

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE FEMALE HEADSHIP EFFECT ON EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN  
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

Pearl Kyei

University of Pennsylvania

Graduate Group in Demography

In their well-known study Lundberg, Pollak and Wales (1997) show that when the United Kingdom made government transfers to women instead of their husbands, the result was an increase in household expenditure on children's clothing. Other studies from different settings have also found evidence supporting their findings of gender differences in the way income is used within the household (Duflo and Udry 2004; Pfeiffer, Quisumbing and Maluccio 1999). The theory that intra-household allocation differs depending on the gender of the person distributing the resources has been one of the main explanations for the unexpected finding that children in female-headed households tend to have better educational outcomes than those in male-headed ones.

The educational benefits of female headship in sub-Saharan Africa is especially puzzling as the observable socio-economic characteristics of female-headed households are factors that tend to have negative associations with children's schooling progress. For instance, the presence of younger children in the household is negatively correlated with schooling attainment especially for females (Lloyd and Gage-Brandon 1994; Morduch 2000) yet female-headed households are significantly more likely to have a greater number of young children (Mberu 2007) in the household than male-headed ones. Children from poorer households in sub-Saharan Africa have lower educational attainment (Ashiabi 2000; Tansel 1997) but Fuller and Liang (1999) find that girls from female-headed households in South Africa have better educational outcomes even though 70% of female-headed households in their sample lived below the poverty line compared with 44% of families with a father present.

The female headship advantage is well established in the African education literature, but this characteristic is typically used as a control variable in studies of other influences on schooling and none have yet undertaken a detailed analysis of this effect. In this paper, I aim to first provide an overview of the differences between female and male-headed households and estimate the influence of female headship on the educational attainment, achievement and aspirations of the children in their households. Then I will explore the pathways through which

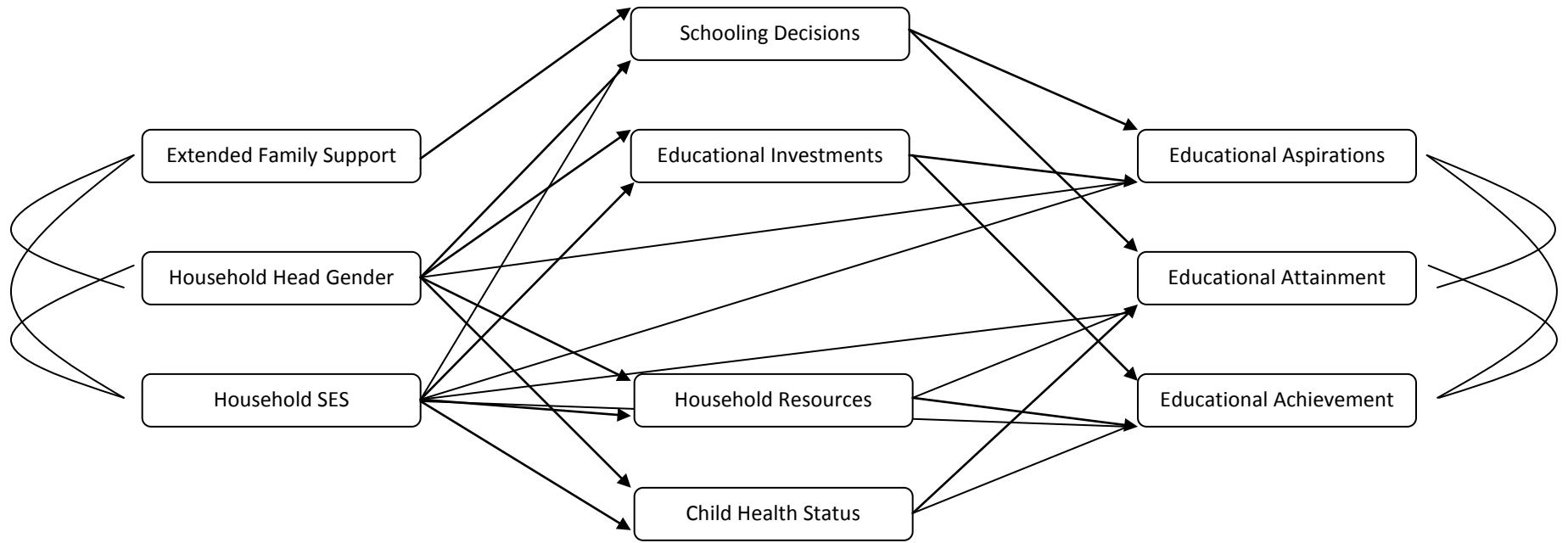
living in a female-headed household translates into greater educational participation for children.

## **DATA & METHODS**

The main data will come from the first four waves of the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS), a longitudinal survey of 5,250 households in metropolitan Cape Town in South Africa. The first wave in 2002 started with a representative sample of 4,752 young adults between the ages 14 and 22 years. The second wave was carried out in 2003-2004 and the youth sample was re-interviewed in 2005 and 2006. The CAPS collects extensive information on education and economic characteristics of households including retrospective monthly schooling histories for children, academic performance of school children, time use, and attitudes concerning education and occupational attainment. At the household level, there is detailed information on household composition, income, expenditures, parental involvement and extended family support.

The analysis will first section use logistic regression to predict the likelihood of households having a female head. There has been no detailed study on the differences between male and female-headed households in sub-Saharan African countries. This is important in understanding the paradox of female headship and educational outcomes in this region. The education outcomes used in this analysis are attainment, achievement and aspirations, three outcomes that have slightly different relationships with household characteristics. Educational attainment provides the best measure of direct education investment but it does not provide much information on the quality of education or children's intellectual development, factors better measured by academic achievement. Achievement also provides some insight into the additional non-economic investments that parents make to enhance their children's learning beyond paying for school. Finally, aspirations provides information on individual differences in ambition and motivation that create variation in educational outcomes. In addition, these outcomes in theory should have influences on each other: children with high educational aspirations should have greater motivate to do better in school or those with low achievement may be discouraged from pursuing more education. The next step of the analysis will use path analysis to study the pathways through which female headship influences educational attainment. The main pathways of interest here are economic, human and social capital resource allocation and transfer within households.

Figure 1: Hypothesized Theoretical Model



## REFERENCES

- Alexander, Karl L. and Bruce K. Eckland. 1974. "Sex Differences in the Educational Attainment Process." *American Sociological Review* 39(5):668-682.
- Anderson, Kermyt G., Anne Case and David Lam. 2001. "Causes and Consequences of Schooling Outcomes in South Africa: Evidence from Survey Data." *Social Dynamics* 27(1):37-59.
- Ashiabi, Godwin S. 2000. "Some Correlates of Childhood Poverty in Ghana." *Journal of Children and Poverty* 6(2):155-169.
- Duflo, Esther and Christopher R. Udry. 2004. "Intrahousehold Resource Allocation in Cote d'Ivoire: Social Norms, Separate Accounts and Consumption Choices." *NBER Working Paper*.
- Fuller, Bruce and Xiaoyan Liang. 1999. "Which Girls Stay in School? The Influence of Family Economy, Social Demands and Ethnicity in South Africa." Pp. 181-215 in *Critical Perspectives on Schooling and Fertility in the Developing World*, edited by J.B. Casterline, J.J. Johnson-Kuhn, J.G. Haaga and C.H. Bledsoe. Washington DC: National Academic Press.
- Lloyd, Cynthia B. and Anastasia J. Gage-Brandon. 1994. "High Fertility and Children's Schooling in Ghana: Sex Differences in Parental Contributions and Educational Outcomes." *Population and Development Review* 48(2):293-306.
- Lundberg, Shelly J., Robert A. Pollak and Terence J. Wales. 1997. "Do Husbands and Wives Pool Their Resources? Evidence from the United Kingdom Child Benefit." *The Journal of Human Resources* 32(3):463-480.
- Morduch, Jonathan. 2000. "Sibling Rivalry in Africa." *The American Economic Review* 90(2):405-409.
- Mberu, Blessing U. 2007. "Household Structure and Living Conditions in Nigeria." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69:513-527.
- Quisumbing, Agnes R. and John A. Maluccio. 1999. "Intrahousehold Allocation and Gender Relations: New Empirical Evidence." *World Bank Policy Research Report on Gender and Development Working Paper Series No. 2*.
- Tansel, Aysit. 1997. "Schooling Attainment, Parental Education, and Gender in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 45:825-856.