inform existing and new policies in this regard.

#### **4.12 CONCLUSION**

The literature review found very few South African studies on perception of the causes of poverty. As a result, I had to build my research design and methods mostly on international studies particularly from Europe and the United States. Despite these constraints, I believe that the research methodology is unprecedented and invaluable for

furthering research on perceptions of the causes of poverty within Africa, and particularly South Africa.

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology of the study to investigate perceptions of the causes of poverty. The results of this investigation are presented in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The current chapter presents the results of the study in three subsections. First, the results of the respondents' preference towards perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural or fatalistic perspectives are reported. Secondly, the focus is on identifying the poor and their level of access to basic necessities as measured by the LPI. Thirdly, answers are provided on whether socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, geographical location, level of education, employment status, the LPI, age, living standard measure (LSM) and gender influence perceptions of the causes of poverty. The chapter is concluded with a summary of the main findings.

#### **5.2 PRIMARY ANALYSIS RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

This level of analysis presents the respondents' preference towards perceptions of the causes of poverty according to structural, individualistic, and fatalistic dimensions. More specifically, this section demonstrates how these dimensions are measured and constructed. Next, these measures are used to determine whether there are any differences in the way respondents perceive the causes of poverty.

##### **5.2.1 Perceptions of the causes of poverty: Indices**

At the core of the study are the composite indices: individualistic, structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. These three indices were constructed through statistical procedures known as factor analysis (using Maximum Likelihood extraction and Direct Oblimin rotation) and reliability analysis. The results of the factor analysis showed that it is possible to extract three unrotated factors (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1 Factor Analysis Perceptions of the Causes of Poverty: Item Loadings**

<b>Reasons why people are poor</b>	<b>Factor 1: Individualistic</b>	<b>Factor 2: Fatalistic</b>	<b>Factor 3: Structural</b>
waste money	<b>.923</b>	-.019	-.064
lack money management	<b>.759</b>	.007	.008
do not seek to improve lives	<b>.658</b>	-.010	.019
lack luck	-.061	<b>.893</b>	-.097
have bad fate	-.004	<b>.785</b>	-.032
encountered misfortunes	.027	<b>.608</b>	.068
born inferior	.008	<b>.485</b>	.022
not motivated because of welfare	.072	<b>.300</b>	.250
society is uneven	-.055	-.077	<b>.798</b>
society lacks social justice	.031	-.029	<b>.720</b>
exploited by rich	.006	.026	<b>.574</b>
live in poor families	.008	.065	<b>.451</b>

The fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty (Fatalistic Index) comprised of five items. Please refer to Chapter 4 for the actual question wording of the various question items measuring perceptions of the causes of poverty. However, to contextualize the construction of the indices an example of the wording for some of the question items is given for the Fatalistic Index. Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with 12 statements about why they think poor people are poor. The response options on the Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with the higher values indicating a greater importance as to why people are perceived to be poor. More specifically, respondents were asked to answer questions such as: “poor people are poor because:” “they have bad fate” and “they have encountered misfortunes”. Results for the fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty indicate that 5 of the 12 items are loaded on or highly correlated with the underlying factor. These are: (1) “they lack luck” (.893), (2) “they have bad fate” (.785), (3) “they have encountered misfortunes” (.608), (4) “they are born inferior” (.485) and (5) “they are not motivated because of welfare” (.300).

The structural perceptions of the causes of poverty (Structural Index) comprised of four items. The items are loaded on or correlated with the underlying factor. These items are: (1) “distribution of wealth in the society is uneven” (.798), (2) “the society lacks social justice” (.720), (3) “they are exploited by rich people” (.574), and (4) “they lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families” (.451).

The individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty (Individual Index) comprised of three items. The items are loaded on or correlated with the underlying factor. These are: (1) “they waste their money on inappropriate items” (.923), (2) “they lack the ability to manage money” (.759), and (3) “they do not actively seek to improve their lives” (.658).

Previous research using similar items also showed that three underlying factors can be abstracted representing structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of poverty (Hunt 2004: 829; Shek, 2004: 273). Based on the literature review on perceptions of the causes of poverty and the factor analysis three separate indices were constructed. Furthermore, each of the three indices was evaluated for dimensionality and reliability through factor analysis (using Maximum Likelihood extraction and Direct Oblimin rotation) and reliability analysis. The results of these factor analyses and reliability scores are reported in Table 5.2, Table 5.3 and Table 5.4.

Table 5.2 shows that the Fatalistic Index with an Eigenvalue of 2.648 explains 42.42 percent of the common variance. The index is reliable (Kronbach’s alpha = 0.773).

**Table 5.2: Fatalistic Index – Factor Analysis**

<b>Reasons why people are poor</b>	<b>Factor loadings</b>	<b>Eigen-value</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Kronbach’s alpha</b>
They lack luck	.833	2.648	42.42	0.773
They have bad fate	.771			
They have encountered misfortunes	.644			
They are born inferior	.500			
They are not motivated because of welfare	.411			



Table 5.3 indicates that the Structural Index with an Eigenvalue of 2.207 explains 41.39 percent of the common variance. The index is reliable (Kronbach's = 0.725).

**Table 5.3: Structural Index – Factor Analysis**

<b>Reasons why people are poor</b>	<b>Factor loadings</b>	<b>Eigen-value</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Kronbach's alpha</b>
Distribution of wealth in the society is uneven	.745	2.207	41.39	0.725
The society lacks social justice	.723			
They are exploited by rich people	.594			
They lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families	.474			

Table 5.4 shows that the Individualistic Index with an Eigenvalue of 2.193 explains 61.12 percent of the common variance. The index is reliable (Kronbach's alpha = 0.815).

**Table 5.4: Individualistic Index – Factor Analysis**

<b>Reasons why people are poor</b>	<b>Factor loadings</b>	<b>Eigen-value</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Kronbach's alpha</b>
They waste their money on inappropriate items	.909	2.193	61.12	0.815
They lack the ability to manage money	.759			
They do not actively seek to improve their lives	.657			

## 5.2.2 Primary analysis statistical methods

The primary analysis aims to investigate respondents' preference with regard to structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, an assessment is made about how South Africans at the national level perceive perceptions of the causes of poverty. This is achieved by employing basic descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation for each perception of the causes of poverty indices introduced in section 5.2.1.

By comparing the means and standard deviations of the indices one can establish whether the survey respondents are more inclined to explain poverty in individualistic, structural

or fatalistic dimensions. Moreover, the respondent's score on each index is calculated as the mean of his or her responses to all the items in that index. In addition, bivariate analysis was conducted to establish whether there are any relationships among the three indices (fatalistic, individualistic and structural).

### 5.2.3 Presentation of the results of the primary analysis

Table 5.5 presents the results of the respondents' views with regard to the three perceptions of the causes of poverty indices. The results indicate that of the 3510 respondents the largest proportion of them were inclined to attribute perceptions of the causes of poverty to structural perceptions ( $M = 3.27$ ), somewhat less were inclined to attribute it to individualistic perceptions ( $M = 2.81$ ) and the least inclined to attribute it to fatalistic perceptions ( $M = 2.78 = .80$ ).

In addition, the standard deviations around these mean scores are the largest for the Individualistic Index ( $SD = 1.08$ ), indicating that the variation among the respondents in terms of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty is more than those for the Structural ( $SD = 0.86$ ) and Fatalistic ( $SD = 0.80$ ) Indices.

**Table 5.5 Perceptions of the causes of poverty (Mean scores)**

Indices	N	Mean	Std Dev.
Structural Index	3474	3.27	0.86
Individualistic Index	3487	2.81	1.08
Fatalistic Index	3480	2.78	0.80

Furthermore, bivariate analysis demonstrates that there is a moderate correlation between structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty (Pearson's  $r = .367$ , sig. 01,  $n = 3458$ ). The correlation between structural and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty is moderate to weak (Pearson's  $r = .162$ , sig. 01,  $n = 3463$ ). However, the

correlation between individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty is the weakest (Pearson's  $r = .129$ , sig.  $.01$ ,  $n = 3469$ ).

These initial results about respondents' preferences toward structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty indicate that greater proportions of the respondents are likely to ascribe to structural and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty and smaller proportions to fatalistic perceptions. It is also interesting to note that there are stronger correlations between structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty than between individualistic and fatalistic perceptions.

However, these differences between the mean scores of the three perceptions of the causes of poverty indices are relatively small. It is therefore important that more advance analysis be conducted to determine whether these differences are significant. More importantly, what are the underlying factors that influence how respondents' perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed? In this regard, the tertiary level analysis that follows later in this chapter provides further insight into South Africans' perceptions of the causes of poverty according to these three dimensions: structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Nevertheless, the present study concludes that South Africans in general prefer structural over individualistic and fatalistic perceptions. Table 5.6 for example indicate that a greater proportion of respondents agree that people are poor because they are exploited by the rich (44 percent), in contrast to 33 percent who disagree (this item measured structural perceptions). In terms of the individualistic perceptions it is evident that a smaller proportion of respondents agree that people are poor (38 percent) because they lack the ability to manage money, in contrast to 54 percent who disagreed with this statement. Lastly, fatalistic explanations such as people are poor because of bad luck are less preferred since a smaller proportion agrees (30 percent) with this statement, while a larger proportion disagrees (54 percent).

**Table 5.6: Perceptions of the causes of poverty (percent)**

<b>Reasons why people are poor</b>	<b>Agree / Strongly agree</b>	<b>Neither agree / disagree</b>	<b>Disagree / Strongly disagree</b>
<b>Fatalistic Causes</b>			
They lack luck	30%	16%	54%
They have bad fate	24%	21%	55%
They have encountered misfortunes	35%	22%	43%
They are born inferior	21%	19%	60%
They are not motivated because of welfare	46%	19%	35%
<b>Structural Causes</b>			
Distribution of wealth in the society is uneven			
The society lacks social justice	54%	18%	28%
They are exploited by rich people	44%	23%	33%
They lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families	45%	17%	38%
	57%	11%	32%
<b>Individualistic Causes</b>			
They waste their money on inappropriate items	41%	12%	47%
They lack the ability to manage money	38%	8%	54%
They do not actively seek to improve their lives	35%	15%	47%

*Note: Response categories agree and strongly agree are collapsed into agree.*

*Response categories disagree and strongly disagree are collapsed into disagree.*

### **5.3 SECONDARY ANALYSIS RESULTS: EXAMINING THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Looking back at the previous discussions in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, it was emphasized that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that must be measured with multiple indicators. Moreover, the LPI was proposed as suitable uni-multifaceted measure able to capture the actual lived experiences of people. In addition, the apartheid system of government has shaped poverty in South Africa in a very unique manner particularly along dimensions such as race, education and geographic location.

This section therefore uses the LPI to examine intra-national differences among the various race groups, education levels, types of geographic locations and types of employment status; rather than comparing national “poverty” estimates produced by, for example, the World Bank and UNDP. Moreover, the focus is on examining the extent of

lived poverty among South Africans. By examining the extent of poverty it is envisaged that we will improve our understanding of how people perceive the causes of poverty. Furthermore, Mattes et al. (2002) have already done a thorough investigation of the LPI both at national and intra-national level. In addition, it is beyond the scope of the current dissertation to contrast the extent of lived poverty in South Africa with those in other countries. However, before examining variations among the various socio-economic demographic variables the LPI is constructed. This section therefore starts with a detailed outline of the construction of the LPI, which is followed by the examining the extent of poverty within South Africa.

### **5.3.1 The Construction of the LPI**

As mentioned in Chapter 4 the LPI measures people's ability to obtain the basic necessities of life. More specifically, the respondents were asked "over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or your family gone without: a) enough food to eat, b) enough clean water for home use, c) medicines or medical treatment, d) electricity in your home, e) enough fuel to cook your food, and f) a cash income". The response options employed in the present study ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always) with the higher values indicating a greater degree of lack of access to these basic necessities. It should be noted that "do not know" = 6 was recoded into "never" = 1. I assumed that people who "do not know" whether they had gone without basic necessities in the past year probably did not go without these basic necessities.

The LPI was constructed based on the six question items about access to basic necessities through factor analysis (using Maximum Likelihood extraction and Direct Oblimin rotation) and reliability analysis. The results of the factor analysis showed that it was possible to extract a single unrotated factor with an Eigenvalue of 3.83 that explains 56.72 percent of the common variance to all six of the items (Table 5.7). The LPI is reliable (Kronbach's alpha = 0.89). Also refer to Table 5.7 for how the items correlated with the underlying factor.

**Table 5.7 Lived Poverty Index: Factor loadings**

<b>Reasons why people are poor</b>	<b>Component 1</b>
Enough fuel to cook your food	0.834
Medicines or medical treatment	0.757
A cash income	0.763
Enough food to eat	0.763
Electricity in your home	0.742
Enough clean water for home use	0.649
Kronbach's Alpha	0.89

### **5.3.2 Examining the extent and nature of poverty within South Africa**

The LPI is now employed to calculate poverty lines to estimate the proportion of people who are poor in South Africa<sup>13</sup>. An approach developed by Mattes et al. (2002) is used to calculate the average proportion who said they “always” went without the mentioned six basic necessities (which could be seen as a measure of the most destitute), as well as the average proportion who said they “always” and “many times” (which could be seen as a measure of the destitute or the poor). Next, the proportion of respondents whose average score on a five point scale (LPI) is above 1.5 as well as 3 are calculated. These values (1.5 and 3) respectively represent the median score (the value at which half of the cases fall above and below) for the LPI as well as the median response category for the LPI. The use of the median response category is very useful when the summary measure has a large number of categories. The final step of the second level of analysis is the calculation and examination of the mean LPI scores among the various socio-demographic variables (for example, race and education). The results of the poverty lines and mean average LPI among the various socio-demographic variables are reported in Table 5.8 and Table 5.9 respectively.

**Table 5.8 Poverty lines to estimate the proportion of people who are poor**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>% always going without</b>	<b>% always and many times going without</b>	<b>% with average score &gt;3 on a scale of 1 – 5<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>% with average score &gt;1.5 on a scale of 1 – 5<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Race</b>	black African	.6%	1.5%	19%	65%
	coloured	.2%	.6%	10%	35%
	Indian / Asian	0%	0%	0%	5%
	white	1%	1%	1%	6%
<b>Education</b>	primary	.7%	2.6%	28%	70%
	secondary	.5%	.9%	12%	51%
	tertiary	.8%	.8%	6%	30%
<b>Geographical location</b>	urban formal	.6%	.7%	9%	40%
	urban informal	1.3%	1.4%	12%	63%
	traditional	.6%	1.9%	26%	79%
	rural formal	0%	4.1%	28%	53%
<b>Employment</b>	employed	.4%	.5%	11%	37%
	not working	.7%	1.5	16%	52%
	unemployed	.5%	1.5%	18%	68%
<b>Gender</b>	male	.6%	1.4%	14%	50%
	female	.6%	1.2%	17%	57%
<b>Age</b>	18 – 24 years	.3%	.8%	11%	52%
	25 – 34 years	.7%	1.7%	16%	58%
	35 – 44 years	.2%	1.1%	17%	50%
	45 – 54 years	.4%	.4%	15%	54%
	55 – 64 years	1.6%	2.7%	17%	50%
	65 years +	.7%	2%	18%	52%
<b>LSM</b>	Low	.7%	3.2%	36%	85%
	Medium	.5%	.9%	14%	63%
	High	.6%	.7%	3%	15%

<sup>1</sup> 3 represents the median category of the LPI. The response options for the LPI range from 1 = never and 5 = always.

<sup>2</sup> 1.5 is the median score on the LPI which divides the sample in halve.

Table 5.8 shows that the decision about how to define and draw a poverty line using the LPI has a major impact on the nature and extent of poverty. For instance, if the poverty line is defined as the average proportion who said they “always” went without the measured six basic necessities (which could be seen as a measure of the most destitute), the results show that much smaller proportions of people are identified as poor across all the socio-economic and demographic variables. However, when the average proportion who said “always” and “many times” (which could be seen as a measure of the destitute or the poor) is used to define the poverty line the results indicate that larger proportions of people are identified as poor. Moreover, the results showed that 0.6 percent of the respondents on average “always” went without basic necessities over the past year. When the response category “always” is combined with “many times” the results indicate that 1.3 percent of the respondents said on average they “always’ or “many times” went without basic necessities over the past year.

Nevertheless, the results of the poverty lines demonstrate that black African respondents over the past year went without basic necessities such as enough food, clean water, medicines, electricity, and fuel to cook and cash income much more than all the other race groups (Table 5.8). For instance, black Africans (19 percent) had the largest proportion of respondents with an average score above 3 on the LPI, while coloureds (10 percent) had a smaller proportion. In contrast, only 1 percent of the white respondents had an average score above 3 on the LPI. Interestingly, 1 percent of the white respondents indicated that they “always” went without basic necessities over the past year, in contrast to 0.6 percent for black Africans and 0.2 percent for coloureds.

In terms of education, the results revealed that those respondents with lower levels of education lack basic necessities much more than those with higher levels of education (Table 5.8). For example, a larger proportion of respondents with primary education (2.6 percent) have “always” or “many times” gone without basic necessities over the past year when measured against respondents with secondary (0.9 percent) and tertiary education (0.8 percent). Similarly, a larger proportion of respondents with primary education (28



percent) obtained an average score above 3 when contrasted to those with secondary (12 percent) and tertiary (6 percent) education.

Table 5.8 further shows that the results of the LPI poverty lines for each of the different geographic locations accords with common understandings of the national distribution of poverty. Moreover, the urban formal areas have the smallest proportion of respondents that have gone without basic necessities over the past year if contrasted to the traditional, rural formal and urban informal areas. For instance, larger proportions of rural formal (28 percent) and traditional (26 percent) obtained an average score of above 3, when contrasted with urban informal (12 percent) and urban formal (9 percent) respondents.

When the results are disaggregated by employment status the “unemployed” and “not working” respondents are most likely to have gone without basic necessities over the past year (Table 5.8). The results show that unemployed (18 percent) are the largest proportion of respondents with an average score above 3 on the LPI, while those “not working” (16 percent) and employed (11 percent) had smaller proportions.

There appears to be very little difference among male and female respondents when accessing basic necessities such as food or a cash income. However, a larger proportion of female (17 percent) respondents recorded an average score above 3 when I compare it to male (14 percent) respondents. There are also very little variation among the age groups across all the LPI poverty lines.

Respondents with a low living standard measure (LSM) were generally the most dissatisfied with regard to access to basic necessities<sup>14</sup>. For instance, a larger proportion of respondents with a low LSM (3.2 percent) have indicated that they “always” or “many times” went without basic necessities over the past year when compared to respondents with a medium LSM (0.9 percent) and high LSM (0.7 percent) (Table 5.8). A larger

proportion of respondents with low LSM (36 percent) obtained an average score above 3 when compared to those with a medium LSM (14 percent) and high LSM (3 percent).

Table 5.9 presents the mean LPI scores for each category of the various socio-economic and demographic variables. The mean scores run from 1 (never went without basic necessities) to 5 (always went without basic necessities). In other words, higher scores reflect a greater degree of lack of access to basic necessities. Viewed in this way, black Africans (2.19) and coloured (1.75) respondents are the most impoverished, while whites (1.17) and Indians (1.09) are the least impoverished.

Overall, the mean LPI scores mirror the results of the LPI poverty lines reported in Table 5.8. For example, respondents with primary (2.29) education are more likely to experience lack of basic necessities than those with secondary (1.79) and tertiary education (1.40) (Table 5.9). Urban informal (2.32) and traditional (2.44) dwellers are also more likely to experience lack of basic necessities. Unemployed (2.17) respondents, females (1.93) and those with a low LSM (2.63) are also experiencing a greater degree of lack of basic necessities.

**Table 5.9 Mean scores of the LPI by race, education, geographic location, employment status, gender, age and LSM**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Response categories</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std Dev.</b>
<b>Race</b>	black African	2.19	2221	.98
	coloured	1.75	484	.93
	Indian / Asian	1.09	335	.25
	white	1.17	445	.64
<b>Education</b>	primary	2.29	903	1.03
	secondary	1.79	2282	.95
	tertiary	1.40	295	.76
<b>Geographical location</b>	urban formal	1.62	2183	.88
	urban informal	2.32	155	.92
	traditional	2.44	953	.96
	rural formal	1.90	194	1.03
<b>Employment</b>	employed	1.63	1034	.90

	not working	1.82	1186	.99
	unemployed	2.17	1227	.97
<b>Gender</b>	male	1.82	1185	.98
	female	1.93	2300	.99
<b>Age</b>	18 – 24 years	1.87	722	.93
	25 – 34 years	1.97	794	1.02
	35 – 44 years	1.88	682	.99
	45 – 54 years	1.83	511	.94
	55 – 64 years	1.87	394	1.04
	65 years +	1.88	378	1.02
<b>LSM</b>	Low	2.63	681	.98
	Medium	2.02	1513	.91
	High	1.25	1109	.65

Finally, if the median score of 1.5 (the value at which half of the cases fall above and below) is used 51 per cent of the respondents in the present study are identified as poor while 49 percent are categorized as non-poor. The poverty line based on the 1.5 median score compares very well with other poverty line measures. A review of poverty lines by Leibbrandt *et al.* (2006: 26) and Magasela (2005: 16) found that similar levels of poverty exist in South Africa. For example, using a poverty line set at R346 per capita expenditure of the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile of households, 54.9 per cent of the individuals of the 2000 Income and Expenditure Survey were identified as living below the poverty line. However, the same studies showed that available poverty line measures in South Africa vary significantly and that the adoption of any poverty line should emphasize that measuring poverty is extremely complex.

Because the focus of the present study is on perceptions of the causes of poverty and not the measurement of poverty I believe it is unnecessary to further elaborate on the construction of poverty lines. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that the LPI assumes equal weight for each of the items within the index. In other words, I argue that respondents rated, for example, access to enough food to eat and access to medicines and medical treatment equally. This shortcoming is therefore recognized because it is evident

that not having access to food is clearly very different to not having access to medicines and medical treatment.

The main focus of this section was to present the results of the extent and nature of poverty within South Africa. It was argued that understanding the nature and extent of poverty may help inform how people perceive the causes of poverty. The next section therefore examines explanations of perceptions of the causes of poverty. Moreover, the next section focuses on how socio-economic and demographic variables explain structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

#### **5.4 TERTIARY ANALYSIS RESULTS: INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

This section examines the influence of race, education, geographical location, employment status, gender, living standard measure (LSM), LPI and age on perceptions of the causes of poverty. A key question that I want to address in this section is which of the mentioned socio-economic and demographic variables has the biggest influence on how people perceive the causes of poverty. More specifically, this section aims to answer which of the various categories for each of the socio-economic and demographic variables are most influential in predicting the dependent variables. For instance, which of the various race groups (black African, coloured, Indian or white) impact most on structural, individualistic or fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty? Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that I was unable to include more explanatory variables due to limited questionnaire space. I therefore acknowledge that the use of the mentioned independent variables is simply a second-best strategy.

To examine the impact of the explanatory variables on the dependent variables I used a series of ordinary least square regressions to test the joint and relative effects of the predictor variables on the dependant variables. More specifically, three regression equations or models were conducted because there were three dependent variables.

However, a series of bivariate analyses which examine the linkages between the dependent variables and the independent variables: lived poverty, race, education, geographical location, and all the other predictor variables were first conducted. The main purpose of the bivariate correlations is to examine the interrelationships among the variables, not only between the dependent variables and the independent variables but also between the dependent variables themselves<sup>15</sup>. The results of these bivariate and regression analyses are reported in the next sections.

#### **5.4.1 Examining the interrelationships among the variables employed in the regressions**

The series of bivariate analyses were conducted using differences of means, which was accompanied by Pearson  $r$  measured at both 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance. As can be seen from Table 5.10, in general, the dependent variables (fatalistic, structural and individualistic index) all correlate more strongly with each other than the other variables. For instance, the fatalistic index correlates the strongest with the structural index (.367) and individualistic index (.129), but at modest levels. The structural index correlates most with the fatalistic (.367) and individualistic (.162) index, as well as the LPI (.121). It can also be seen that the individualistic index correlates most with race (.204), LSM (.148) and LPI (.145) even though it is very modest.

There is a much stronger correlation between LSM and race (.629) and somewhat modest correlations with geographic location (-.596), LPI (-.514), education (.405) and employment status (.289).

As mentioned previously, the LPI correlates the strongest with LSM (-.514), but also at modest levels with race (-.420), geographic location (.315), education (-.262) and employment status (-.225).

Employment status correlates the strongest with race (.305) and LSM (.289) but at modest levels.

Race correlates stronger with LSM (.629) and LPI (-.420). Race also correlates at modest levels with geographic location (-.380), employment status (.305), and at weaker levels with education (.288), and the individualistic index (.204).

Education correlates strongest with LSM (.405) followed by age (-.304), race (.288) and the LPI (-.262). However, all these correlations are modest at best.

Geographic location correlates the strongest with LSM (-.596) but also with race (-.380), LPI (.315) and education (-.246) at modest levels.

Age correlates the weakest with all the variables except with education (-.304) and race (.210) where modest correlations are observed levels. Gender correlates weakly across all the variables.

**Table 5.10: Correlations among the variables**

	Geographic location	LSM	Education	Employment	Age	Gender	Race	Structural index	Individualistic index	Fatalistic	LPI
Geographic location	1	-.596**	-.246**	-.145**	-.074**	.005	-.380**	.029	-.050**	.014	.315**
	3498	3316	3493	3460	3494	3498	3498	3474	3487	3480	3485
LSM	-.596**	1	.405**	.289**	.051**	-.024	.629**	-.094**	.148**	-.074**	-.514**
	3316	3316	3311	3279	3312	3316	3316	3294	3309	3299	3303
Education	-.246**	.405**	1	.121**	-.304**	-.088**	.288**	-.085**	.052**	-.067**	-.262**
	3493	3311	3493	3455	3489	3493	3493	3469	3482	3475	3480
Employment	-.145**	.289**	.121**	1	.161**	-.181**	.305**	-.018	.098**	-.008	-.225**
	3460	3279	3455	3460	3456	3460	3460	3437	3449	3442	3447
Age	-.074**	.051**	-.304**	.161**	1	.013	.210**	-.002	.072**	.037*	-.017
	3494	3312	3489	3456	3494	3494	3494	3470	3483	3476	3481
Gender	.005	-.024	-.088**	-.181**	.013	1	-.085**	.022	-.024	.026	.054**
	3498	3316	3493	3460	3494	3498	3498	3474	3487	3480	3485
Race	-.380**	.629**	.288**	.305**	.210**	-.085**	1	-.066**	.204**	-.027	-.420**
	3498	3316	3493	3460	3494	3498	3498	3474	3487	3480	3485
Structural index	.029	-.094**	-.085**	-.018	-.002	.022	-.066**	1	.162**	.367**	.121**
	3474	3294	3469	3437	3470	3474	3474	3474	3463	3458	3461
Individualistic index	-.050**	.148**	.052**	.098**	.072**	-.024	.204**	.162**	1	.129**	-.145**
	3487	3309	3482	3449	3483	3487	3487	3463	3487	3469	3474

**Table 5.10: Correlations among the variables ... Continues**

	<b>Geographic location</b>	<b>LSM</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Structural index</b>	<b>Individualistic index</b>	<b>Fatalistic</b>	<b>LPI</b>
Fatalistic	.014	-.074**	-.067**	-.008	.037*	.026	-.027	.367**	.129**	1	.080**
	3480	3299	3475	3442	3476	3480	3480	3458	3469	3480	3467
LPI	.315**	-.514**	-.262**	-.225**	-.017	.054**	-.420**	.121**	-.145**	.080**	1
	3485	3303	3480	3447	3481	3485	3485	3461	3474	3467	3485

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



### **5.4.2 Explaining perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The main focus in this section is to examine factors that impact on people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. I reasoned that a number of socio-economic and demographic variables influence the manner in which people perceive the causes of poverty. Furthermore, a review of the literature showed that people perceive the causes of poverty according to structural, individualistic, and fatalistic perceptions. In essence, the analysis aims to establish the joint and relative effects of the independent variables: education, the LPI, LSM, age, as well as race, employment status, geographic location and gender; using a series of dummy variables for the latter four categorical variables on the three dependent variables: structural, individualistic, and fatalistic perceptions respectively.

To achieve these aims I employ a multivariate regression. Multivariate regression analysis is a tool that examines the correlation of a set of independent variables on a dependent variable. Moreover, it helps determine how well the entire set of predictors correlates with the dependent variable. In addition, a multivariate regression is able to identify the correlation between a specific independent variable and the dependent variable, while at the same time controlling for all other independent variables. The present study tested three regression models which determined the impact of independent variables on the three dependent variables: 1) structural, 2) individualistic and 3) fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

#### ***Examining statistical assumption violations***

Before the multivariate regression analysis was conducted, I screened the variables in the data set for possible statistical assumption violations, for missing values and outliers. The results of this analysis reveal that there were very few missing values reported for all the variables. The data was also normally distributed with all the P-P plots looking reasonably normal since the data points are all close to or on the diagonal lines (Appendix J). In addition, the skewness and kurtosis values were almost all within the acceptable range of -1 to +1 thus indicating a normal distribution.

Next the collinearity among the independent variables is assessed. It is important to note that collinearity poses problems for multivariate regressions. For example high levels of multicollinearity or high intercorrelations among the independent variables reduces the size of the multiple correlation, it makes the interpretation very difficult and it increases the regression coefficient variance which leads to unstable regression equations. A review of the tolerance statistics of the three multiple regressions reveal that not a single tolerance value for any of the variables in all the multiple regressions were found to be less than or equal to 0.01. The variance inflation factor (VIF) is another measure of collinearity. The results of the VIF also revealed that all the values for all three multiple regressions were less than 10 which imply no multicollinearity among the independent variables.

In addition, the conditional index for each of the three multiple regressions showed that none of the independent variables is equal or greater than 30. The conditional index measures how 'dependent' one independent variable is on another. Thus on the basis of the tolerance and VIF statistics as well as the conditional index one can conclude that multicollinearity is not a problem, and hence the implementation of the three multiple regressions. The results of the three multiple regressions are reported in the next section.

#### **5.4.2.1 Model 1: Explaining structural perceptions of the causes of poverty**

An ordinary least square regression was conducted with the structural perception index as the dependent variable and LPI, age, LSM, education, gender, race, geographical location, and employment status as the independent variables. Dummy variables were entered for gender, race, geographical location, and employment status. More specifically, for race the dummy variables white, coloured and Indian were entered (with black being the implicit reference group). Dummy variables employed and not working were entered for employment status with unemployed being the implicit reference group. Geographic location had dummy variables for urban informal, traditional / tribal areas and rural formal except for urban formal (which acted as the implicit reference group),

while gender had a dummy variable for male (with female being the implicit reference group).

Table 5.11 reports the results of the Model 1: linear regression with the structural index as the dependent variable. The results from the regression analysis indicate a statistically significant regression,  $F(13, 3258) = 10.189, p < .001$ . The model accounts for 3.5 percent (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.035$ ) of the variance in structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. It should be noted that the explanatory power of this linear regression model is quite weak (as indicated by Adjusted  $R^2$ ) and should therefore be interpreted with caution. However, there are several important things to note from this linear regression. First, controlling for all factors simultaneously, the most important determinant of structural perceptions of the causes of poverty are whether people have access to basic necessities as measured by the LPI (.112). Moreover, those respondents who are poor are more likely to ascribe to structural perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Secondly, respondents LSM (-.073) also played a significant role in determining structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. Because LSM correlates negatively (Pearson's  $r = -0.092$ , sig. 01,  $n = 3294$ ) with structural perceptions of the causes of poverty one can conclude that those respondents with a low LSM are more likely to be structural in their perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Thirdly, controlling for black African respondents, being coloured (.107) or Indian (.056) is associated with increased levels of structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. In other words, coloureds and Indians are more likely to ascribe to structural perceptions of the causes of poverty when compared to black African respondents.

Fourthly, those respondents living in traditional areas (-.061) compared to the urban formal areas are less likely to prefer structural perceptions of the causes of poverty.

In total the results show that respondents' LPI (those that lack access to basic necessities), their LSM (those that have a low LSM), race (coloured and Indian respondents were

more structural compare to black Africans) and geographic location (those in traditional areas are less structural than those in urban formal areas) significantly influence structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. I believe these results are extremely interesting, because it appears that economic variables such as the LPI and LSM have a much larger impact on predicting structural perceptions of the causes of poverty than race and geographic location.

**Table 5.11 Regression analysis summary for predicting structural perceptions**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Pearson's r
	B	Std Error	Beta			
(Constant)	3.356	.114		29.547	.000	
Male	-.011	.032	-.006	-.348	.728	-.017
Not working	-.028	.040	-.015	-.685	.493	-.023
Employed	.029	.040	.015	.723	.470	-.003
Urban informal	.033	.075	.008	.434	.665	.034
Traditional areas	-.118	.046	<b>-.061</b>	-2.577	<b>.010</b>	-.007
Rural formal	.013	.069	.003	.189	.850	.041
Coloured	.266	.048	<b>.107</b>	5.523	<b>.000</b>	.111
Indian	.165	.060	<b>.056</b>	2.728	<b>.006</b>	-.002
White	-.065	.059	-.025	-1.105	.269	-.109
Lived Poverty Index	.098	.018	<b>.112</b>	5.445	<b>.000</b>	.122
Education	-.051	.032	-.033	-1.602	.109	-.087
LSM	-.087	.033	<b>-.073</b>	-2.597	<b>.009</b>	-.092
Age	.000	.011	.000	-.011	.991	-.002

*Dependent: Structural Index*

*Note: Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.035 (N = 3498, p < .000) and \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01*

#### **5.4.2.2 Model 2: Explaining individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

An ordinary least square regression was conducted with the individualistic perception index as the dependent variable and LPI, age, LSM, education, gender, race, geographical location and employment status as the independent variables. Dummy variables were entered for gender, race, geographical location, and employment status. These dummy variables are the same variables that were entered for the first regression with the structural index as the dependent variable.

Table 5.12 reports the results of the Model 2, the second linear regression with the individualistic index as the dependent variable. The results from the regression analysis indicate a statistically significant regression,  $F(13, 3273) = 17.048$ ,  $p < .001$ . The model accounts for 6 percent (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.060$ ) of the variance in individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. It is important to note that the explanatory power of this linear regression model is quite weak (as indicated by Adjusted  $R^2$ ) and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Nevertheless, the results of the second regression in Model 2 show that being white (.182) is the most significant predictor of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Furthermore, controlling for black Africans the results demonstrate that white (.182) and coloured (.041) respondents are significantly more individualistic inclined in their perceptions of the causes of poverty.

It is also interesting to note that the LPI (-.082) is another significant predictor of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Moreover, if you lack access to basic necessities you are less likely to ascribe to individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Geographic location plays a significant role in predicting individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. For example, Table 13 reports that compared to urban formal

respondents, the urban informal (.088) and rural formal (.046) respondents are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic dimensions.

Generally the second regression showed that your race group, poverty status, and geographic location significantly influenced individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

**Table 5.12 Regression analysis summary for predicting individualistic perceptions**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Pearson's r
	B	Std Error	Beta			
(Constant)	2.645	.139		18.979	.000	
Male	.026	.039	.011	.662	.508	.030
Not working	.030	.050	.013	.607	.544	.040
Employed	.048	.049	.020	.970	.332	.063
Urban informal	.457	.092	<b>.088</b>	4.953	<b>.000</b>	.048
Traditional areas	.082	.056	.034	1.456	.145	-.101
Rural formal	.215	.084	<b>.046</b>	2.550	<b>.011</b>	.035
Coloured	.126	.059	<b>.041</b>	2.131	<b>.033</b>	.020
Indian	.099	.074	.027	1.341	.180	.021
White	.579	.072	<b>.182</b>	8.068	<b>.000</b>	.206
Lived Poverty Index	-.089	.022	<b>-.082</b>	-4.061	<b>.000</b>	-.146
Education	-.037	.039	-.019	-.931	.352	.054
LSM	.069	.041	.046	1.679	.093	.148
Age	.020	.014	.031	1.513	.130	.074

*Dependent: Individualistic Index*

*Note: Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.060 (N = 3498, p < .000) and \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01*

### 5.4.2.3 Model 3: Explaining fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty

A third ordinary least square regression was conducted with the fatalistic perception index as the dependent variable and LPI, age, LSM, education, gender, race, geographical location, and employment status as the independent variables. Dummy variables were entered for gender, race, geographical location and employment status. These dummy variables are the same variables that were entered for the first two regressions in the previous sections.

Table 5.13 reports the results of the regression model 3 or the third linear regression with the fatalistic index as the dependent variable. The results from the regression analysis indicate a statistically significant regression,  $F(13, 3263) = 5.618, p < .001$ . The model accounts for 1.8 percent (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.018$ ) of the variance in fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Please note that the explanatory power of this linear regression model is quite weak (as indicated by Adjusted  $R^2$ ) and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the examination of the results of the third regression reveals that coloured (0.098) respondents are most inclined to perceive the causes of poverty in fatalistic terms. Furthermore, controlling for black African respondents, coloureds are more likely than black Africans to perceive the causes of poverty in fatalistic terms.

LSM (-0.69) has a significant impact on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Moreover, those respondents with a high LSM is less likely to perceive poverty in fatalistic terms. Conversely, respondents with a low LSM is more inclined to ascribe to fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Access to basic necessities such as water and cash income as measured by the LPI (.055) also play a significant influence in predicting fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. In other words, those respondents that lack basic necessities are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in fatalistic terms.

Geographic location also impacts significantly on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. For instance, controlling for urban formal respondents, those living in rural

formal (-.051) areas are less likely to perceive poverty in fatalistic terms those from urban informal areas (.041) are more likely to ascribe to fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Overall, the third regression demonstrated that their poverty status, race and geographic location significantly impacted on how respondents perceived fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

**Table 5.13 Regression analysis summary for predicting fatalistic perceptions**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Pearson's r
	B	Std Error	Beta			
(Constant)	2.855	.106		26.885	.000	-.022
Male	-.028	.030	-.017	-.936	.350	-.009
Not working	-.037	.038	-.022	-.969	.333	-.005
Employed	.025	.038	.015	.678	.498	.050
Urban informal	.158	.071	<b>.041</b>	2.242	<b>.025</b>	.030
Traditional areas	.008	.043	.004	.186	.852	-.028
Rural formal	-.177	.064	<b>-.051</b>	-2.751	<b>.006</b>	.074
Coloured	.227	.045	<b>.098</b>	5.031	<b>.000</b>	-.029
Indian	.083	.056	.031	1.474	.141	-.036
White	.088	.055	.037	1.599	.110	.078
Lived Poverty Index	.045	.017	<b>.055</b>	2.662	<b>.008</b>	-.071
Education	-.042	.030	-.030	-1.416	.157	-.074
LSM	-.076	.031	<b>-.069</b>	-2.420	<b>.016</b>	.036
Age	.016	.010	.032	1.538	.124	-.022

*Dependent: Fatalistic Index*

*Note: Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.018 (N = 3498, p < .000) and \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01*



## 5.5 CONCLUDING INTERPRETATION

The findings of this study point to several possible conclusions. First, the study suggests that South Africans, in general, perceive poverty from a structural perspective. However, a big proportion of respondents also believe that poverty is attributable to individualistic factors. Fatalistic perceptions of poverty are ranked the lowest of the three poverty perception indices.

Secondly, the results of the secondary analysis in section 5.3 revealed that there are intra-national differences among the various race groups, education levels, types of geographic locations and types of employment status with regard to access to basic necessities as measured by the LPI.

- For example, black African respondents went without basic necessities such as enough food, clean water, medicines, electricity, and fuel to cook and cash income much more than all the other race groups. On the other hand, white respondents almost never went without these basic necessities.
- Furthermore, respondents with lower levels of education lack basic necessities much more than those with higher levels of education.
- The results of the LPI poverty lines also showed that different geographic locations have different levels of access to basic necessities. For example, respondents from rural formal and traditional areas were more likely to go without basic necessities than those living in urban informal and urban formal areas.
- The unemployed and not working respondents are most likely to have gone without basic necessities compared to those who are employed.
- A larger proportion of respondents with a low LSM have “always” or “many times” gone without basic necessities over the past year when compared to respondents with a medium LSM and high LSM.

It is important to note the changing impact of the various predictor variables on the three dependent variables: structural, fatalistic and individualistic index. For example, white significantly predicted the individualistic index, while it had no significant impact on the structural index. It is against this background that I summarize the impact of the various predictor variables on the dependent variables.

Thirdly, the three multivariate regression analyses showed that respondents' poverty status measured by the LPI significantly impacted on all three dependent variables: 1) structural, 2) individualistic and 3) fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Moreover, those respondents with a lack of access to basic necessities were more likely to ascribe to structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty, but less likely to individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Fourthly, LSM impacted significantly on both the structural and fatalistic indices. More specifically, those respondents with a low LSM were more likely to prefer structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. However, LSM had no significant impact on individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Fifthly, race significantly predicted structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Controlling for black African, coloured and Indian respondents were more inclined to prefer structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. Furthermore, being white had the most significant impact on individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. In contrast, coloured respondents were also the most fatalistic in their perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Sixthly, it was demonstrated that respondents living in traditional areas compared to the urban formal areas are less likely to prefer structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. However, controlling for urban formal areas the results show that those in informal urban areas and formal rural areas are more individualistic in their perceptions of the causes of poverty. Geographic location also impacts significantly on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty with those living in rural formal compared to those in urban areas less

likely to perceive poverty in fatalistic terms. Conversely, those respondents from urban informal compare to urban formal respondents were more likely to ascribe to fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Seventhly, the multivariate regressions analyses showed that age, education, employment status and gender did not significantly impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty for all three indices.

Finally, I believe that the results presented in this chapter demonstrated that explaining perceptions of the causes of poverty is considerably more complicated and the various socio-economic and demographic variables all interact in a multidimensional way. A major part of Chapter 6 therefore focuses on the multidimensional ways in which perceptions of the causes of poverty can be explained. In addition, Chapter 6 discusses the shortcomings of the study and explains the larger significance of the results.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I discuss the results of the study along two sets of hypotheses. The first part of this chapter focuses on the first set of hypotheses which explores whether respondents perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic, structural or fatalistic terms or whether they have multiple perceptions. The second part of this chapter discusses the influence of socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, education, LPI and LSM on perceptions of the causes of poverty.

In addition, I agree that the way people perceive the causes of poverty is very complex and that an examination of the different poverty dimensions is needed to gain a full understanding of how these perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed. I reason that poverty perceptions are multidimensional since various factors impact on how individuals explain perceptions of the causes of poverty. For example, I mentioned earlier in the dissertation that the system of apartheid had a devastating impact on the lives of all South Africans and caused widespread poverty among the to be poor. I believe that the system of apartheid continues to impact on how South Africans form their perceptions of the causes of poverty. In addition, I discuss the relevance and value of the study.

#### **6.2 SOUTH AFRICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

The first set of hypotheses tested respondents' perceptions of the causes of poverty according to structural, individualistic and fatalistic dimensions. Consistent with previous research I demonstrated that the respondents in the present study endorsed structural perceptions of the causes of poverty more strongly than individualistic and fatalistic perceptions (Campbell *et al.*, 2001: 423). However, I also found relatively strong support for individualistic perceptions. This finding is comparable with previous research, which

suggests that poverty is perceived in both structural and individualistic dimensions (Bullock *et al.*, 2005: 1134; Hunt, 1996: 312). This complex multidimensional way in which perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed, is not uncommon if one considers that South Africa is a highly unequal society with vast differences between the rich and the poor as well as between white and black Africans in particular.

Note a study based on the Ten Years of Democracy Survey which demonstrated that poverty in South Africa is divided along racial lines and that black Africans and coloureds are more frequently going without basic services and necessities than whites and Indians (Hamel *et al.*, 2005: 352). In addition, the Afrobarometer 2002 survey also suggested that poverty has further deepened in post-apartheid South Africa, and that stark differences in the enjoyment of basic necessities still exist between black Africans and whites (Mattes *et al.*, 2002:14). I want to highlight that both the studies by Hamel *et al.* (2005: 352) and Mattes *et al.* (2002:14) are based on popular perceptions of poverty rather than popular perceptions of the causes of poverty.

I also showed that at the national level respondents are the least fatalistic in terms of perceptions of the causes of poverty. Overall, this result is not surprising because South Africans with a history of racial discrimination and past injustices would perceive poverty more in terms of structural than fatalistic dimensions. I want to note a comparative study based on a South African, Portuguese and Lebanese sample which found that their student sample in general attributed poverty to structural explanations (Nasser *et al.*, 2002: 111). However, I believe that there is variation in opinion among the various race groups or between those who are poor and non-poor. For example, Bègue and Bastounis (2003: 436) argue that members of disadvantaged groups frequently use the fatalistic framework when faced with situations of injustices and victimization to explain perceptions of the causes of poverty. In these instances the individuals perceive unfair discrimination or injustice towards them as a result of bad luck or a mistake. Another study found that Chinese mothers held stronger fatalistic explanations of poverty than Chinese fathers (Shek, 2004: 277).

In the sections that follow I discuss how the different socio-economic and demographic variables impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty. In Chapter 5 I employed three linear regressions to examine the influence of these socio-economic and demographic explanatory variables such as the LPI, LSM, education, race, employment status and geographic location respectively on the three dependent variables: (1) structural, (2) individualistic and (3) fatalistic index<sup>16</sup>. These multiple regression analyses revealed that South Africans' perceptions of the causes of poverty varied according to these explanatory variables.

In addition, the findings from Chapter 5 suggest that South Africans' perceptions of the causes of poverty are much more complex and that the above explanatory variables interact with each other in a unique manner when perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed. It is important to note that although I discuss the impact of the predictor variables separately, each predictor variable interact with the other predictor variables in predicting the dependent variables. For example, the socio-economic variables such as LSM and LPI interact with variables such as race and geographic location in predicting perceptions of the causes of poverty. In the latter part of this chapter I discuss these complex relationships that exist among the various socio-economic and demographic predictor variables. However, before proceeding with the discussion of the results it must be emphasized that three linear regressions examining the relationship between the socio-economic and demographic variables and the structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty should be interpreted with caution because the explanatory power of the three regression models is quite weak (as indicated by Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>).

### **6.3 IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON STRUCTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

The results of the first linear regression (Model 1) with the structural index as the dependent variable showed that the LPI is the most important predictor of structural perceptions. The second best predictor was coloured, followed by LSM, traditional areas

and Indian. The impact of these socio-economic and demographic variables on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty is discussed in this section. I first examine the impact of the economic predictor variables and then the impact of coloured, traditional areas and Indian.

Given South Africa's history of apartheid and its impact on poverty I believe that the LPI and LSM influence perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, I anticipate that access to basic necessities such as water and food (measured by the LPI) determines perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic dimensions. Likewise, I believe that an individual's living standard (LSM) determines perceptions of the causes of poverty according to individualistic, structural, or fatalistic terms. I therefore discuss these two predictor variables together although coloured had a more significant impact than LSM.

However, I first examined the extent of poverty to understand how lived poverty influences perceptions of the causes of poverty. To get a better understanding of who are poor I used the LPI to calculate a number of poverty lines. More specifically, I use the poverty lines to estimate the proportion of people who are going without basic necessities such as enough food to eat, enough clean water for home use and medicines or medical treatment. The results of these poverty lines overwhelming indicate that black Africans are the largest proportion of respondents that go without basic necessities. In contrast, Indians and whites seldom go without these basic necessities. The better educated respondents have more access to basic necessities compared to those with lower education.

I also observed an urban rural bias in terms of access to basic necessities. For example, those respondents living in the urban areas (formal and informal) have more access to basic necessities than those living in rural or traditional areas. Having employment makes a difference when you want to access basic necessities such as food or medicine. For instance, the employed respondents had greater access to these basic necessities than the

unemployed and those who are not working. Unsurprisingly, I found that the respondents with a high LSM were most optimistic about accessing basic necessities, while those respondents with a low LSM were the most pessimistic. The variations among male and female, and different age groups were extremely small. Nevertheless, it appeared that women compared to men are less likely to secure basic necessities.

Having established that there are differences among the various socio-economic and demographic groups in terms of access to basic necessities, I investigated whether these privileges or lack thereof influence respondents' perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, in this section I examine whether the LPI and LSM influence respondents' perceptions of the structural causes of poverty. In order to examine the impact of the LPI and LSM on perceptions of the causes of poverty I review the results of the first linear regression (Model 1).

### **6.3.1 The impact of LPI on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The first linear regression examined the impact of the predictor variables on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. The results show that the LPI is the most important predictor of structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. In other words, controlling for all factors simultaneously, I found that access to basic necessities as measured by the LPI play a significant role - within each race group, age category, within the various geographic locations, LSM categories (high, medium and low), education levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) and employment levels (employed, unemployed or not working) - in how structural perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed. This finding is very interesting because it shows that people who lack basic necessities such as water, food, fuel to cook food, electricity, medicine or medical treatment, and a cash income are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. It is important to note that I indicated in Chapter 5 that those who lack basic necessities are also likely to perceive the causes of poverty in fatalistic terms. For example, LSM and LPI are respectively the second and third most significant predictors of fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. In the previous section I showed that those respondents who lack



basic necessities are mostly black Africans and coloureds as well as those with a low education, unemployed or not working, and from rural and traditional areas.

The above results seem to corroborate previous research which argued that poor people's perceptions of poverty are clearly interconnected and interrelated within a socio-economic context (Appelbaum et al., 2006: 392; Moore et al., 1998: 3; May et al., 1997: 96). However, I believe the circumstances under which the poor as well as the non-poor live play an important role in shaping their perceptions of the causes of poverty. In this regard, Reutter et al. (2005: 515) reasoned that the personal circumstances of people or people's living conditions are crucial to understanding feelings of marginalization, social exclusion, and experiences of lack of resources. For instance, the current study show that those who lack access to basic necessities and have a low LSM are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms, while those who do not lack access to basic necessities and have a high LSM perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. These contrasting perceptions of the causes of poverty by the poor (predominantly black African and coloured) and the non-poor (predominantly white) illustrate the structural challenges which South Africans face. Moreover, the perceptions of the causes of poverty in structural terms by the poor are a manifestation of the impact of poverty on the lives of many South Africans. For example, in 2003 it was found that about 48.5 percent or 21.9 million of South Africans live below the national poverty line placed at R354 per adult equivalent per month (UNDP, 2003: 41). Further statistics indicate that income poverty is on the increase since the headcount index rose nationally from 32 percent to 34 percent between 1995 and 2002 (Bhorat & Kanbur, 2005: 4).

### **6.3.2. LSM and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty**

In Chapter 5 I showed that the LPI correlated the strongest with LSM. The negative correlation indicates that those respondents who have a high lack of basic necessities have a low LSM. In other words, those respondents who struggle to access basic necessities such as food and water are mainly categorized as those with a low LSM. I want to emphasize that the lack of equal access to resources as well as different living

standards often influence the way people perceive the causes of poverty. For example, I demonstrated in Chapter 5 that LSM play a significant role in determining structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. This section discusses the impact of LSM on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty.

The first linear regression (Model 1) indicated that respondents with a low LSM are more likely to be structural in their perceptions of the causes of poverty. Conversely, respondents with a high LSM are less likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. I believe it is acceptable to assume that people with a low LSM often lack the resources to access goods and services that may improve their living standard. A study by Bullock *et al.* (2003: 695) showed that poor immigrant Mexican women were unable to access good quality education because of a lack of money and transport. However, the study is silent on the fact that the poor immigrant Mexican women did not blame themselves for their inability to access good quality education but rather external conditions such as lack of income and transport.

Another study showed that wealthy people compared to the poor are in a much better position to utilize opportunities within their environment because of their ownership or control of structures such as capital and labour (Smith *et al.*, 1989: 95). I want to emphasize that the wealthy in this case view the optimal use of resources in their environment as a result of individual factors such hard work, drive and motivation.

It is important that I briefly draw attention to the implications that underlie the above two studies by Bullock *et al.* (2003: 695) and Smith *et al.* (1989: 95). These two studies suggest very different approaches to explaining perceptions of the causes of poverty. The study by Bullock *et al.* (2003: 695) for example suggests that the causes of poverty are a consequence of the system, while Smith *et al.* (1989: 95) suggest that the causes of poverty are attributable to the individual. In Chapter 7 I show that these two distinct explanations of the causes of poverty directly impact on how poverty is addressed. For example, a liberal policy may advocate that we need to change the system, while a more conservative policy encourage individual behavioural change.

### **6.3.3 The impact of race on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty**

As I mentioned previously, three multivariate regressions were conducted to examine the influence of the predictor variables respectively on the three dependent variables (structural-, individualistic- and fatalistic index). The first multiple regression analysis revealed that, controlling for black African respondents, being coloured or Indian is associated with increased levels of structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. These results suggest that coloureds and Indians are more structural in their perceptions of the causes of poverty compared to black African respondents. Moreover, coloured and Indian compared to black African respondents believe people are poor because the “distribution of wealth in the society is uneven”, “the society lacks social justice”, “they are exploited by rich people”, and “they lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families”.

This is a contradictory finding because I expected black African respondents to be more structural in their perceptions of the causes of poverty than coloureds and Indians. Although this finding appears to be contradictory I argue later in this section that the circumstances under which South Africans live play an important role in shaping their perceptions of the causes of poverty. For instance, whites with a high LSM and good access to basic necessities perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms, while those with a low LSM and lack of access to basic necessities perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. Previous research in the United States showed that African Americans in general perceive poverty in structural terms, while whites attach more importance to individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty (Hunt, 1996: 312). In addition, studies on popular perceptions of poverty in South Africa indicate that black Africans continue to be the most disadvantaged group in terms of range of socio-economic indicators such as enough food and income to meet all their household needs (Davids, 2006:16; Hamel, Brodie and Morin; 2005: 352; Mattes, Bratton & Davids, 2002: 14).

It is against this background that I suspect lived poverty, which is the most important predictor of structural perceptions of the causes of poverty, to influence the respondents' views. More specifically, it is clear that the impact of race (being white, coloured, Indian or black African) disappeared once I controlled for lived poverty (experiencing poverty as measured by the LPI). What I learn from this result is that access to basic necessities plays a very important role in determining structural perceptions of the causes of poverty among the South African public. I also think it is worth mentioning that LSM is the third most significant predictor of structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. I am therefore convinced that the respondents' living standard and access to basic necessities interacted with race in predicting structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. I want to emphasize that the circumstances under which both the poor and non-poor live impact on their perceptions of the causes of poverty.

#### **6.3.4 Geographic location and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The linear regressions revealed that there are significant differences among the respondents living in different geographical locations in how they predict perceptions of the causes of poverty. The first linear regression analysis showed, controlling for urban formal areas, that those respondents living in traditional areas are less likely to have structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. This result is very surprising because research indicates that poverty in South Africa has a strong urban bias and those in the urban informal areas are less likely to go without basic necessities such as water and food (Mattes et. al., 2002).

The above finding is even more astonishing if I highlight a study on popular perceptions of the causes of poverty by May et al. (2000: 30) which found that there are vast differences in living standards as well as access to basic services between rural and urban areas in South Africa. Another study conducted in Malawi also demonstrated that the causes of household welfare varied by location with urban households in a more favourable position than rural households (Mukherjee & Benson, 2003: 349). Overall, I expected that those respondents from the traditional areas compared to the urban areas to

perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. I based my assumption on the findings of previous studies such as the above two and the results of the current study. For instance, my examination of the extent of lived poverty in South Africa showed that the urban formal areas have the smallest proportion of respondents that have gone without basic necessities over the past year if contrasted to the traditional, rural formal and urban informal areas.

Nevertheless, once the variables such LPI, coloured and LSM are introduced the impact of traditional location becomes less significant in predicting structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, it is clear that the impact of geographic location (living in an urban formal, urban informal, rural formal or traditional area) disappeared once I controlled for lived poverty (experiencing poverty as measured by the LPI), race and LSM. I conclude that access to basic necessities and your living standard play a more important role in determining structural perceptions of the causes of poverty than geographic location.

However, to further clarify the above results I believe that the traditional and rural people are simply so preoccupied with making a living within their immediate environment that they often do not even consider other external barriers, as those people in the cities or urban formal areas will do. In other words, I think when the people from the traditional areas perceive the causes of poverty they often do not consider things such as the “distribution of wealth in the society is uneven”, “the society lacks social justice”, “they are exploited by rich people” and “they lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families”. The point is people in traditional areas most likely compare themselves with other people within their own community. Consequently, they do not consider themselves less privileged because all of them may feel “they are exploited by rich people” or they all “lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families”.

## **6.4 IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON INDIVIDUALISTIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

### **6.4.1 Race and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The second multiple regression analysis showed that, controlling for black African respondents, being white is associated with increased levels of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, white is the most important predictor of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. I think it is important to point out that the individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty (Individual Index) comprised of three items which indicated people are poor because: “they waste their money on inappropriate items”, (2) “they lack the ability to manage money”, and (3) “they do not actively seek to improve their lives”.

I also found that coloured is the fifth most significant predictor of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. But I want to emphasize that the impact of coloured on individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty is less significant than white, urban informal, LPI and rural formal.

I predicted that white South Africans are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. My main argument is that whites benefitted from the system of apartheid. As such whites have higher access to basic necessities, they have a higher living standard than all the other racial groups and they are mostly better educated. These privileged circumstances have placed whites in a more favourable position in which they seldom experience structural difficulties such as lack of good quality schools in the immediate environment (Lund, 2008: 3). It is thus not surprising that whites perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic rather than structural terms.

The results of the present study are consistent with studies conducted in the United States which showed that African Americans in general perceive poverty in structural terms while whites ascribed to individualistic causes (Bullock *et al.*, 2005: 1134; Hunt, 1996:

312). I also discussed in Chapter 3 that there is a clear distinction between the perceptions of the causes of poverty of those people living in a developed country compared to those living in a developing country (Campbell *et al.*, 2001: 424). For example, the people in a developed country such Australia were more likely to attribute the causes of poverty to individualistic characteristics of the poor, while those in a developing country like Malawi perceived the causes of poverty in structural terms. I want to contrast this distinction with the “two nations debate”. According to the “two nations debate” South Africa is a country of two nations where the one is white, predominantly well-off and with better access to employment, education, communication and infrastructure while the other nation is poor, predominantly black and lacks access to opportunities (Faull, 2005: 2).

#### **6.4.2 LPI and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The second linear regression (Model 2) examined the impact of the predictor variables on individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. The results of this linear regression indicate that the LPI is the third most significant predictor of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Moreover, if you lack access to basic necessities such as food you are less likely to perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. Conversely, those respondents who have a high degree of access to basic necessities are more likely to perceive poverty in individualistic terms. My own view is that those socio-economic and demographic groups such as whites and Indians, who have high access to basic necessities, will ascribe to individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty, while African blacks with a lower degree of access to basic necessities will perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. In section 6.4 on race I discuss the impact of white as the most important predictor of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Historically the individualistic perspective has been favoured by the American public because they believe that people are responsible for their own economic situation (Bullock & Limbert, 2003: 696; Smith *et al.*, 1989: 94). This perspective referred to as the individualistic explanation framework attributes poverty to individual level dynamics

such as lack of ability, low intelligence, low ambition, or low morals. Conversely, poverty is not seen as a consequence of external factors but as individual predispositions of the poor (Smith *et al.*, 1989: 94). Also refer to the belief in a just world framework which is based on the assumption that individuals believe that the world is a just and orderly place where people usually get what they deserve (Bègue & Bastounis, 2003: 435; Campbell *et al.*, 2001: 411). According to this framework, for example, people are poor because they fail to work hard. I also want to emphasize that some studies found that the non-poor also condemn perceptions that the poor is lazy, opportunistic and fatalistic (Clarke *et al.*, 2003: 228).

#### **6.4.3 Geographic location and individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The second multiple regression analysis showed that, controlling for urban formal respondents, the urban informal and rural formal respondents are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. More specifically, the urban informal variable is the second most important predictor of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty, while rural formal is the fourth best predictor. I find these results very difficult to explain because of the lack of information on the relationship between geographic location and perceptions of the causes of poverty.

However, my view is that geographic location interacts with a number of other variables when predicting perceptions of the causes of poverty. For example, I believe that the distribution of economic resources within a community or the socio-economic conditions within an area impact on people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. In Chapter 5 I indicated that there is a moderate correlation between geographic location and LSM as well as between geographic location and the LPI. It may be that respondents in the urban informal and rural formal areas have to continuously compete with other community members for scarce resources or resources that are unequally distributed within the community. In this case the individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty are a consequence of the battle to obtain scarce resources. In other words, the continuous struggle to obtain resources may activate perceptions such as you need to work hard to



obtain resources; or if you do not get access to the resources or opportunities within your community you are simply labeled as lazy.

It is interesting to note that the traditional areas had no significant impact predicting individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. I find this result not surprising because traditional areas are normally associated with a high level of communal activities. Moreover, people in traditional societies normally get together to make joint decisions. In addition, the traditional leaders in these areas often make decisions on behalf of the entire community.

## **6.5 IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON FATALISTIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

### **6.5.1 Race and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The third multiple regression analysis demonstrated that, controlling for black African respondents, being coloured is associated with increased levels of fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. The third multiple regression analysis also showed that being coloured is the most significant predictor of fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, I found that LSM, LPI, rural formal and urban informal also significantly predict fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. I therefore reason that coloureds with a low LSM, with a lack of access to basic necessities (LPI), and who live in rural formal and urban informal perceive the causes of poverty mostly in fatalistic terms. Similar results emerged from a previous study based on a South African student sample where coloured respondents also appeared to be fatalistic in explaining the causes of poverty (Nasser *et al.*, 2002: 111). However, I want to note that the same study found South African students compared to the Portuguese and Lebanese students generally have structural perceptions of the causes of poverty.

The findings of the present study about a significant relationship between race and structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions are not unique. As noted previously,

race influences perceptions at cross-country level (Nasser *et al.*, 2002: 111; Campbell *et al.*, 2001: 424), at group level or between ethnic groups (Weiss *et al.*, 2007: 905; Bullock *et al.*, 2005: 1134; Cozzarelli *et al.*, 2001: 224) and at intra-group level (Hunt, 2004: 833; Shek, 2004: 277). Past research has also demonstrated that poverty attitudes and perceptions are shaped by negative racial and ethnic predispositions (Winter, 2006: 402).

### **6.5.2 LSM and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The third linear regression revealed that LSM is the second most significant predictor of fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, those respondents with a high LSM are less likely to perceive poverty in fatalistic terms. In contrast, respondents with a low LSM are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in fatalistic terms. The available research examining fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty is extremely limited, but the few studies I reviewed seem to indicate that the poor are more likely than the non-poor to attribute the causes of poverty in fatalistic terms (Shek, 2004: 273). I also showed that the LPI had a significant impact on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, those who lack access to basic necessities are more likely to perceive poverty in fatalistic terms. It is important to note that I indicated previously that those respondents who lack access to basic necessities and have a low LSM are also likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. Base on the results of the third linear regression I conclude that the influence of LPI as well as LSM on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty is evidence that poorer people are inclined to perceive the causes of poverty in fatalistic terms.

Lastly, I want to suggest that personal exposure to poverty and poor areas as well as personal experience of living in a poor area are important factors in the construction of people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. In other words, that the lack of access to basic necessities and a low living standard impacted on those respondents who perceived the causes of poverty in structural terms. Conversely, one can argue that high access to basic necessities and a high living standard influenced those respondents who perceived the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. Also see the literature review which

showed that studies based on subjective poverty measures or experiences of the poor can help to provide a fuller and more integrated understanding of poverty (May, 2000: 5; May et al., 1997: 96).

### **6.5.3 LPI and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The third linear regression (Model 3) examined the impact of the predictor variables on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. The results of the third linear regression reveal that access to basic necessities such as water and cash income as measured by the LPI also play a significant role in predicting fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. In other words, those respondents that lack basic necessities are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in fatalistic terms. I want to emphasize that those who lack basic necessities are also more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms.

Note that the LPI is the third best predictor of fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty, while being coloured and LSM were the first and second best predictors respectively. More specifically, the poor (those who lack basic necessities) are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty as a consequence of lack of luck, some misfortunate happening, bad fate or because they are born inferior. The results imply that the poorer respondents believe that if you are born inferior or poor your chances of escaping poverty are very limited. The results also demonstrate that those who ascribe to fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty believe people are poor because they are dependent on welfare. In both instances (born inferior and dependent on welfare) a sense of helplessness is detected where the poor are at the mercy of others and unable to control their own destiny.

### **6.5.4 Geographic location and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The third multiple regression analysis showed that, controlling for urban formal areas, those respondents living in rural formal areas are less likely to perceive poverty in fatalistic terms. In addition, urban informal respondents compared to those from urban

formal areas are more likely to ascribe to fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. These results are somewhat surprising because I anticipated the respondents from the rural formal and traditional areas to be significantly more fatalistic in their perceptions of the causes of poverty.

## **6.6 EDUCATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

The results of the three multivariate regressions indicate that education has no significant impact on structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. This is an extremely interesting result because I anticipated that education may influence the respondents' perceptions of the causes of poverty. It appears that LPI, living standard (LSM), race as well as geographic location of the respondents negated the impact of education on perceptions of the causes of poverty.

More specifically, I predicted that respondents with a primary education would be more likely to ascribe to structural perceptions than those with a secondary and post secondary education. For example, when I examined the extent of lived poverty, I found that those respondents who have a primary education were more likely to go without basic necessities. My prediction would have been consistent with a previous study which found that the Americans with low levels of education are much more likely to view the causes of poverty in structural terms, while those with high levels of education are less likely to prefer a structural explanation (Hunt, 2005: 694).

In terms of the influence of education on individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty I expected respondents with a post secondary qualification to be more individualistic in their perceptions. For instance, my assessment of the extent of lived poverty showed that those respondents who have a post-secondary or tertiary education were less likely to go without basic necessities. A study by Wilson (1996: 416), for example argues that higher education or being white or employed enhances individualistic perceptions of poverty. Similarly, Smith and Stone (1989: 100) found that

respondents ascribed wealth to individualistic factors such as hard work, drive, better schools and perseverance.

Finally, I want to emphasize that education can play a role in influencing both individualistic and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. For example, a study by Sun (2001: 167) also investigated the impact of race on perceptions of the causes of poverty and found that white social work students perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms, while white non-social work students perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. In other words, education in the form of social work impacted on perceptions of the causes of poverty.

## **6.7 EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

The results of the three multivariate regressions indicate that employment had no significant impact on structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. This is a surprising result because I expected employment status to play a significant role in predicting individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Numerous studies have indicated a relationship between employment and perceptions of poverty. Most of these studies showed that low-income or unemployed people perceived poverty in structural terms, while the employed are more individualistic in their perceptions of the causes of poverty (Bullock *et al.*, 2005: 1132; Bullock *et al.*, 2003: 705).

Past research also demonstrated that the relationship between economic indicators such as employment and perceptions of the causes of poverty interact with a host of socio-demographic variables. In section 6.3 I showed that the LPI and LSM interact with variables such as employment status and education in predicting perceptions of the causes of poverty. In the next section we explore these interactions or lack thereof in more detail.

## **6.8 MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY**

The review of literature demonstrated that the way poverty is perceived is indeed very complex and that it must be approached from various dimensions. For example, some studies indicated that there are relationships among socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, gender, employment and education in the way they predict perceptions of the causes of poverty (Hunt, 2004: 829; Shek, 2004: 273; Shek, 2002: 790; Sun, 2001: 164).

I found that at the national level South Africans perceive the causes of poverty mostly in structural terms. However, a large proportion of the respondents also perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. A somewhat smaller proportion perceives the causes of poverty in fatalistic terms. The literature review on perceptions of the causes of poverty showed that it is not uncommon for people to ascribe to both individualistic and structural causes of poverty depending on contextual factors such as group or ethnic influence.

When I examined the three dependent variables: structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty separately I found that the impact of the predictor variables varies across each of them respectively. For example, I found that poverty (measured by the LPI) has a dominant impact on structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. On the other hand, LSM has a significant impact only on structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

Furthermore, white compared to black Africans are significantly more individualistic in their perceptions of the causes of poverty, but had no significant impact on structural and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

The three linear regressions found that being coloured compared to black African significantly predicted structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty respectively. The third linear regression showed that being coloured compared to

black African was the most significant predictor of fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

In terms of geographic location, I showed that traditional areas compared to urban areas significantly predicted structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. On other hand, rural formal areas compared to urban areas significantly predicted individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty, but rural formal areas were significantly less fatalistic in their perceptions of the causes of poverty. Also note urban informal areas compared to urban areas also significantly predicted individualistic as well as fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

However, I found that employment and education had no significant impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty. This is surprising because I expected that compared to employed respondents, the unemployed and those not working to significantly predict fatalistic or structural perceptions of the causes of poverty<sup>17</sup>. Two studies showed that low-income or unemployed people perceived poverty in structural instead of individualistic terms (Bullock *et al.*, 2005: 1132; Bullock *et al.*, 2003: 705).

Similarly, I believe that those respondents with lower education would be more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. A study by Sun (2001: 167) found that white social work students perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms, while white non-social work students perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. Note that some studies also found that it is very possible for people with high levels of education to hold both individualistic and structural perceptions of the causes of poverty (Hunt, 1996: 296). This complex and multi-dimensional perceptions are not unusual because some educated people understand issues of structural injustices and may view the poor in a positive light, while others may blame the poor for their poverty situation. The positivist often perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms, while negativist view the causes of poverty in individualistic terms such as lack of hard work or lack of personal drive. Nevertheless, I want to emphasize that the impact of employment and education disappeared once I controlled for the LPI and LSM. In other words, those who lack

access to basic necessities and had a low LSM were more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms.

Overall, the results of the linear regressions suggest that the various predictor variables all interact in a multidimensional manner and simultaneously impact on the way perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed. More specifically, the first linear regression revealed that structural perceptions of the causes of poverty are significantly predicted by the LPI, followed by coloured, LSM, traditional areas, and Indian. The second linear regression showed that individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty are significantly predicted by white, followed by urban informal, LPI, rural formal and coloured. The third linear regression indicated that fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty are significantly predicted by coloured, LSM, LPI, rural formal and urban informal.

To sum up, this chapter demonstrated that poverty is indeed a multidimensional phenomenon. I also want to acknowledge that some predictor variables significantly contributed more towards explaining perceptions of the causes of poverty, while others contributed less or were insignificant. However, it is vital that I indicate that other dimensions such as religion, class, and household characteristics may also play an important role in shaping people's poverty perceptions. For example, households with three or more children at school may struggle more than households with two or less children to pay school fees. However, it is beyond the scope of the present study to include all factors that may impact on how people form their perceptions of the causes of poverty.

## **6.9 LARGER RELEVANCE AND VALUE OF PRESENT DISSERTATION**

In this section I discuss the relevance and value of the results as well as the contribution it makes to poverty policy formulation. In addition, I elaborate on the contribution the present dissertation makes to poverty research in general and the measurement of poverty in particular.



### **6.9.1 Poverty is major priority for the South African government**

The South African government has consistently committed itself to eradicating poverty since 1994. For example, in its third term of democracy, the government outlined an ambitious set of programmes aimed at increasing employment, reducing poverty and inequality, and improving the life of all the citizens (Fraser-Moleketi, 2004: 11). On 8 February 2008 former President Thabo Mbeki in his State of the Nation Address again emphasized the government's goal of improving the effectiveness of interventions aimed at poverty eradication.<sup>18</sup>

Despite government's commitment, I cited various studies to provide support for the notion that poverty and inequality has further deepened in post-apartheid South Africa and as a consequence sustained the socio-economic polarization of the South African society where class and colour dominates. For this reason, I adopted an approach that may further deepen our understanding of how people perceive and experience poverty. Moreover, I anticipate that the findings will generate a body of knowledge that could enable government and poverty eradication agencies to better target their interventions.

### **6.9.2 Measuring poverty versus understanding the causes of poverty**

A review of the poverty literature showed that the scope of research conceptualizing, defining and measuring poverty is far greater than research that determines and explains perceptions of the causes of poverty (Halman *et al.*, 1999: 3). In this dissertation I focus on perceptions of the causes of poverty. By investigating whether the causes of poverty are perceived in individualistic, structural and fatalistic dimensions, I attempt to bridge the gap between studies which focus on perceptions of the causes of poverty and those that concentrate on popular perceptions of poverty as well as those that define and measure poverty.

Nevertheless, numerous studies have indicated the importance of the causes of poverty to inform poverty eradication strategies (Shek, 2004: 273; Halman *et al.*, 1999:3). Some of

these reasons include a better understanding by social scientists of the stigma associated with poverty, information to help researchers understand the impact that people's perceptions could have on welfare and poverty relief programmes, and to make people aware of their own biased perceptions towards the poor.

### **6.9.3 People's perceptions of poverty contribute to pro-poor policy making**

The review of literature demonstrated that the way poverty is perceived is indeed very complex and that it must be tackled from various perspectives. I showed that numerous poverty measures are being employed to gauge the extent of poverty and the impact it has on the lives of the poor. Using a national representative survey I explore whether respondents attribute poverty to structural, individualistic or fatalistic causes of poverty.

Consequently, the approach of the present study is to give voice to ordinary people regarding what they think the major causes of poverty are as a starting point for a more inclusive and informed poverty eradication strategy. Furthermore, I believe that by asking people directly what they think the causes of poverty are is critical towards the development of pro-poor policy making (Roberts, 2006: 103).

### **6.9.4 Lack of data based on people's perception of poverty**

I emphasize the importance of people's lived experiences of poverty as an essential element to formulating policy. The results of the present study is therefore of remarkable value since I produced information that will enhance our understanding of the causes of poverty from a person-centered perspective. However, past research showed that there is a lack of data sources based on people's own perceptions of their living conditions. It is therefore hoped that the present study will help fill this vacuum. In addition, I am of the opinion that this study is unique since it uses a sample which is culturally and socio-economically diverse from the First World samples that have often been used to inform theory and intervention in much of the literature.

### **6.9.5 LPI contribution to the construction of the official poverty line**

In keeping with the practice in many other countries, an official poverty line has been proposed for South Africa to assist in measuring the extent of household poverty and monitoring progress in poverty eradication. In this regard, the approach to measuring poverty of the present study can contribute to the standardization of an official poverty line for South Africa. Methodologically, the findings showed that the LPI as a poverty measure is able to separate the sample into those who are poor and those who are non-poor. Since the index is a unidimensional but multifaceted measure it showed that the poor are struggling to access a range of basic necessities such as enough food and clean water, as well as adequate medical treatment, fuel to cook and cash income.

However, I think it is important to explore how this definition of poverty relates to other definitions of poverty, as there is not always a total overlap among the various poverty definitions and measures. Interestingly, the LPI has already been applied to measure poverty across Southern Africa (Mattes et. al., 2002: 37). In this instance the LPI compared well with international models through its examination of the extent of poverty across the Southern African region.

## **6.10 CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

I believe the findings are extremely significant to understanding people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. Literature revealed that there are three broad theoretical explanations of poverty:

- Individualistic explanations, where blame is placed squarely on the poor themselves;
- Structural explanations, where poverty is blamed on external social and economic forces; and
- Fatalistic explanations, which attribute poverty to factors such as bad luck or illness.

I reason that these structural, individualistic and fatalistic dimensions interact with socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, geographical location, education, LSM, LPI, age, and employment.

In this chapter I show that the circumstances under which the poor as well as the non-poor live play an important role in shaping their perceptions of the causes of poverty. For instance, those respondents who lack access to basic necessities and have a low LSM are more likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms, while those who do not lack access to basic necessities and have a high LSM perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. I believe that these contrasting perceptions of the causes of poverty by the poor and the non-poor are a result of apartheid and its impact on poverty.

I also found that race had a significant impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, I showed that the perceptions of the causes of poverty of the various race groups differ according to the structural, individualistic and fatalistic dimensions. For example, white is the most important predictor of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. I reasoned that whites benefitted from the system of apartheid which placed them in a more favourable position than black Africans and coloureds. Conversely, whites seldom experience structural difficulties such as lack of good quality schools in the immediate environment like their black African and coloured counterparts.

The results of the current study showed that being coloured is the most significant predictor of fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Furthermore, I found that LSM, LPI, rural formal and urban informal also significantly predicted fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. I therefore concluded that coloureds with a low LSM, with a lack of access to basic necessities (LPI), and who live in rural formal and urban informal perceive the causes of poverty mostly in fatalistic terms.

The first linear regression analysis showed that respondents living in traditional areas compared to those in urban formal areas are less likely to have structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. This is a very interesting finding because my examination of the

extent of lived poverty showed that the urban formal areas have the smallest proportion of respondents that have gone without basic necessities over the past year if contrasted to the traditional, rural formal and urban informal areas.

The third linear regression analysis showed that respondents living in rural formal areas compared to urban formal areas are less likely to ascribe to fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. These results are somewhat surprising because I anticipated the respondents from the rural formal and traditional areas compared to the urban formal areas to be significantly more fatalistic in their perceptions of the causes of poverty. I felt that the practice of traditional healers and traditional medicines within the traditional and rural areas would result in more fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty within these areas.

I found that education had no significant impact on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. In spite of my assessment of the extent of access to basic necessities which revealed that a large proportion of respondents with primary education compared to those with tertiary education go without these basic necessities.

Finally, I showed that the relationship of the predictor variables and perceptions of the causes of poverty is considerably more complex and that all interact in a multidimensional manner on how perceptions of the causes of poverty are formed.

In Chapter 7 I highlight the key findings together with major conclusions derived from the study. Chapter 7 is concluded with a set of recommendations which I believe will strengthen the South African government's initi

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa, like the rest of the world, felt the impact of the volatility of the world markets between 2007 and 2009. In particular, steep food and fuel prices, high energy tariffs and increasing interest rates have placed severe pressure on ordinary South Africans already struggling to meet their basic household needs. For example, the price of rice has more than doubled since 2007 and that of wheat, pasta, soya and other staple foods have soared. South Africa's rural poor is most affected with 62 percent of them spending their disposable income on food (Dlamini, 2008). Statistics South Africa argued that the increase in the headline inflation rate between April and May 2008 can be attributed to increases of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food and transport.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the Competition Commission has uncovered a food price fixing scam by big companies, which is further exacerbating the food crisis and over-burdening the poor.

These adverse living conditions elicited criticism from all sectors of South African society. For example, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) is of the view that the South African government's policy of interest rates hikes has had a disastrous impact on the people of South Africa. Cosatu argued that the rate hikes contributed substantially to the slowing down of the South African economy, with devastating consequences such as job losses and increased poverty (Craven, 2007). The Policy Head in the Presidency also indirectly acknowledged that social grants, particularly pension and child support grants, with their current value fail to effectively cushion the poor against the ravages of this price hike wave (Pressly, 2008). Furthermore, the investment study for the Office of the President previously highlighted that South Africa's "levels of mass poverty represents a major constraint to investment, as investors regard the situation as unsustainable" (Naidoo, 2002: 3).

It is against these unstable and deteriorating living conditions that Cosatu warned of food riots as witnessed in other parts of the world. For instance, violent protests were observed in many countries, including Egypt, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Ethiopia, Madagascar, the Philippines and Indonesia as a result of the sharp rise of the cost of basic foods in the first few months of 2008 (SAPA, 2008). Unsurprisingly, Cosatu, in July 2008 organized a protest march against rising costs, which was followed by nation-wide protest action in August 2008. Between June and July 2009 a spate of protest actions over service delivery, unemployment and poverty lead to violent clashes between the police and protestors. For example, people protesting under the newly formed “South African Unemployed People’s Movement” (SAUPM) looted shops for food and demanded that government provide free education, better public health care, and a R1500 monthly grant for the unemployed (AFP, 2009). During the same period the South African Municipal Workers’ Union (SAMWU) and the Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (IMATU) embarked on a nationwide municipal strike to demand a 15 percent wage increase. These municipal strikes were also marked by violence and damage to public property (Prince, Dentlinger, & SAPA, 2009: 5).

Although these violent protests are unacceptable and criticized by government, I believe the protesters gained some justification for their actions when Statistics South Africa announced that the unemployment rate rose to 23.5 percent in the first quarter of 2009 from 21.9 percent in the previous three months. More specifically, a total of 208 000 people living in South Africa lost their jobs between the last quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009 (SAPA, 2009).

This brief introduction of the current global economic crisis and its impact on South Africa is important because I feel it has a direct bearing on the manner and pace at which the South African government responds to the challenges (including wide spread poverty) it faces. In view of the aforementioned, I briefly outline how this study was conducted and then summarize the key findings that emerged from the analyses. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations that may enhance South Africa’s efforts to eradicate poverty.

## 7.2 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

The main focus of this dissertation is to explore how people perceive the causes of poverty. I therefore contextualize in Chapter 1 the importance of a study on poverty. I emphasize that South Africa like most other African countries is also faced with the daunting task of eradicating poverty.

I argue in Chapter 2 that the way one conceptualizes and defines poverty has an impact on how you perceive and interpret the results as well on how comparisons are made with other studies. I also discuss in Chapter 2 the different approaches of how poverty is conceptualized and defined. In addition, I review the key poverty research and projects within South Africa.

In Chapter 3 I review the literature on perceptions of the causes of poverty in order to highlight that poverty is a complex phenomenon that influences the lives of people in a multidimensional manner. In brief, the literature showed that perceptions of poverty differ according to: individualistic perceptions, where blame is placed squarely on the poor themselves; structural perceptions, where poverty is blamed on external social and economic forces; and fatalistic perceptions, which attribute poverty to factors such as bad luck or illness. Furthermore, research has shown that these perceptions interact with socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, geographical location, education, and employment. I therefore critically examine perceptions of the causes of poverty among South Africans as measured by individualistic, structural and fatalistic dimensions and its interaction with these socio-economic and demographic variables.

I explain in Chapter 4 the research design and methodology that was followed in this study to examine people's perceptions of the causes of poverty. More specifically, I employ a national representative survey of 3510 adults aged 18 and older. This survey was conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council between 18 April and 30 May 2006.



In Chapter 5 I present the results, while in Chapter 6 I discuss the results according to two sets of hypotheses. The first set of hypotheses explore whether respondents have individualistic, structural or fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty or whether they have multiple perceptions. The second set of hypotheses discusses the influence of socio-economic and demographic variables such as race, education, LPI and LSM on perceptions of the causes of poverty.

The main aim of the current chapter is to provide recommendations that may improve the plight of the poor. In the next section I highlight the main findings that emerged from this dissertation to contextualize the recommendations.

### **7.3 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS**

It is my view that a number of key findings emerge from the current dissertation. Firstly, I want to highlight the enormous impact of lived poverty in predicting structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. I also want to note that lived poverty has a significant impact on individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Secondly, I must emphasize the dominant impact of white in contrast to black African in predicting individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Thirdly, I need to mention the overwhelming impact of coloured compared to black African in predicting fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty.

But before turning to these three dominant predictor variables, I should like to underline that the series of linear regressions demonstrated that various predictor variables all interact in predicting the dependent variables. I therefore want to highlight a fourth key finding, namely the multidimensional nature of perceptions of the causes of poverty. Almost throughout this dissertation I have demonstrated that how people perceive the causes of poverty are very complex and that at any given time more than one dimensions exists when perceptions of the causes of poverty are explained. However, I mentioned previously that the explanatory power of the three linear regression models is quite weak (as indicated by Adjusted  $R^2$ ) and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

### **7.3.1 Dominant impact of poverty on structural perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The results presented in this study overwhelmingly show that South Africans mostly perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms such as “society lacks social justice”, or “people are poor because they are born in families where there are not many opportunities”. In other words, the causes of poverty are predominantly perceived as a result of external barriers rather than deficiencies or factors at a personal level. The first linear regression (Model 1) showed that LPI is the most significant predictor of structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. Interestingly, the first linear regression also indicated that LSM is the third most significant predictor of structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. I therefore concluded that those respondents who lack basic necessities (high on LPI) and have a low living standard (Low LSM) are more likely to perceive poverty in structural terms.

Furthermore, I feel that poverty cuts across each race group, age category, within the various geographic locations, LSM categories (high, medium and low), education levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) and employment levels (employed or unemployed) in influencing structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. It is therefore important that I emphasize that my analysis of the extent of poverty within South Africa found that the following groups mostly lack access to basic necessities: black Africans, people with lower levels of education, those from rural formal and traditional areas, those who are unemployed and not working, and those with a low LSM.

Because of the lack of basic necessities I am convinced that South Africans in general and the poor in particular believe that structural causes of poverty must be a priority in order to eradicate poverty. This viewpoint is acceptable against past discriminating policies and laws, because the apartheid government has restricted the historically disadvantaged (of which the poor, coloured and black African groups form the majority) from accessing, for instance, better employment opportunities, good quality education and medical care. In addition, basic services such as access to water, refuse removal and

electricity, although improving, are still at unacceptable levels in disadvantaged areas (Lund, 2008: 3).

### **7.3.2 Dominant impact of white on individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The second regression analysis (Model 2) explored the impact of the predictor variables on individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. The results from this regression analysis clearly showed the dominant impact of white compared to black Africans in explaining individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Moreover, white is the most significant predictor of individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. Previously in this dissertation I argue that most white South Africans benefitted from the system of apartheid. As a result whites seldomly experienced the structural difficulties such as poor neighbourhoods with poorly resourced schools as their black African and coloured counterparts did. I therefore believe that the predominant individualistic perceptions among whites of the causes of poverty are a result of an apartheid policy environment which has created a white middle class society.

Adopting an individualistic stance towards the causes of poverty is often associated with negative racist or sexist stereotypes (Underlid, 2005: 274). In these instances the individualistic framework is used to explain poverty from a cultural perspective where the poor are seen as a group of people with a distinct set of values and behaviours. From this perspective the poor are normally perceived as lazy and responsible for their own poverty status. In other words, from the culture of poverty perspective the poor are often perceived in a negative manner (Auletta, 1982: 12; Hunt, 1996: 312).

However, non-poor people or those who are wealthy often attribute their success or privileged situation to personal characteristics such as hard work, motivation and drive. In this instance, the causes of poverty are perceived as a result of positive individualistic actions or behaviours. It is important that I emphasize the distinction between positive and negative individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty because it may impact

on the psychological state of mind of both the poor and non-poor. In addition, the positive and negative individualistic perceptions may also influence the formulation of poverty eradication policies.

In the recommendation section I indicate that those who attribute poverty to negative individualistic perceptions (such as the poor are lazy) often prefer policies such as in-kind transfers to assist or help the poor. However, Lang (2007: 80) made the point that in-kind transfers often identify the poor in a very embarrassing manner that nullifies the anticipated impact. For example, Lang states that “poor students may refuse free school lunches because receiving the lunches will reveal that they are poor”. In other words, the poor students often refuse free lunches because of stigmatization. I therefore consider the psychological impact of poverty to be equally as important as the socio-economic impact of poverty.

### **7.3.3 Dominant impact of coloured on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty**

The findings from the linear regressions showed that being coloured compared to black African significantly predicted structural, individualistic and fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty respectively. However, the impact of coloured compared to black African to predict structural perceptions of the causes of poverty (Model 1) is less significant than the LPI. Similarly, the impact of coloured controlling for black African to predict individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty (Model 2) is less significant than white, urban informal, LPI, and rural formal. It is interesting to note that the third linear regression (Model 3) found that being coloured compared to black African was the most significant predictor of fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty. The third linear regression imply that coloureds are more likely to ascribe the causes of poverty to factors such as “lack of luck”, “they are born inferior” and “they are not motivated because of welfare”. The dominant impact of being coloured on fatalistic perceptions of the causes of poverty has important policy implications which I discuss in the next section.

## 7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several key findings that I can draw from the present study of which all may contribute to our understanding of perceptions of the causes of poverty. However, it is my opinion that the three perceptions of the causes of poverty scenarios that I presented in the previous section represent three distinct approaches of how to deal with poverty. I classify the three approaches as the (1) Liberal Approach, (2) Conservative Approach and (3) Neutral Approach.

- In essence, those who favour the Liberal Approach, for example, believe that poverty eradication require large scale government assistance to change the system. In other words, liberalists view poverty as a result of external factors.
- Those who favour the Conservative Approach, for example, think that individual (personal) behavioural changes are necessary to enable those who are perceived as poor to help themselves.
- Proponents of the Neutral Approach believe that there is very little that one can do to help the poor and that a wait and see strategy is best. Those who advocate the neutral approach often feel that poverty is a result of bad luck or bad fate.

These are very simplistic descriptions but I introduced the liberal and conservative approaches in Chapter 3 and elaborate further on these approaches later in this section. The Liberal Approach and the Conservative Approach are essentially two ideological perspectives in the United States that represent the “Democrats” on the one side and the “Conservatives” on the other<sup>20</sup>.

In the context of the current study the liberal approach must not be seen as synonymous with the individualistic approach. I therefore want to reiterate that the Liberal Approach in the South African context is normally described as the social democratic perspective. A social democratic resolution was suggested well before the 1990’s as the most viable

post-apartheid option to create a humane and political future for South Africa (Southall, 1990: 489). Even today trade unions such as COSATU are continuing to advocate that economic and social challenges such as large scale unemployment and AIDS must be address if South Africans want to achieve social solidarity. From the social democratic perspective electorally aware leaders may often opt for high levels of social investment. Natrass (2003: 9), for example, reviewed the support that exists for the introduction of a basic income grant (BIG) in South Africa and found that even political parties like the Democratic Alliance (DA) and to the socialist left were in favour of such a grant. It is against this background that I associate the social democratic perspective in South Africa with the Liberal Approach.

In contrast, I consider the neoliberal policy framework as synonymous with the Conservative Approach. The neoliberal economic policy framework advocates growth, economic reform and development through policies such as the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers to international trade, the reduction of direct subsidies to consumers for food and government services (health care, education, housing, electricity, water and so on), restricting labour rights, selling state-owned enterprises and entrenching private property rights. In addition, the neoliberal liberal framework advocates lower government spending and accelerated debt payments (Basset, 2008: 2).

I do not consider the Conservative Approach (neoliberal in South Africa) better than the Liberal Approach (social democratic perspective in South Africa). In fact, each approach has merit and help us understand how people form their perceptions of the causes of poverty. But I do want to emphasize that the position one advocates has as much to do with judgment and values as with facts.

However, I believe that a multi-dimensional approach is necessary to eradicate poverty. This multi-dimensional approach may entail in some instances a combination of liberal and structural strategies to eradicate poverty. For example, creating access to education by building schools in poor areas can be considered as a liberal approach because it addresses structural difficulties. At the same time government can implement parenting

programmes to improve the education skills of parents to help their children of school going age. This strategy is focused on skills improvement of people at a personal level and may be considered as a conservative approach. I want to reiterate that I do not think these various approaches to the eradication of poverty are mutually exclusive and therefore suggest a multi-dimensional approach to tackle poverty in all its manifestations. For example, in Chapter 2 I emphasize that poverty is multi-dimensional and as such adopted the Lived Poverty Index (LPI), a uni-multidimensional poverty measure to capture the various dimensions of poverty.

It is therefore most heartwarming to be able to highlight that the South African government adopted a multi-dimensional definition to define poverty. This is confirmed by the latest Discussion Document on an Anti-poverty Strategy for South Africa:

*Poverty is understood as a deficiency in an individual's socio-economic capabilities. Its manifestations include factors such as income, access to basic services, access to assets, access to information, and access to social networks or social capital. This broad approach to poverty allows for the engagement with the reality of poverty and the combination of things that should be done to deal with it (Anti-poverty Strategy Discussion Document: 4)<sup>21</sup>.*

Although this multi-dimensional definition to define poverty will help the government to improve its efforts to eradicate poverty, much more is needed to satisfy the South African public against a background of deteriorating living conditions and the current global economic crisis. At this point I want to acknowledge that the priorities identified by President Jacob Zuma in his State of the Nation Address on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2009 are extremely vital in the war on poverty<sup>22</sup>. It is clear that these priorities aim to address the broad spectrum of how poverty and all its dimensions manifest. I have decided to focus on job creation, social security and community development particularly among the historically disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, I present a range of strategies to tackle poverty within poor communities. I base my recommendations on the results of the

present study which indicate that those who lack basic necessities are predominantly living in poor communities, in rural formal and traditional areas, are mostly black African or coloured, unemployed or not working, and with lower levels of education.

To summarize, I recommend that interventions should be targeted towards the unemployed in order to provide the poor with the necessary cash to obtain basic necessities and to maintain an adequate living standard. Social security should be provided for those who are eligible but unable to find work or those who are unable to work, such as the disabled. In the last instance I suggest a multi-dimensional approach where the identified poor communities are assisted through a well coordinated programme of action that will benefit all members of such a community.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the South African government is committed to protecting the poor and sustaining employment growth. For instance, government's social grants programme has grown and now covers about 13 million beneficiaries. This is mainly due to the expansion of the social grants system by (1) increasing the eligible age for a child support grant to children up to 15 years, (2) revising the means test to cover a larger proportion of households, and (3) lowering the eligible age for men for the old age pension to 60. As a result the spending on social assistance is projected to rise by 10.2 percent a year, from R71 billion in 2008/09 to R95 billion in 2011/12.<sup>23</sup>

#### **7.4.1 Job creation**

The diminishing living conditions pose a real threat to South Africa's new-found democracy and may reverse the many socio-economic advances the democratic government has made since 1994 to improve the quality of life of its citizens. It is therefore important that research on poverty be continued and accelerated. More importantly, these research projects must inform poverty eradication policies.

I showed that access to basic necessities such as food, water and cash income significantly impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty. Using the LPI I found that



large proportions of the South African population live in poverty. The lived poverty is particularly evident among black Africans, coloureds, the unemployed, rural and informal dwellers, people with a low LSM, and those with lower levels of education. It is against this widespread poverty that I recommend that government step up their efforts to improve economic growth to create more jobs. I believe the lack of access to basic necessities is mostly driven by lack of cash income. Unfortunately, government's latest Anti-poverty Strategy Discussion Document is too vague or not explicit enough about how employment opportunities will be created with a pro-poor emphasis and how these strategies will protect the poor and marginalized from further being exploited further.

It is my opinion that both those respondents in the present study who perceive the causes of poverty in structural and individualistic terms want to see more jobs created. However, these two groups of respondents differ remarkably in the way they want government to create more jobs. I believe that those respondents who perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms want to see large scale government lead initiatives to address this widespread lived poverty. In this way the respondents support a Liberal Approach which suggests that fundamental economic reforms and redistribution are necessary to eradicate poverty.

From this perspective the liberalists promote the notion that wealth be redistributed from those who have to those who do not have. For example, to create jobs the government should impose taxes on private companies, implement profit ceilings and set up employee owned or managed companies. The assumption is that the profits will go to the poor and that investments will be made in labour intensive programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). I want to note that government considers the EPWP as an employment strategy aimed at people with low skills levels and education. I do not think it is an effective response to the unemployment crisis, but I do admit that government views the EPWP as a vehicle to develop infrastructure, to deliver services and to provide the poor with the opportunity to learn new skills that will make them employable to gain longer term jobs. Nevertheless, much more is needed if government wants to create long-term sustainable employment.

In contrast, to the liberalistic view those respondents who perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms want to see job creation through improved economic growth and foreign direct investment. It is interesting to note that the South African government implemented GEAR to create economic growth which would be the impetus for job creation. More specifically, it was reasoned that economic growth will lead to the creation of more than a million jobs through which redistribution would be achieved (Everatt, 2005:5). Nevertheless, GEAR was unable to improve the lives of the poor because of the low levels of public and private investment, low skills among the unemployed, lack of access to seed capital, and lack of spatial and social cohesion.

Despite the failure of programmes such as GEAR I believe the individualists prefer that government cut taxes and lower trade tariffs in order to create more jobs. I previously indicated that those respondents that perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms can be regarded as proponents of the Conservative Approach which argue that tax policies that benefit the poor are counterproductive because they create dependency. More specifically, the conservatives believe that this creates a feeling that society owes the individual a living (Auletta, 1999: 338). It is therefore not surprising that respondents who perceived the causes of poverty in individualistic dimensions agreed that “poor people are poor because: 1) they lack the ability to manage money, 2) they waste their money on inappropriate items, and 3) they do not actively seek to improve their lives”.

In Chapter 3 I indicated that people who perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms often prefer a conservative approach to poverty eradication, while those who perceive poverty in structural terms prefer a liberal approach. Auletta (1982: 18), for example suggested that the liberals believe you have to change the system and the conservatives argue you have to change the individual. From this perspective, I argue that those who subscribe to individualistic perceptions of the causes of poverty appear to advocate individualistic solutions to the poverty crisis. For example, individual drive, initiative, good money management and not being wasteful can be considered essential ingredients for any business to be financially successful or for young entrepreneurs to

succeed. There is no doubt that hard work and good money management will contribute to the improvement of economic conditions of the poor. Nevertheless, I must emphasize that focusing solely on individual causes of poverty is extremely limiting. For instance, it is very difficult to improve your educational qualifications if you do not have access to educational institutions and do not have the necessary resources to pay for this education.

In this section I argued that employment creation is very important if the South Africa government wants to eradicate poverty. Although both the respondents who perceive the causes of poverty in structural and individualistic terms want to see more jobs created, they tend to disagree on how these jobs must be created. I believe the differences between these two groups have important implications on the policy formulation process.

#### **7.4.2 Social security**

One way to ensure that vulnerable groups such as the unemployed and disabled have money to access basic necessities is to provide social security assistance. I want to indicate that the liberalist (social democrats) most often recommend the implementation of wide scale social security support such as a Basic Income Grant (BIG). Borat (2002: 9) argues that BIG is necessary because the current grant transfers by the state are assisting not only the direct recipients, but also those individuals who live in the households with them. In addition, he argues that the grant transfers by the South African government are completely insufficient to act as a significant lever for reducing household poverty levels. Natrass (2003: 9) believes that a BIG of R100 per month for all South Africans could contribute substantially to reducing poverty and inequality and that BIG would also waste fewer resources on bureaucracy. In contrast, the South African government has been reluctant to implement the BIG because it is concerned with the “handout nature” of the grant which may create dependency. Natrass (2003: 9) also argues that those who are against BIG believe people are obliged to work. It is therefore evident that there are differences of opinion between the liberalists and conservatives about the advantages and disadvantages of social security which I discuss further in this section. Nevertheless, social security is without a doubt the most powerful poverty

eradication mechanism in South Africa. For instance, the South African government created a single Social Security Agency (SASSA) to manage the financing and provision of grants.<sup>24</sup>

Despite increased social security some analysts have suggested that it is not adequate and should be expanded to cover the working poor, those people with seasonal or cyclical jobs, and people in the informal sector (Naidoo, 2002: 2). Similarly, the Taylor Committee on Social Security emphasized the introduction of broad based social support such as a BIG that would successfully reduce poverty. Furthermore, it is recommended that the child support grant be extended to children aged 18 and older.<sup>25</sup>

The South African government is wary that the provision of social grants must be linked to jobs or economic activity in order to encourage self-reliance amongst the able-bodied. Failing to link social grants with jobs may create dependency on the state and discourage the unemployed to seek gainful employment. There is also a concern that the increasing social expenditure will become unaffordable for the state. These are some of the reasons why the proponents of the conservative approach often oppose the provision of social security. In general, I believe that those respondents who perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms will be against the implementation of social security and other similar strategies. Auletta (1999: 338) argues that the conservatives (individualists) worry that the provision of social security such as cash transfers will undermine initiative, encourage family dissolution, reduce hours of work and increase dependency. Lang (2007: 78), on the other hand, reasoned that there is sometimes merit in preferring in-kind transfers. For example, in the United States the government implemented school lunch programmes and some medical care programmes to target children. I mentioned in Chapter 3 that in South Africa children under six and pregnant women receive free basic health care at public clinics and health centres, and there are also school feeding schemes in place in some schools.

Conversely, the liberals recommend social security in the form of cash-transfers such as BIG because they feel it will get rid of the high costs of administering welfare

payments. There are a number of factors that contribute to the costs of welfare payments such as means testing and interviewing the potential recipients. In addition, if we remove means testing altogether it will support the idea that welfare is not a privilege but a right. I argue that liberalist or the proponents of the BIG believe that it is everyone's right to earn a basic income whether they work or not. Furthermore, the liberalists reason that it is wrong for the conservatives to assume that everyone wants to work. The liberalists argue that some people do not want to work. Others work but still claim unemployment, while some unemployed people indicate that they make more money on the street than if they were to work (Auletta, 1999: 339).

In this section I reason that those respondents who perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms maybe against the implementation of social security, while those who perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms perhaps see social security as fundamental to poverty eradication. Based on the results of the present study I believe that whites may discourage the provision of social security and those who are poor (lack access to basic necessities and low LSM) will possibly welcome social security. I want to emphasize that other socio-economic and demographic variables may interact with race in predicting perceptions of the causes of poverty. For instance, Sun (2001: 167) found that white social work students perceived the causes of poverty in structural terms, while the white non-social work students perceived the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. The differences in the perceptions of poverty among the white social and non-social work students were therefore attributed to the influence on social work education. Nevertheless, in the present study education had no significant impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty.

My view is that coloured respondents may also favour social security, especially those who lack access to basic necessities, with low LSM, is from rural formal and urban informal areas. Coloureds were more fatalistic than all the other race groups because they may have lost hope of any improvement in their lives. The feelings of hopelessness among coloured people may be attributed to the belief that both the apartheid and democratic regime failed to address their concerns. Moreover, coloured people often

argue that black Africans are benefiting more from democracy (particularly through affirmative action policies) even though both groups were denied political and economic rights under the apartheid regime. As a result, the poor coloured respondents may think that it is their destiny to be poor and that they have no choice but to depend on welfare to meet their basic household needs.

It is important to note that policies have trade-offs. In other words, it is evident that the provision of social security in any form has advantages and disadvantages. In my discussion I did not discourage or encourage the provision of social security. I simply pointed out that there are fundamental differences between those who promote social security and those who are against it.

### **7.4.3 Community Development**

I recommend that for poverty eradication to be effective government must help poor communities in a holistic manner. The provision of low skills jobs and social security can be considered as short-term interventions with the main aim of providing support to the poorest of the poor. Although these interventions play an essential role in alleviating the plight of the poor, it is in essence survivalist in nature. The eradication of poverty requires both short-term and long-term interventions. What is needed to eradicate poverty are longer-term interventions that empower the poor to lift themselves out of poverty. In this section I therefore focus on longer-term strategies to help poor communities improve their living conditions and overall living standard.

#### **7.4.3.1 Improved service delivery and infrastructure development**

The results overwhelmingly show that those who lack access to basic necessities predominantly perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms, while those who are white mostly perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms. In other words, the poor feel that external barriers or structural causes of poverty continue to prevent them

from improving their lives. Examples of structural causes include “the lack of opportunities within the external environment” and “poor household circumstances”. I therefore suggest that the provision of basic services and infrastructure development in historically disadvantaged communities should be a priority if the South African government wants to address poverty and related socio-economic problems such as crime, drug abuse and violence.

In other words, I want to recommend that the South African government’s poverty eradication policies and strategies must target those poor communities directly and work closely with citizens living in these communities. It is therefore important to ask how well government has done up to now in tackling poverty. Although some research show that access to water, energy for cooking and lighting, sanitation and refuse removal significantly improved from 1996 to 2001 (Leibbrandt, *et al.*, 2005: 24), much more is needed if you consider the large proportion of respondents from the present study who perceive poverty in structural terms. A study by Burger (2005:483) “distinguishes between service outputs and service outcomes, where the first term refers to merely quantities and the second is a more encompassing term that asks how service delivered has actually improved lives, thus incorporating quality dimensions.” I therefore argue that government expenditure on service provision does not necessarily lead to improved outcomes. Moreover, the poor or those who lack access to basic necessities want to see tangible differences in quality of service delivery by the state institutions.

The distinction between service outputs and service outcomes is also a possible explanation why respondents from traditional areas in contrast to those from urban formal areas are less likely to perceive the causes of poverty in structural terms. I anticipated the perception of those respondents from urban formal areas rather than those from traditional areas to be structural in their perceptions of the causes of poverty. Nonetheless, I think the respondents from the formal urban areas do have high access to basic services but they are extremely unhappy about the quality of the service. The spate of municipal demonstrations in the past two years is testimony that most people including residents in urban areas are extremely dissatisfied with the delivery of services (Prince,

Dentlinger, & SAPA, 2009: 5). I therefore want to recommend that the South African government and its developmental partners better target the poor with services such as subsidised housing, water, electricity, refuse removal and sanitation. This will be in line with government policy of subsidizing basic services to those people (particularly the poor) who are unable to pay for these basic services altogether.

The provision of subsidized basic services can be achieved through the local government structures such as the metropolitan, district and local municipalities. More specifically, municipalities are expected to play a major social and economic developmental role that goes beyond service delivery. The integrated development planning (IDP) is the key strategy to identify the needs of the community. In other words, government should be praised for putting structures in place to serve the public. However, up to now the work of the municipalities has been hamstrung by lack of capacity, which often resulted in poor service delivery.

I want to emphasize that poor service delivery cannot be exclusively attributed to capacity constraints, because a number of other factors such as corruption among government officials and lack of community participation may also impact on service delivery. I therefore recommend that community members participate in the affairs of the municipalities. In addition, I want municipal councils to create a culture of public service among their staff and empower community members to interact with their municipalities to address their concerns. Moreover, citizens should be encouraged to participate in community structures such as neighbourhood watches or street committees. Through these structures people can at least exercise some measure of control over decisions that affect their lives.

Even more importantly, participation in these structures fosters a culture of democratic participation which is not only crucial to hold government officials accountable but also to prevent people from thinking that government is the only source of service delivery. I believe public participation will be very challenging for members of poor communities because they expect state intervention to address structural barriers rather than individual behavioural change. In many instances, the poor communities simply do not have the



necessary resources, skills, energy and time available to engage with the state. For instance, the effects of poor health among poorer communities manifest in various ways, and within households are often associated with diminished ability to obtain work and to generate income (Brock, 1999: 3).

#### **7.4.3.2 Improving access to education within poor communities**

Although education had no significant impact on perceptions of the causes of poverty, I found that those respondents who lack access to basic necessities normally had lower levels of education. The South African government advocates education as a long-term solution to the poverty. I therefore want to recommend that government invest in school infrastructure particularly within poor communities, that poor households receive financial assistance to pay for all education related expenses and that public transport be provided to access schools and other educational facilities. These infrastructure developments must be made against the perception that those who lack access to basic necessities perceive poverty in structural terms.

In addition, it is recommended that parents with lower levels of education be assisted to help their children with learning problems or be trained to help their own children to improve their performance at school. This strategy may be popular among those who perceive poverty in individualistic terms. In other words, it recommends changes at a personal level rather than environmental or external changes.

#### **7.4.3.3 Investment in health within poor communities**

The lack of resources and lack of opportunities have a negative impact on the lives of the poor and in particular impact negatively on their health. Government must therefore ensure that poor communities and households have greater access to health facilities and health care. In other words, strategies must be put in place at community level that ensure

that poor children grow up healthy, that good quality care and efficient preventative and curative care is provided. These suggestions will enhance structural perceptions of the causes of poverty. On the other hand, those who attribute the causes of poverty to individualistic perceptions are more likely to support in-kind transfer strategies like free basic health care for children under six and pregnant women as well as school feeding schemes for children from poorer communities.

It is comforting to learn that government will introduce a National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme, transform public hospitals through Public-Private Partnerships; and address the remuneration of health professionals to remove uncertainty among health workers.<sup>26</sup> However, those opposed to the NHI argue that the public health care must first address problems such lack of resources and understaffing before any transformation can take place (Paton, 2009: 34).

#### **7.4.3.4 Access to housing within poor communities**

Access to assets is another strategy that has been identified to improve economic and social security. It is envisaged that the provision of assets such as housing, land and capital, including public infrastructure, will form the basis for economic engagement in the long run. In this regard, community infrastructure is an important form of assets for the poor. To this end President Zuma indicated that the Urban Renewal and Integrated and Sustainable Rural Development programmes will be boosted by focusing on more targeted interventions.

Based on the arguments advanced in the literature and the present study it is recommended that government should further strengthen its assistance to people to obtain housing or provide subsidized housing schemes. The provision of housing will improve the living conditions of the poor and particularly of those people without homes.

#### **7.4.3.5 Social inclusion and social capital**

The distinction between individualistic and structural perceptions has particular significance for South Africa with a history of racial discrimination since the present study found that the historical disadvantaged groups (black Africans and coloureds) believe that poverty is a consequence of structural factors such as the distribution of wealth in the society that is uneven and that society lacks social justice. On the other hand, the advantaged groups (for example whites) believe that poverty is a consequence of individual factors such as poor money management.

I believe that those respondents who attribute poverty to structural perceptions clearly believe that South Africa still lacks social justice and that there are vast differences among the various groups. These results require government intervention. I want to recommend that government implement programmes that will enhance a more inclusive and integrated society. I believe it is important that integration and engagements across class and race be encouraged as well as community solidarity in communities and the society as a whole. This may strengthen social capital for the poor so as to expand their networks to gain greater access to information.

More specifically, I want to recommend programmes that focus on people's exposure to the poor and poverty. A study by Wilson (1996: 417), for example, found that formal learning about poverty and long-term relationships with poor people were seen as more effective in creating positive attitudes than brief encounters with the poor (Wilson, 1996: 417). In this regard, the non-poor in South Africa who believe that the poor are poor because they waste their money on inappropriate items, they lack the ability to manage money and they do not actively seek to improve their lives will benefit from these type of poverty exposure programmes.

Overall, the government of South Africa should be acknowledged for shifting their policies and strategies from a maintenance approach to a more sustainable or long-term approach where the focus is on empowering people's capabilities to contribute to

improving their own well-being. However, much more is needed to enhance the quality of life of all South Africans. The results presented in this dissertation provide a step in a new direction of how to measure people's own perceptions of the causes of poverty. I hope this approach will ultimately help improve the future performance of the South African government with regard to poverty eradication.

The results should not be construed as an authoritative view on poverty eradication on its own. The scope of this dissertation does not allow room to comment on all the strategies of government. Thus it is emphasized that the results should be seen as complementing other similar studies which aim to inform poverty eradication initiatives and programmes. It is against this background that the recommendations are presented with the hope of improving the quality of life of all South Africans.

## **7.5 CONCLUDING COMMENT**

It is my opinion that the present study is relevant in many ways and makes a unique contribution at both a methodological and policy level. Methodologically, the findings showed that the LPI may contribute to the proposed poverty line suggested for South Africa. In keeping with other countries it is envisaged that the proposed poverty line will assist in measuring the extent of household poverty and monitoring progress in poverty eradication.

In addition, I presented results of how ordinary citizens perceive the causes of poverty. The advantage of this approach is that the population at large plays an active role in informing poverty eradication policies. For instance, I showed that those respondents who have liberal or social democratic views most often recommend the implementation of wide scale social security support such as a BIG. In contrast, those respondents that perceive the causes of poverty in individualistic terms or have conservative or neoliberal views argue that tax policies that benefit the poor are counterproductive because it creates dependency and a feeling that society owes the individual a living.

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**Appendix A  
Survey Questions**

**SECTION 1  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

**10. Poor people are poor because:** *[Read out options] [Interviewer: Probe for strength of opinion]*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) They lack the ability to manage money.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) They waste their money on inappropriate items.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) They do not actively seek to improve their lives.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) They are exploited by rich people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) The society lacks social justice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) Distribution of wealth in the society is uneven.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) They lack opportunities due to the fact that they live in poor families.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) They live in places where there are not many opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) They have bad fate.	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) They lack luck.	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) They have encountered misfortunes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
l) They are not motivated because of welfare	1	2	3	4	5	6
m) They are born inferior	1	2	3	4	5	6

**SECTION 2  
LIVED POVERTY INDEX**

**11. Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or your family gone without:**  
*[Read out options]*

	Never	Just once or twice	Several times	Many times	Always	Don't Know
a) Enough food to eat?	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) Enough clean water for home use?	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) Medicines or medical treatment?	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) Electricity in your home?	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) Enough fuel to cook your food?	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) A cash income?	1	2	3	4	5	6

**SECTION 3  
RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS**

**64. Sex of respondent [fieldworker observation]**

Male	1
Female	2

**65. Race of respondent [fieldworker observation]**

Black African	1
Coloured	2
Indian/Asian	3
White	4
Other	5

**66. Is the respondent disabled [fieldworker observation]**

Yes	1
No	2

**67. Age of respondent in completed years [copy from contact sheet]**

			years
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**68. What is your current marital status?**

Married	1
Widower/widow	2
Divorced	3
Separated	4
Never married	5

**69. What is the highest level of education that you have ever completed?**

**70. What is the highest level of education that your mother ever completed?**

**71. What is the highest level of education that your father ever completed?**

	Error! Reference source not found. <b>You</b>	Error! Reference source not found. <b>Mother</b>	Error! Reference source not found. <b>Father</b>
No schooling	00	00	00
Grade 0	01	01	01
Sub A/Grade 1	02	02	02
Sub B/Grade 2	03	03	03
Grade 3/Standard 1	04	04	04
Grade 4/Standard 2	05	05	05
Grade 5/Standard 3	06	06	06
Grade 6/Standard 4	07	07	07
Grade 7/Standard 5	08	08	08
Grade 8/Standard 6/Form 1	09	09	09
Grade 9/Standard 7/Form 2	10	10	10
Grade 10/Standard 8/Form 3	11	11	11
Grade 11/Standard 9/Form 4	12	12	12
Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric	13	13	13

NTC I	14	14	14
NTC II	15	15	15
NTC III	16	16	16
Diploma/certificate with less than Grade 12/Std 10	17	17	17
Diploma/certificate with Grade 12/Std 10	18	18	18
Degree	19	19	19
Postgraduate degree or diploma	20	20	20
Other, specify	21	21	21
Do not know	22	22	22

**72. Are you a citizen of South Africa?**

Yes	1
No	2

**73. What language do you speak mostly at home?**

**74. What is your mother tongue?**

	Error! Reference source not found. <b>Mostly spoken at home</b>	Error! Reference source not found. <b>Mother tongue</b>
Sesotho	01	01
Setswana	02	02
Sepedi	03	03
Siswati	04	04
IsiNdebele	05	05
IsiXhosa	06	06
IsiZulu	07	07
Xitsonga	08	08
Tshivenda/Lemba	09	09
Afrikaans	10	10
English	11	11
Other African language	12	12
European language	13	13
Indian language	14	14
Other (specify) .....	15	15

**75. What is your current employment status? (WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR PRESENT WORK SITUATION?)**

Unemployed, not looking for work	01
Unemployed, looking for work	02
Pensioner (aged/retired)	03
Temporarily sick	04
Permanently disabled	05
Housewife, not working at all, not looking for work	06
Housewife, looking for work	07
Student/learner	08
Self-employed - full time	09
Self-employed - part time	10
Employed part time (if none of the above)	11
Employed full time	12
Other (specify) .....	13

**76. If you are married or have a partner, what is his/her employment status?**

Unemployed, not looking for work	01
Unemployed, looking for work	02
Pensioner (aged/retired)	03
Temporarily sick	04
Permanently disabled	05
Housewife, not working at all, not looking for work	06
Housewife, looking for work	07
Student/learner	08
Self-employed - full time	09
Self-employed - part time	10
Employed part time (if none of the above)	11
Employed full time	12
Other (specify) .....	13

**HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS**

**Interviewer:** Record one main material used for the roof and walls of the dwelling.  
**[PERSONAL OBSERVATION]**

Type of Material	77. Roof	78. Walls
Bricks	01	01
Cement block/concrete	02	02
Corrugated iron/zinc	03	03
Wood	04	04
Plastic	05	05
Cardboard	06	06
Mixture of mud and cement	07	07
Wattle and daub	08	08
Tile	09	09
Mud	10	10
Thatching	11	11
Asbestos	12	12

Please tell me which of the following, if any, are presently in your household (in working order)? Do you have ...

***Interviewer:*** if the respondent feels uncomfortable about telling you what they have in their house, please remind him or her that all the answers are confidential and that they will in no way be linked to their address or name. If someone has questions about this question, please phone your supervisor or send him or her a clear message to phone you urgently with your name and number (not just a "please call me" sms!!).

	Yes	No
<b>79.</b> Hot running water	1	0
<b>80.</b> Fridge/freezer	1	0
<b>81.</b> Microwave oven (in working order)	1	0
<b>82.</b> Flush toilet in house or on plot	1	0
<b>83.</b> VCR in household	1	0
<b>84.</b> Vacuum cleaner/floor polisher	1	0
<b>85.</b> A washing machine	1	0
<b>86.</b> A computer at home	1	0



<b>87.</b>	An electric stove	1	0
<b>88.</b>	Have TV set(s)	1	0
<b>89.</b>	A tumble dryer	1	0
<b>90.</b>	A Telkom home telephone	1	0
<b>91.</b>	Hi-fi or music centre	1	0
<b>92.</b>	Built in kitchen sink	1	0
<b>93.</b>	Home security service	1	0
<b>94.</b>	A deep freezer (in working order)	1	0
<b>95.</b>	Water in home or on stand	1	0
<b>96.</b>	M-Net and or DStv	1	0
<b>97.</b>	A dishwasher	1	0
<b>98.</b>	Metropolitan dweller	1	0
<b>99.</b>	A sewing machine	1	0
<b>100.</b>	DVD player	1	0
<b>101.</b>	House/cluster/town house	1	0
<b>102.</b>	One or more motor vehicles	1	0
<b>103.</b>	No domestic in household	1	0
<b>104.</b>	No cell phone in household	1	0
<b>105.</b>	Only 1 cell phone in household	1	0
<b>106.</b>	None or only one radio	1	0
<b>107.</b>	Living in a non-urban area outside of Gauteng or Western Cape	1	0

**PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

**SHOWCARD G2**

- 108.** Please give me the letter that best describes the **TOTAL MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME** of all the people in your household before tax and other deductions. Please include all sources of income i.e. salaries, pensions, income from investment, etc.
- 109.** Please give me the letter that best describes your **PERSONAL TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME** before tax and other deductions. Please include all sources of income i.e. salaries, pensions, income from investment, etc.

		<b>Household</b>	<b>Personal</b>
	No income	01	01
<b>K</b>	R1 – R500	02	02
<b>L</b>	R501 –R750	03	03
<b>M</b>	R751 – R1 000	04	04
<b>N</b>	R1 001-R1 500	05	05
<b>O</b>	R1 501 – R2 000	06	06
<b>P</b>	R2 001 – R3 000	07	07
<b>Q</b>	R3 001 – R5 000	08	08
<b>R</b>	R5 001 – R7 500	09	09
<b>S</b>	R7 501 – R10 000	10	10
<b>T</b>	R10 001 – R15 000	11	11
<b>U</b>	R15 001 – R20 000	12	12
<b>V</b>	R20 001 – R30 000	13	13
<b>W</b>	R30 000 +	14	14
	(Refuse to answer)	97	97
	(Uncertain/Don't know)	98	98

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION**

## APPENDIX B

### HSRC CLIENT SURVEY (DOC HOUSEHOLD SURVEY 2006) – DEFINITIONS

**Citizenship:** The country to which a person belongs by legal right is that person's *country of citizenship*. That country may or may not be one's country of birth. A person may be a citizen of more than one country. The fact that a person holds a resident's permit – whether temporary or permanent – of a country does not make one a citizen of that country.

**Enumeration area (EA):** An *enumeration area (EA)* (interchangeably called an *enumerator area*) is the smallest geographical unit usually allocated to a single enumerator during census enumeration. In other words, it constituted a small piece of land for an enumerator to cover in order to administer a questionnaire during Censuses conducted by Statistics South Africa. The size of the majority of Eas varies between 100 and 250 *visiting points*. Size is influenced by terrain and other topological conditions, as well as by literacy levels of the population, socio-political and administrative boundaries and the population density of the area. For example, a difficult terrain is likely to have fewer visiting points than a formal urban area. This would also be the case where literacy levels are low. Size would also vary with population density, with higher density areas having more visiting points than lower density areas.

**Flat/block of flats/apartments:** A *flat* or an *apartment* referred to a dwelling within a block of flats. A *block of flats* is a structure, usually multistoried, consisting of a number of dwellings, sharing the same residential address, and usually sharing a common entrance, foyer or staircase.

**Head of household:** A *head of household* is the person that the household regards as such, and is usually the person who assumes responsibility for decision-making in the household. The head could be either male or female. There can be more than one head of a household.

**Hostel:** A *hostel* is a collective form of accommodation specifically built during the apartheid era for mine, factory, power station, municipal or other employees. Accommodation in hostels may be in single rooms or in dormitories. People who live in hostels are, in general, migrant workers; they often live in the hostels as individuals and not as members of households. However, in recent years, some families have started moving into hostels. A hostel was regarded as a special dwelling that required an enumeration procedure which was different from that used for households.

**Household:** In common with the definition used by Statistics South Africa, the SASAS defines a *household* as consisting of a single person or a group of persons who: (a) eat together and who share resources and (b) who normally reside at least four nights a week at the specific visiting point.

**Informal dwelling:** Dwelling structures, which are not erected according to approved architectural plans or on planned sites in municipal or local authority areas, or are on unproclaimed land in both urban and non-urban areas, or are in makeshift structures in relatively high-density concentrations in rural areas, are regarded as *informal dwellings*.

**Informal settlement:** An *informal settlement* refers to an area consisting mainly of informal dwellings.

**Visiting point:** A *visiting point* is a physical address or a dwelling where a household or a group of households can be found. It can be a house, shack, vacant stand, hotel, a room in a hostel, shop, house under construction, hut, tent, or a block of flats or apartments. There may be more than one household at one visiting point.

## APPENDIX C1

### **Stage 3: Respondent selection procedure and household roster**

There were four basic steps in the respondent selection procedure:

#### ***Step 1: Number of households at visiting point***

When the fieldworker arrived at the designated visiting point, he introduced himself and explained the purpose of the survey to an adult member living at the visiting point. At the same time, the fieldworker asked the adult person how many households there are at the visiting point. This was normally complicated and fieldworkers were requested to make sure that the person they were speaking to understands exactly what they mean when they talk of “household”. A list of definitions was therefore provided for each fieldworker before the start of the data collection process (Appendix B). The number of households at the visiting point was then recorded on the questionnaire.

#### ***Step 2: Number of people 18 and older at visiting point***

Next, the fieldworker had to determine the number of persons at the visiting point (or on the stand) who are 18 and older and were resident at least 15 days in the last month. In certain situations, there may be a number of dwellings and households at the visiting point, making it difficult for the respondent to remember everyone off the top of his or her head. The fieldworkers were therefore instructed to use probing to ensure that all the people at the visiting point that meet the selection criteria are included.

#### ***Step 3: Listing the names of all the people 18 years and older***

Having determined the number of people 18 and older and resident at least 15 days in the last month, the fieldworker must now list the names of these people on the questionnaire. The fieldworkers were reminded that the number of persons 18 years and older at the visiting point (refer to step 2) should correspond with the number of people listed in the

table (Appendix C). It is critical that all the persons meeting the criteria are listed, as this has a direct influence on the individual that is ultimately selected as the respondent.

***Step 4: Selection of the interview respondent***

Once the fieldworkers completed the list of names, a Kish grid was used to select the respondent (Appendix C). The grid is a tool that was developed to allow for the random selection of respondents. There are two pieces of information that fieldworkers need in order to implement the respondent selection procedure. Firstly, the last two digits of the five-digit questionnaire number from the cover page of the questionnaire (Appendix D). If the questionnaire number is 00022, the number the fieldworker require is 22. If the questionnaire number happens to be 06410, then the number would be 10. These numbers are listed 1-100 in the first four columns of the grid. The second piece of information a fieldworker requires is the total number of persons at the visiting point aged 18 years and older and resident at least 15 days in the last month. This number (of persons) forms the first row of numbers in the grid. The number at the intersection of the relevant column and row in the grid is the number of the respondent as found in the table of names on page ii (Appendix C). This would be the person that a fieldworker would subsequently go and interview.

If a respondent was unwilling to participate the fieldworker was encouraged to motivate the person to participate and to ask the field supervisor assistance in securing an interview. If the respondent still refused to participate the fieldworker was instructed to select at random a neighbouring household close to the one at which the refusal was encountered. If the selected respondent was not at home the fieldworker had to revisit the household at least 3 times. It was recommended that the fieldworkers make an appointment with someone from the selected respondent's household if the selected respondent was not at home at the time of the first visit.

**APPENDIX C2**  
**Questionnaire format: Respondent selection procedure**

**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

**Name of Interviewer** .....

Number of interviewer


Checked by

Signature of supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

**FIELDWORK CONTROL**

CONTROL	YES	NO	REMARKS
Personal	1	2	
Telephonic	1	2	
Name	SIGNATURE		
.....	DATE ...../...../2006		

**RESPONDENT SELECTION PROCEDURE**

Number of households at visiting point

--	--

Number of persons 18 years and older at visiting point

--	--

*Please list all persons at the visiting point/on the stand who are 18 years and older and were resident 15 out of the past 30 days. Once this is completed, use the Kish grid on next page to determine which person is to be interviewed.*

<b>Names of Persons Aged 18 and Older</b>	
	01
	02
	03
	04
	05
	06
	07
	08
	09
	10
	11
	12
	13
	14
	15
	16
	17
	18
	19
	20
	21
	22
	23
	24
	25

NAME OF RESPONDENT:	
ADDRESS OF RESPONDENT:	
1.	.....
2.	.....
3.	TEL NO.:

**KISH GRID TO SELECT RESPONDENT**

NUMBER OF QUESTION-NAIRE				NUMBER OF PERSONS FROM WHICH RESPONDENT MUST BE DRAWN																								
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	26	51	76	1	1	1	3	2	4	1	3	5	8	6	5	12	10	1	6	8	7	19	19	13	21	13	24	25
2	27	52	77	1	2	3	4	3	1	2	2	3	4	8	3	7	2	5	14	4	15	4	8	6	16	14	22	19
3	28	53	78	1	1	2	1	4	2	7	6	9	3	5	11	2	1	3	11	7	10	16	16	10	5	2	2	3
4	29	54	79	1	2	3	2	1	3	5	8	6	2	4	2	4	8	11	10	16	6	9	10	15	11	12	11	18
5	30	55	80	1	1	1	4	5	6	3	5	7	5	9	8	14	3	2	13	5	18	1	4	1	20	11	5	24
6	31	56	81	1	2	2	2	3	5	7	7	8	7	1	4	9	14	8	2	17	17	14	12	14	22	10	3	14
7	32	57	82	1	2	1	1	4	1	4	1	4	6	3	6	5	7	13	9	2	3	13	14	8	2	7	20	4
8	33	58	83	1	1	2	3	2	5	1	4	2	1	7	10	6	5	4	15	10	5	2	13	4	17	5	17	8
9	34	59	84	1	1	3	2	5	6	2	2	1	9	10	1	10	4	6	6	1	9	10	1	5	6	9	1	12
10	35	60	85	1	2	2	4	1	3	3	6	9	10	11	12	3	9	15	7	8	11	6	3	9	4	3	10	1
11	36	61	86	1	1	1	3	1	4	5	3	1	6	2	9	13	11	14	4	11	4	15	15	17	1	1	23	2
12	37	62	87	1	2	3	1	3	2	7	5	6	5	7	7	8	6	10	3	3	1	12	20	7	13	22	12	16
13	38	63	88	1	1	2	1	5	3	6	4	3	4	6	2	11	13	12	1	15	8	7	2	12	15	21	13	7
14	39	64	89	1	2	3	2	4	1	4	7	8	2	5	6	11	12	9	16	13	16	11	18	18	14	16	18	23
15	40	65	90	1	2	1	4	2	4	3	8	7	7	11	1	3	5	7	12	14	13	8	17	20	19	20	19	11
16	41	66	91	1	1	3	3	1	6	5	1	5	9	10	3	2	11	13	8	12	12	5	6	21	8	8	4	15
17	42	67	92	1	1	2	2	3	4	2	6	2	3	2	12	5	2	10	13	5	8	18	9	16	10	17	16	20
18	43	68	93	1	2	1	4	2	6	4	1	4	8	9	10	7	9	3	12	12	9	7	20	19	9	19	21	13
19	44	69	94	1	2	2	1	3	5	2	8	9	10	4	9	8	13	1	1	14	10	19	10	11	18	15	7	6
20	45	70	95	1	1	3	2	5	4	1	3	8	1	3	8	6	6	9	5	7	13	4	15	1	7	22	15	21
21	46	71	96	1	1	1	2	5	1	7	2	3	2	1	11	4	7	5	3	2	1	3	12	18	5	19	14	9
22	47	72	97	1	2	1	3	1	3	2	6	2	1	8	7	1	4	2	11	8	2	17	4	17	21	16	3	5
23	48	73	98	1	2	3	4	2	2	6	7	7	8	3	4	9	3	6	2	11	11	16	2	8	11	23	6	22
24	49	74	99	1	1	2	1	4	6	3	5	5	3	1	5	13	1	14	8	14	6	15	9	14	3	6	9	17
25	50	75	100	1	1	2	3	3	2	4	6	4	7	5	3	12	12	12	4	6	2	17	11	2	12	4	8	10

## APPENDIX D

### Bar code number (sticker)

#### COMPLETTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaires have been translated in other languages but these questionnaires should not be filled in. ONLY ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRES WITH A BAR CODE NUMBER (sticker) SHOULD BE COMPLETED.



\* 30700004 - 006 - Q3 - 22 \*

QUESTIONNAIRE NO - 00022

Each questionnaire has two unique numbers. The questionnaire number is numeric and is from 1-4000. The other number is a unique bar coded number. This number indicates the province, magisterial district and EA number.

Province						<b>3</b>
Magisterial district				<b>0</b>		<b>7</b>
EA number	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>4</b>
Visiting point number				<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
Questionnaire number (Q1, Q2, Q3)						<b>3</b>
Total number of visiting points / EA (1-22)					<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

Provinces are numbered as follows:

- 1 = Western Cape
- 2 = Eastern Cape
- 3 = Northern Cape
- 4 = Free State
- 5 = KwaZulu-Natal
- 6 = North West
- 7 = Gauteng
- 8 = Mpumalanga
- 9 = Limpopo



**Appendix E**  
**Department of Communications (DoC) Survey 2006 Introduction Letter**



Human Sciences Research Council  
Lekgotla la Dinyakisišo tša Semahlale tša Setho  
Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing  
Umkhandlu Wezokucwaninga Ngesayensi  
Yesintu

**Knowledge Systems**

**Pretoria Office**

**HSRC**

*Social science that makes a difference*

Dr. J. M. Kivilu

(012) 302-2541

Autumn 2006

**Department of Communications (DoC) Survey 2006**

This study is specifically about people's perceptions, attitudes and experiences when exposed to various forms of media services like postal services, television, radio, Internet and cellular phones. The Department of Communications, who is responsible for formulating policies and laws on media, is interested in your opinion about whether you have access to these services or not and how these services can be improved.

The questionnaire covers a wide range of media services and no special knowledge is needed except people's experiences and knowledge when interacting with these various media types. Your address has been selected randomly by statistical methods to ensure that we get a representative picture of people in South Africa. There are no right or wrong answers and all we are interested in, are your opinions about issues. You can rest assured that the information gathered is only for research purposes and to assist DoC in improving its services to the public.

Most people taking part in the study find it an interesting and enjoyable experience, and we hope that you will too. Interviews normally take just under half an hour. We certainly hope we can rely on your co-operation.

Meanwhile, if you wish to have any further information about the study, please feel free to contact me on the number above.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Dr. J. M. Kivilu (Director: Social Economic surveys)

The interviewer who will be contacting you is:.....

**Appendix F**  
**Project Information Letter for the Police DOC 2006 Survey**

Human Sciences Research Council  
Lekgotla la Dinyakisišo tša Semahlale tša Setho  
Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing  
Umkhandlu Wezokucwaninga Ngesayensi  
Yesintu

**Knowledge Systems**

**Pretoria Office**

**HSRC**

*Social science that makes a difference*

The Station Commander  
South African Police Service  
Postal address:

---

Dear Sir/Madam

The HSRC regularly undertakes surveys on a wide range of matters among all population groups. These surveys require the conducting of personal interviews with respondents at their houses on farms, in towns and cities.

Officials of the HSRC report at the local police station in order to inform the officer in charge about movements of HSRC personnel in the area.

The HSRC would appreciate any assistance you can render to officials concerned with this survey. Your knowledge of the local environment will be of great help.

Thank you for your co-operation.

**Dr. J.M. Kivilu**

**Director: Socio-Economic Surveys**

---

**NAME OF SURVEY:**

HSRC Client Survey - Department of Communications (DoC)

**DATE OF SURVEY:**

Autumn 2006

**CONTACT DETAILS:** Dr. J.M. Kivilu (012) 302 2541 and Mr. Y.D. Davids (021) 466 7838

**APPENDIX G**  
**Consent form for the respondent**

**Department of Communications**



**CONSENT FORM FOR RESPONDENT**

Hello, my name is ..... and I am from the Human Sciences Research Council. I am here to ask people from your community to answer a few questions, which we hope will benefit your community and possibly other communities in the future.

I am undertaking this work on behalf of the Department of Communications (DoC). The Department of Communications is interested in the attitudes and perceptions of South African citizens about issues surrounding media convergence and accessibility. In other words, DoC is interested in how the postal services (e.g. Post office), broadcasting services (eg. TV and radio) and wireless services (e.g. Cellphone and internet) are regulated within a single policy or law. This is important because the media are no longer seen as separate but operate as one single system. The Department of Communications is also interested to know whether these services are accessible or available to all people or not.

We have randomly chosen you and your household as one of our sample of 3500 nationally and are requesting one member of your household who is 18 years and older, to respond to a few questions. We are doing this among various groups of people, such as people living in towns and in rural areas as well as on farms and in traditional areas.

You are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not to take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

The information will remain confidential and there will be no negative consequences from the answers you give. Researchers may conduct random back-checks to check whether I have interviewed you and recorded your responses accurately.

The interview will last between 20 and 30 minutes. I will be asking you a few questions and ask that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but we ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers.

Contact persons:

Project leader  
Fieldwork manager

J.M. Kivilu  
Susan Sedumedi

Tel. (012) 302 2541  
Tel: (012) 302 2505

**CONSENT**

I hereby agree to participate in the Department of Communications Survey project. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues that may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

.....  
Signature of participant

Date:.....

**Appendix H1**  
**Permission Letter to use additional questions of the Department of Communications Survey**



Human Sciences Research Council  
Lekgotla la Dinyakisišo tša Semahlale tša Setho  
Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing  
Umkhandlu Wezokucwaninga Ngesayensi  
Yesintu

**Knowledge Systems**

**Pretoria Office**

**HSRC**

*Social science that makes a difference*

Dr. J. M. Kivilu

(012) 302-2541

Dear Sir or Madam,

**RE: HSRC Client Survey**

This is to inform you that Yul Derek Davids (student number: 147-62099) will use some of the data collected by the HSRC Client Survey for his DPhil in the Political Science Department at the University of Stellenbosch. This survey will be conducted between Mid May and June 2006.

The HSRC Client Survey in line with previous client surveys will meet all ethical standards. For example: respondents will be informed about the purpose of the survey and will not be forced to take part in the study. If respondents do agree to participate, they may stop at any time and inform the interviewer that they don't want to go on with the interview. Further, respondents will be informed that the information they provide will remain confidential and there will be no negative consequences from the answers they give. Quality control will be of the highest and researchers will conduct random back-checks to check whether the responses of the respondents were accurately recorded (**See Appendix H2**).

For more detail information please see the appendix.

Kind regards,

Dr. J. M. Kivilu  
Director: Social Economic surveys

## **Appendix H2: Fieldwork and Data Management (Part of the Data Permission Letter):**

### **Fieldwork logistics**

The Surveys unit has conducted national surveys on attitudes, perceptions, and service delivery for wide range of clients including government departments over the years. The planning and implementation of fieldwork for these projects required sophisticated arrangements. We have developed a network of locally based fieldwork supervisors in all parts of the country. Thus we are able to respond at a short notice and get our trained field workers to conduct a national survey. The profiles of our network of supervisors reflect the demographics of South Africa and have a bias towards black empowerment. We demand that the supervisors should recruit fieldworkers from the local areas who have a thorough understanding of the area. Whenever a larger team than the available fieldworkers is required, we have our technical team that trains newly recruited fieldworkers.

HSRC protocol requires that the relevant authority be informed of the research in the area. It is reassuring for elderly or suspicious respondents to be told that the inkosi / induna / local councillor / local police know about the survey, and that they can check with them. A copy of the Survey Notification Form (giving details of the research organisation, interviewer number, area to be worked in, car registration number, start and end date of fieldwork etc.) is completed for each interview. A letter of introduction will be given to each respondent prior to the commencement of the fieldwork. The letter will contain information about what the surveys is, why we want to speak to the respondents and who uses the results. The letter can be used whenever interviewers feel it would be valuable - for example leaving it with someone who they are going to call back on later, or giving it to people who want to know more about the study.

#### **Information that will be included in the Letter:**

- Why does the study matter – why should they take part?
- Topics included in the questionnaire
- How we have obtained the respondent's name/address
- Why we cannot substitute them with another respondent
- Confidentiality
- Who will use the information given?
- About how long will the interview take?

### **Quality control**

To ensure that the information collected is of the highest quality the Surveys Unit has developed a comprehensive quality control mechanism that involves training of all supervisors and the fieldworkers before they are dispatched to the field. Researchers also conduct random visits to selected areas and work with the fieldworkers for a period of time to ensure that they adhere to ethical research practices, select the identified households and respondents in the household correctly. The researchers also check on the procedures followed in administering the research instruments. Field check backs are also conducted on 10% of randomly selected respondents to ascertain whether the fieldworkers actually visited the particular respondents.

### **Data management**

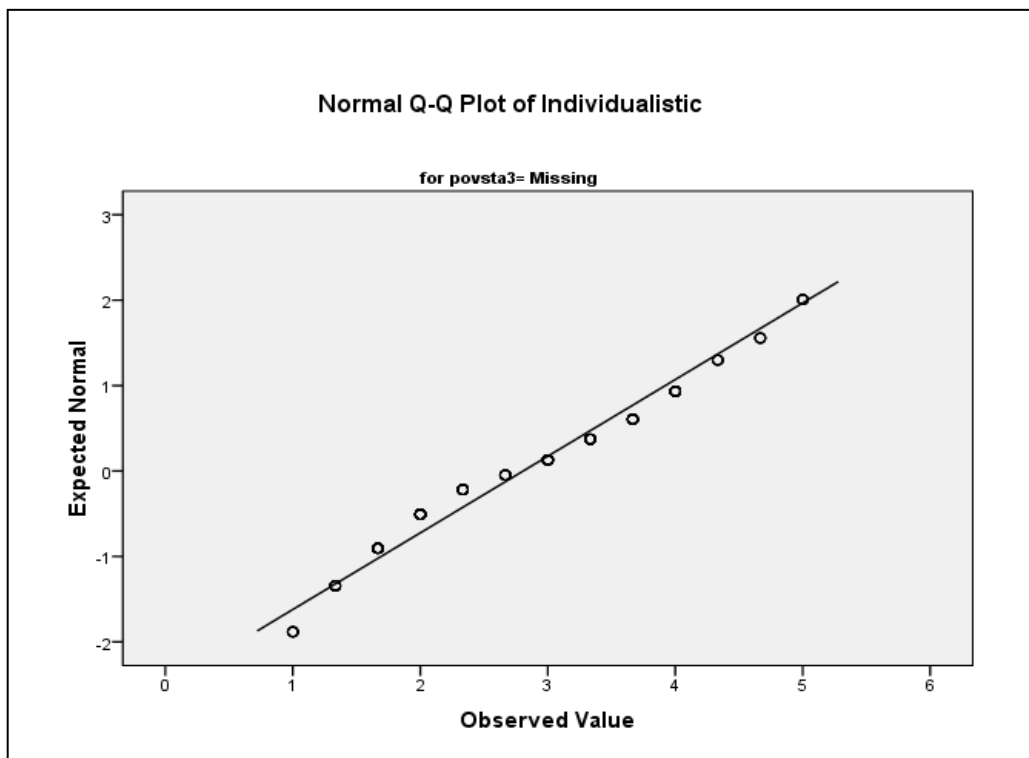
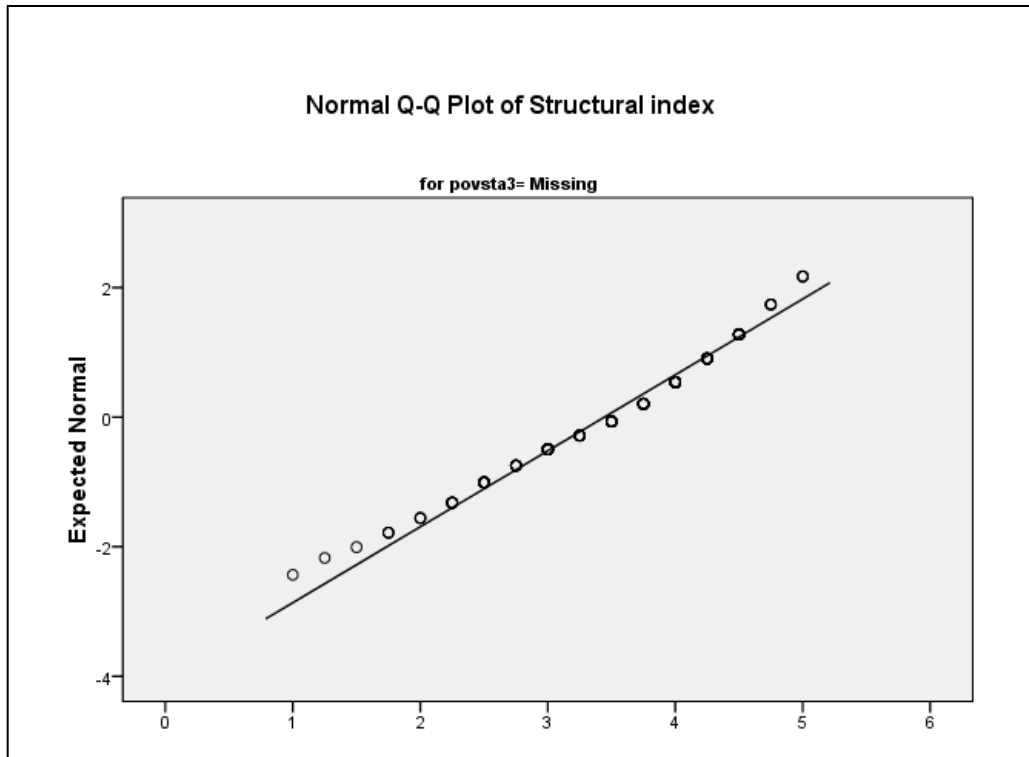
A second phase of quality control is done when the completed questionnaires and other research instruments are submitted to HSRC's Data Management centre. Our team of very experienced people in data management supervise capturing of the data to minimize error. Data is then cleaned, for example, by ensuring all skip questions instructions are followed and it is then weighted to the population of the target population. This enables us to provide projections from

the sample to the total population at the identified level of reporting. Our team of statisticians and modelling experts analyse the data, develop indicators and draw inferences.

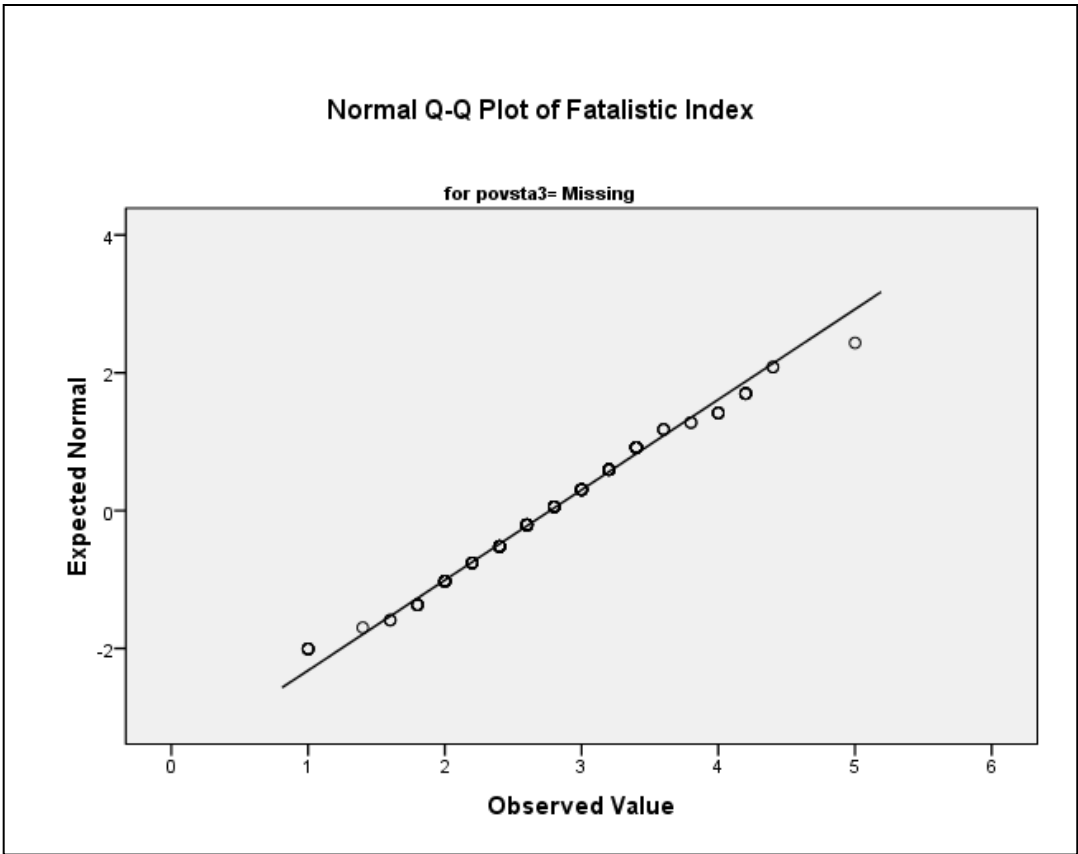
**Confidentiality and integrity**

The project will be conducted in a confidential manner and information will only be discussed with designated client representatives. The HSRC subscribes to a strict internal Code of Ethics. Each questionnaire conducted by the HSRC is fielded only if the HSRC ethics committee has approved it. At all times we will keep in mind the confidentiality of information that we may have at our disposal.

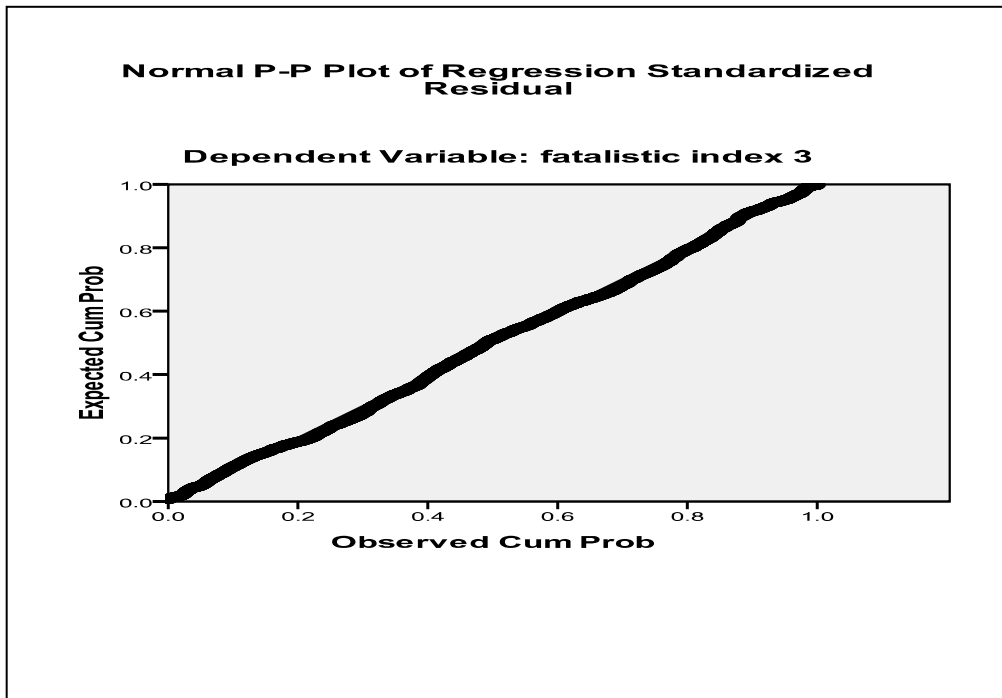
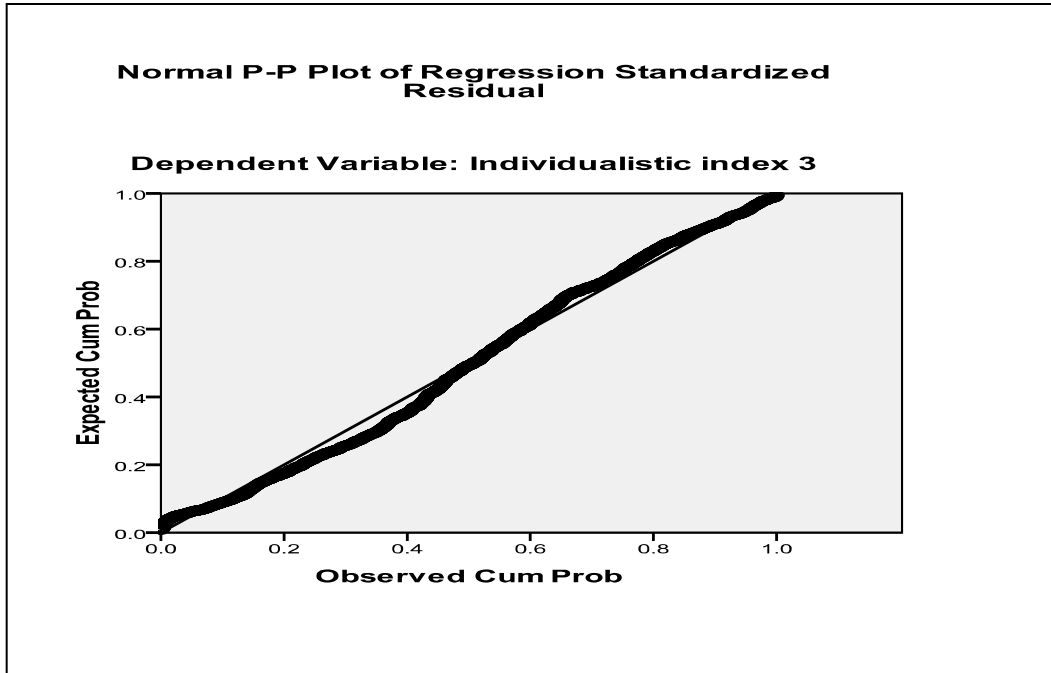
## Appendix I Q-Q Plots





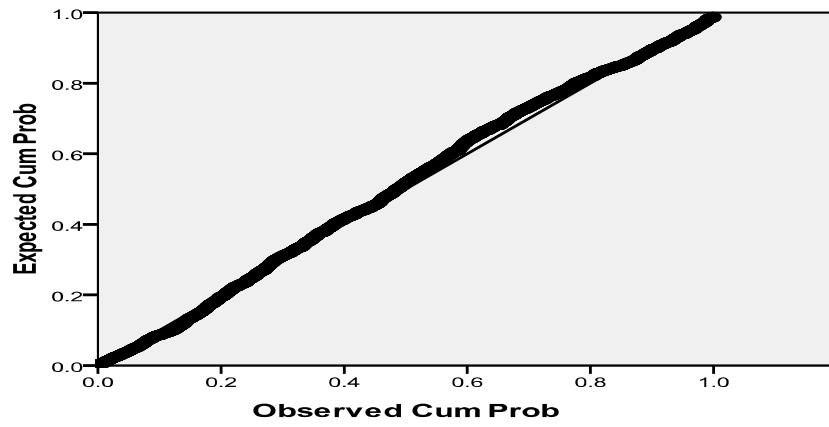


**Appendix J**  
**P-P Plots**



**Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual**

**Dependent Variable: Structural index 3**



## END NOTES:

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1 The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (WSSD Political declaration 4 September 2002)

2 The human development index (HDI) is a composite indicator which covers three dimensions of human welfare: income, education and health. Its purpose is not to give a complete picture of human development but to provide a measure that goes beyond income.

3 South African Social Attitude Surveys (see HSRC website: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za>)

4 See [www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za) and The Measurement of Poverty in South Africa Project: Key Issues, 2007: 7

5 [www.treasury.gov.za](http://www.treasury.gov.za)

6 The South African National Treasury and Statistics South Africa are inviting public comment on the proposed poverty line for South Africa by sending messages to [povertyline@treasury.gov.za](mailto:povertyline@treasury.gov.za)

7 The Measurement of Poverty in South Africa Project: Key Issues, 2007: 6

8 See [www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za) for AsgiSA Annual Report 2007

9 It is important to note that the “Liberal” and the “Conservative” Approach are essentially two ideological perspectives in the United States that represent the “Democrats” on the one side and the “Conservatives” on the other. In the context of the current study the liberal approach must not be seen as synonymous with the individualistic approach. I want to make it clear that the Liberal Approach in the South African context is normally described as the social democratic perspective.

10 The country to which a person belongs by legal right is that person’s country of citizenship. That country may or may not be one’s country of birth. A person may be a citizen of more than one country. Even if a person holds a resident’s permit whether temporary or permanent of a country it does not make one a citizen of that country.

11 The 11 official languages of South Africa: Afrikaans, English, IsiNdebele (Ndebele), IsiXhosa (Xhosa), IsiZulu (Zulu), Northern Sotho (Sepedi), Sesotho (Southern Sotho), Setswana (Tswana), SiSwati (Swati), Tshivenda (Venda) and Xitsonga (Tsonga).

12 The author of this dissertation is one of the senior HSRC staff members and therefore participated in all aspects of the project and attended the regional training as well as the Western Cape Training. More specifically, the author conducted both the supervisors training in Pretoria as well as regional training in the Western Cape.

13 Mattes et al. (2002: 43) indicated that they can use the ordinal distinctions between the response categories of the LPI to draw their own “poverty line” and derive the total proportion of people or households falling under or over that line. “At the same time, because the LPI yields a continuous variable we do not simply have to divide people into ‘poor’ or ‘not poor’ but are able to see poverty as a matter of degree. Thus, we can calculate a mean to compare average poverty rates between any two or more countries, provinces, or other groups of households or individuals – something that is not possible with the HDI, for example, since it is based on national aggregate data.”

14 The living standard measure (LSM) used in this study is based on the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) AMPS 2005 survey. The SAARF LSM has become the most widely used marketing research tool in Southern Africa. It divides the population into 10 LSM groups, 10 (highest) to 1 (lowest). The LSM is a unique means of segmenting the South African market. It cuts across race and other outmoded techniques of categorising people, and instead groups people according to their living

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standards using criteria such as degree of urbanisation and ownership of cars and major appliances. A total of 29 variables are used. Each variable carries a different weight, some positive, others negative, and the respondent's position on the SAARF LSM scale is arrived at by adding together the weights of the variables that she/he possesses. A constant is also added to the total score to remove negative total scores. For more information visit: [www.saarf.co.za](http://www.saarf.co.za)

15 A correlation is a way to index the degree to which two or more variables are associated to each other. I have used the Pearson product-moment coefficient because I examined relationship between two quantitatively measured variables. The strength of the relationship ranges from -1 to +1. A -1 indicate a perfect negative relationship, while a +1 indicate a perfect positive relationship. It is interesting to note that we normally draw the same conclusion about the strength of the relationship even if it is negative, because  $R^2$  or the variance explained is always positive. In other words, positive and negative correlations of the same absolute value represent the same relationship strength (Meyers, Gamst, Guarino, 2006: 117).

16 Three regression equations or models were conducted because there were three dependent variables. In essence the analysis aims to establish the joint and relative effects of the independent variables: education, the LPI, LSM and age, as well as race, employment status, geographic location and gender; using a series of dummy variables for the latter four categorical variables on the three dependent variables: structural, individualistic, and fatalistic perceptions respectively.

17 Those not working refer to respondents that are not employed or unemployed such as housewives and students.

18 The 2008 State of the Nation Address of the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki: Joint Sitting of Parliament.

19 The CPI for food increased from 15.7% to 17.0% and for transport from 15.6% to 16.7%. See Statistical release P0141, May 2008: [www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za)

20 It is important to note that I derived upon these distinctions (Liberal and Conservative) based on work done by Wilson (1987: 4 – 18) and Auletta (1982: 18) in the United States. These distinctions are therefore based on an American society where the Liberals traditionally emphasized that the poverty of the disadvantaged can be related to problems in the broader society, including problems of discrimination and social class subordination. “The liberalist generally emphasized the need for progressive social change, particularly through governmental programmes that open the opportunity structure. The Conservatives, in contrast, have traditionally stressed the importance of different group values and competitive resources in accounting for the experiences of the disadvantaged; if reference is made to the larger society, it is in terms of assumed adverse effects of various government programmes on individual or group behaviour and initiative” (Wilson (1987: 5).

21 Towards an Anti-poverty Strategy for South Africa, A Discussion Document. September 2008. Presidency of South Africa [www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za)

22 During his address he informed the people of South Africa that government has identified 10 priority areas, included in the Medium Term Strategic Framework for 2009 to 2014, to address the challenges South Africa is facing. The 10 priority areas aim to address unemployment through increased economic growth; to develop and implement a comprehensive rural development strategy which is linked to land agrarian reform and

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food security; to strengthen the skills and human resource base; to improve the health of all South Africans; to fight crime and corruption; to build cohesive and sustainable communities; to work together with other African countries and the rest of the world; to ensure sustainable resource management and use; and to work together with all South Africans supported by our public servants to build a developmental state and improve public services.

23 South Africa. National Treasury. 2009 Budget Review. [www.treasury.gov.za](http://www.treasury.gov.za)

24 Refer to the website of the SASSA for more information [www.sassa.gov.za](http://www.sassa.gov.za)

25 See [www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za) and The Measurement of Poverty in South Africa Project: Key Issues, 2007: 7

26 State of the Nation Address, President Jacob Zuma, 3 June 2009,