The Politics of Social Assistance in South Africa: How Protests and Electoral Politics Shape the Child Support Grant

Abstract: Since the 1990s, South Africa, like many other countries from the Global South, has provided extensive social assistance for the poor. The literature on these policies, however, is largely dominated by structuralist accounts, and it largely overlooks political factors. We conducted quantitative analyses regarding the South African flagship Child Support Grant (CSG) program and investigated how contentious and electoral political dynamics jointly shape the provision of this program. Based on a logistic regression analysis, we measured the effect of protest participation, voting preference and their interaction on the likelihood of CSG receipt. Our analysis revealed that CSG receipt is much higher among "uncontentious supporters" of ANC and "contentious non-supporters", as well as those who join violent protests. This lends support for our argument that CSG is being used as a tool for electoral politics and containment of unrest, providing fresh evidence for political mediation theories of social policy.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, South Africa has built expansive social assistance programs for the poor. The flagship Child Support Grant (CSG) has received worldwide acknowledgment and stimulated a wide body of scholarship. However, in parallel with the trends in the global literature on social assistance, most studies on the CSG and other social assistance programs in South Africa have focused on demographic, economic, and, in other words, structural factors, underestimating the effect of politics. Our article examines the determinants of CSG provision and argues that the interaction of contentious and electoral political dynamics significantly shapes the distribution of the CSG program benefits. Drawing on nationally representative data from the annually repeated cross-sectional *South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS)* and on expert interviews with South African scholars and NGO activists, we have developed our argument by combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. We illustrate that compared to other groups, the CSG is disproportionally directed towards what we designate as uncontentious supporters (those African National Congress (ANC) voters who do not participate in protests) and contentious non-supporters (those non-ANC voters who participate in protests), emphasizing an intriguing pattern whereby protest participation

and voting preferences interact and shape social policy. We also demonstrate that those who participate in violent protests are much more likely to receive the CSG than those involved in non-violent protests. These findings illustrate the centrality of politics in social assistance provision in South Africa and make a significant contribution to the literature that has been dominated by structuralist accounts that emphasize economic and demographic factors. It also lends strong support for the political mediation theories that link protest, elections and social policy.

In the following pages, we will first present a critical review of the existing global and South African literature on social assistance, indicating the gap related to political factors. We will then portray the history of contentious politics and electoral politics in South Africa in relation to country's social assistance system. Then, we will present our quantitative analysis and results. Finally, we will provide a concluding section, which includes a discussion of possible mechanisms behind the political targeting of the CSG, based on our expert interviews and the survey of secondary literature.

Theories of Social Assistance Provision

Since the 1990s, welfare systems in many developing countries are building extensive social assistance policies for the poor, or what Goldberg and Rosenthal (2002) call "the poor-law states" (Gao 2006; Haggard and Kaufman 2008; World Bank 2015). However, the explanations for the rise of social assistance programs have been largely dominated by structural arguments, emphasizing demographic and economic changes and thereby neglecting political factors. Most scholars argue that the rise of informalization, the erosion of traditional support networks, rapid urbanization, contingent work, aging of populations and increasing dependency ratios have made it difficult to cover larger segments of the population through informal solidarity networks or employment-based socials security programs where they existed previously, thus necessitating an anti-poverty program expansion. In this line of thinking, although the countries in the Global South have long suffered from problems, such as poverty and informality, it is either that governments of developing country have only recently gained the financial capacity to expand social assistance programs or that they have transformed their welfare states away from social security policies to social assistance due to rising dependency ratios (Keyder and Buğra 2006; Gough and Wood 2004; Hemerijck 2012; Iversen 2001; Vanhuysse and Goerres 2013; Hong and Kongshoj 2014).

This structuralist tendency in the literature has led to a significant underestimation of contentious and electoral political dynamics that determine the expansion and provision of social assistance programs. Except for a few studies (see for example Tenorio 2014 and Yörük 2012), "contemporary role played by social movements in shaping social welfare has too often been neglected in the discipline of social policy" (Mooney et al. 2009, p. 1). Yet, an earlier literature has illustrated that contentious politics and protest movements are main underlying parameters of social assistance expansion, because it helps establish control over the unruly populations (Piven and Cloward 1971). In this groundbreaking work, Piven and Cloward have shown that the poor in the USA during the 1960s gained access to social welfare mainly as a consequence of the disruption that they made in the social order through violent protests and riots. It is very likely that a similar mechanism is at work today in developing countries, as well. Apart from this possible contentious political perspective, a few political studies pinpoint electoral competition as the driver of social assistance expansion or distribution in their case studies of Turkey, Mexico, India and South Africa (Aytaç 2014; De La O 2013; Thachil 2014; Zucco 2013; Sadie, Patel, and Baldry 2016). However, contentious and electoral politics have been analyzed as *independent* explanatory variables, indicating that the social policy effect of their interaction has not been examined and only their individual effects have been considered. Yet, we know from previous studies about how electoral and contentious politics shape each other (Goldstone 2003; McAdam and Tarrow 2010). Furthermore, political mediation theories hold that favorable electoral conditions increase social policy outcomes of social movements (Amenta and Caren 2005, Piven and Cloward 1979). In other words, social movements gain concessions as intended or unintended consequence of their actions only when electoral conditions make the elites more vulnerable.

There is also a growing South African and international literature on the Child Support Grant, as the flagship social assistance program of the country and one of the most popular social assistance programs globally. The vast majority of studies on provision of the CSG, however, remains either descriptive or policy-outcome-oriented, drawing attention to the program's characteristics, its history and policy outcomes. Some scholarly works on the effectiveness and success of the CSG are interested in poverty reduction (Grinspun 2016; Coetzee 2013), child development (Grinspun 2016; Coetzee 2013), human capital accumulation (Coetzee 2013), more birth registration (Grinspun 2016; F. Lund 2012), female labor participation (Grinspun 2016), and women empowerment (Patel and Hochfeld 2011). Fewer studies investigate, in an analytical

manner, the causes or dynamics behind the provision or expansion of the CSG. However, in parallel with the trends in the global literature on social assistance, the analytical studies mostly discuss the role of structural factors such as poverty, economic transformations, demographic trends, population growth, deagrarianization, trade liberalization, and social security retrenchment (Ferguson 2007; Leubolt 2014; Seekings 2008; Seekings and Nattrass 2015; Devereux 2013).

The literature on social assistance programs in South Africa rarely analyzes the politics of social assistance provision. In few examples, Barrientos et al. claim that the main stimulus for the provision of social assistance programs in South Africa was the new constitution, and thus, new social contract by the end of the apartheid regime that favored more egalitarian policies (Barrientos et al. 2013). Therefore, governments have been more motivated to pursue policies of social protection and social assistance (Barrientos et al. 2013; Barrientos and Pellissery 2012; Plagerson et al. 2019). Seekings underscores democratic transition and proceeding electoral competition for the votes of the poor as the driving force that increased social assistance expenditure and coverage (Seekings 2008). Other authors claim that the civil society with organized non-governmental organizations such as the Black Sash, the Children's Institute, and the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security, played a crucial role in the provision of the CSG by pressuring the government for the loosed eligibility criteria, more transparent application and delivery processes, and raised awareness among the poor (Devereux 2010, 201; Proudlock 2011; F. Lund 2012; Plagerson et al. 2019).

In addition to this theoretical underestimation of contentious politics, there is a shortage of empirical, particularly quantitative analyses that trace the contentious and electoral political determinants of South African social assistance in general and the CSG in particular. Patel warns against a probable populist relationship between the ruling party and the masses, since the 2014 ANC election campaign discourse championed the ANC as 'the hand' feeding them, whereas supporting the opposition would mean betraying that hand (Patel 2016). Furthermore, Patel states that the poor were concerned about the continuation of their protection if they voted for an opposition party (Patel 2016; Patel, Sadie, and Bryer 2018). Thus, electoral competition and populist policies may be another factor that caused further expansion of the CSG (Patel and Plagerson 2016; Sadie, Patel, and Baldry 2016; Patel 2016). The role of contentious politics in determining social assistance as a means of containment of political mobilization and grassroots organizations has been largely unnoticed, despite high number of protests per year. Finally, the

interaction effect of electoral and contentious politics on social assistance and therefore political mediation theories are completely missing from the research, although in other contexts these two forms of politics are shown to have shaped each other and policy to a large degree. Our article aims to fill this gap.

Social assistance, contentious politics and electoral politics in South Africa

Historically, South Africa has experimented with social assistance programs to a greater extent and much earlier than many other developing countries. The introduction of the first nationwide social pension in South Africa dates back to 1928, which makes it the first country with fully developed national program in African continent and one of the pioneer nations in the Global South (Seekings 2008, 2012; F. Lund 2012). After the first democratic elections in 1994 *the Reconstruction and Development Program*, the African National Congress (ANC) reformed the welfare system as a part of reconstruction (Seekings and Nattrass 2015; van der Merwe 1997). As the 'principle of discrimination' from the Apartheid period was replaced by the 'principle of equality' removing white privileges in welfare distribution and deracializing the social programs, social assistance coverage has increased significantly (Leubolt 2014; F. Lund 2012). By 2018, more than 17 million grants have been distributed by the state, covering almost one third of the population. Some of the non-contributory social assistance programs in South Africa are old-age grant, disability grant, child support grant, foster child grant, care dependency grant, war veteran's grant, and grant-in-aid. Administered by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), a separate national governmental agency, all these programs are means-tested and applicable to the residents of South Africa (see Table 1 in Appendix). Yet one of the programs, namely the Child Support Grant, which was introduced in 1998, has experienced considerable increase in its coverage, benefiting more than 12 million poor children in 2018. Given the resources needed to finance the grant, and widespread poverty, inequality and unemployment, the CSG has attracted considerable scholarly attention.

Following the reform suggestions of the 'Lund Committee', the CSG replaced the State Maintenance Grant (SMG) that was given to single parents with children. It officially aimed at mitigating child poverty by targeting the primary caregivers, working alongside the Foster Child Grant and Care Dependency Grant (F. J. Lund 2008, 200). Even though the grant initially covered fewer than 100,000 people, as eligibility criteria loosed gradually, the number of the CSG beneficiaries increased steadily (Seekings 2016). The requirement that the recipient must be a

South African citizen was changed to include permanent residents in 2004 and documented refugees in 2012. The age restriction, furthermore, became looser over time: it incrementally increased to 9 years in 2003, 11 years in 2004, 14 years in 2005, and from 15 years to 18 years incrementally between 2009 and 2012 (F. Lund et al. 2009; Westphal 2016; Seekings 2016).

While social assistance programs have rapidly unfolded in the post-Apartheid South Africa, the protests and grassroots movements' activism have also become significant aspects of political landscape. Particularly since Jacob Zuma was elected the president in 2009, the number of protests has significantly increased (Seekings and Nattrass 2015; Duncan 2014). Between 1997 and 2013, there were approximately 67,750 police-recorded protests (80% of them were 'orderly', 10% of them were 'disruptive', and 10% of them were 'violent'), the highest in 2012 with around 5,500 police-recorded protests and the lowest in 2004 with about 2,300 protests (Runciman et al. 2016, see Table 1. In addition, for the discussion about the incidence data by the South African Police Service, see Table 2 in Appendix). Moreover, among provinces Gauteng and Eastern Cape had the highest number of protests whereas Northern Cape had the lowest number of protests (Runciman et al. 2016).

Table 1: The estimated number of protests (Runciman et al. 2016)

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The feelings of injustice and disappointment growing from inequality, venality, inadequate service delivery, and neoliberal policies favoring the privatization of local services have given a sustained impetus for contentious actions in poorer townships and informal settlements (Alexander 2010). Between 1997 and 2013, while almost 46% of all police-recorded protests were labor-related protests, about a quarter of them were "community" protests (Runciman et al. 2016; Alexander et al. 2018). Moreover, there is an increasing trend in the number of community protests over time with ever growing disruptiveness and violence (Alexander et al. 2018). Having mostly occurred in poor townships and informal settlements with the aim of demanding better housing, electricity, and water services, the 'service delivery protests' have attracted considerable attention among the scholars (Booysen 2007; Alexander 2010; Runciman 2016; McKinley 2016). Booysen claims that many people participated in these protests to provide the ANC with a 'reminder' or a 'signal' of electoral promises for better services, without decreasing their electoral support to the

ANC (2007, 2011). Others, however, consider service delivery protests the 'rebellion of the poor' against insufficient service provision and negligent and corrupt local councilors (Alexander 2010; Atkinson 2007). Revisiting Booyen's 'dual repertoire' framework, furthermore, Runciman asserts that there is a trend of increasing voter abstention among protesters as another form of informal political reaction (Runciman 2016).

Facing one of the highest rates of protests per capita in the world, the South African government has adopted direct, indirect, and sometimes repressive and benevolent forms of policies to contain the protests. Many municipalities have hindered protests by limiting access to information on necessary procedures to organize protests (Mukumba and Abdullah 2017; Right2Protest 2017; Lancaster 2016). Municipalities and the South African Police Service work to create inaccurate public beliefs that citizens have to obtain permissions to organize a public protest. This measure is thought to create a downsizing effect on protest activities (Chamberlain and Snyman 2017). The use of incommensurate police violence has been another means of preventing and repressing contentious politics (Right2Protest 2017; Seekings and Nattrass 2015; Chamberlain and Snyman 2017). A tragic example of police violence is the Marikana Massacre, during which 34 striking miners were killed by police forces in 2012, attracting international attention to the state violence in South Africa (Adelman 2015; Lancaster 2016). Finally, as this article also argues, social benefits are used to contain protests as benevolent means, as well. A study conducted by Staniland in Guguletu, Cape Town, for instance, revealed that by taking advantage of the social assistances such as food parcels and work programs, ANC councilors had been able to contain potential protests and dissents, and to create incentives to maintain amicable relationships with state representatives (Staniland 2008).

Electoral politics is also critical in analyzing social assistance provision in the South Africa. In 1994, South Africa held its first democratic election, which the ANC won by 62.6% of the votes (see Table 4 in Appendix). In the following elections, the votes of the ANC increased in both 1999 and 2004, so the ANC received 66.4% and 69.7% of the popular votes. Despite an ostensible decrease in popular support (receiving 65.9% in 2009 and 62.3% in 2014, and a historic low in 2019 with 57.5%), as the ANC garnered the majority of votes over successive elections, South African political regime has been dominated by a single party (Barrientos and Pellissery 2012; von Holdt 2013; Piper and von Lieres 2016). In the construction of this electoral hegemony, one must emphasize the role of redistributive policies, which has manifested itself as the ANC shifted from

a developmental state logic, which regarded employment and education as the main mechanisms to prevent poverty, to a logic of social policy, which focuses on social grants for alleviating poverty once it comes into place (Piper and von Lieres 2016; Plagerson et al. 2019, 2). Furthermore, as participatory democracy and civil society remained weak, clientelism and contentious politics became the main "informal politics" of representation that shaped the provision of public resources (Staniland 2008; Piper and von Lieres 2016; Runciman 2016; Anciano 2018; McKinley 2016). In such a context, the poor and marginalized employed this informal politics to access basic needs through their relationships with the ANC party members or organizers of contentious politics (von Holdt 2013; Piper and von Lieres 2016). Some authors even point out a populist relationship between the ANC and the poor masses, as the party increasingly adopted a public discourse that tied grants to loyalty to the party (von Holdt 2013; Patel 2016). A recent study, which investigates how socio-economic rights shape voting preferences, showed that a quarter of social assistance beneficiaries expressed that the fear of losing the grant has been influential in their voting preferences (Patel, Sadie, and Bryer 2018).

Research Design

This article investigates the possibility that contentious politics, electoral competition, and their interaction shape the provision of Child Support Grant. Our investigation consists of a quantitative analysis of survey data, where we establish the determinants of social assistance receipt, and a qualitative analysis of the interviews that we conducted in South Africa. Our quantitative analysis shows that at the same poverty level, those who do not vote for the ANC but participate in protests and those who vote for the ANC and do not participate in protests are more likely to receive the CSG than others. Our qualitative analysis is based on the data that we have drawn from our expert interviews with scholars of social policy and politics in South Africa, as well as with the NGO representatives involved in social policy procedures. These interviews were conducted in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Pretoria in September 2018. We conducted these interviews and qualitative analysis following our quantitative analysis, in order to account for the quantitative findings, to create a coherent narrative about the politics of social assistance and to present hypotheses about the possible mechanisms through which politics-based allocations of social assistance benefits might occur in South Africa.

In order to find out the impact of contentious politics, electoral politics and their interactions on the CSG provision, we have conducted a set of logistic regression analyses – given

that our dependent variable (whether receiving the CSG or not) is binary. The analysis is built upon pooled cross-sectional data from the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), conducted by Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa. Our data cover eight surveys from each year between 2008 and 2016, except for the year 2014, in which the questionnaire does not have information about protest participation. The unit of analysis is individuals 16 years of age or older, and surveys are conducted through face-to-face interviews (Roberts, Struwig, and Human Sciences Research Council 2017). The dataset is nationally representative (N= 9,708) and three stratification variables were used in sampling (province, geographic location and majority population group). SASAS is suitable for empirical purposes, as it is comparable over time. It also contains detailed information on many socio-economic, political, demographic factors theorized to capture eligibility for participation in social assistance program.

Receiving the Child Support Grant is our dependent variable coded as a dummy variable. It is operationalized based on a question from the SASAS questionnaire that asks if anyone in the household receives the CSG (for the exact questions asked, please see Appendix). *Protest* is the first main independent variable that is again a dummy variable. It is also coded based on a SASAS questionnaire question that asks "*if the person has taken part in a protest, march or demonstration in the course of last 12 months as a way of improving things or prevent things going wrong in South Africa"* (Roberts, Struwig, and Human Sciences Research Council 2017). Moreover, owing to the 2016 SASAS survey that asks the participants if they participated into peaceful, disruptive, and violent protest during the last five years, we used these three subcategories in another model to see the effect of different types of protest. In the questionnaire, a peaceful protest is defined as *non-violent protests such as strikes or political rallies with the permission of authorities*. A disruptive protest is categorized in the following sentence: "*if the person participated in a non-violent yet more disruptive protest, such as occupation or traffic blocking*." Lastly, violent protests are defined as *protests causing harming people or properties* (Roberts, Struwig, and Human Sciences Research Council 2017). All three categories are coded as dummy variables. The support for ANC is another main independent variable coded as a dummy variable. It is defined as whether the person voted for the ANC in the last national election or not. Abstentions are included into not voting for the ANC, as many scholars emphasize the importance of abstention as a manifestation of dissatisfaction in the context of one-party dominant South Africa (Runciman 2016, for the reasons people do not consider to vote see table 19 in Appendix).

To effectively control our models, we used four sets of control variables: socio-economic, demographic, political, and opinion factors. These Socio-economic variables are added in order to capture the income-level, eligibility conditions and other demographic factors, as the CSG is a means-tested social assistance program: *household income, main income source, trade union membership, dwelling type*, and *geographic location*, *race, education, age, citizenship, gender,* and *number of children in the household* (in additional model specifications, we also controlled *religion* and *language* for robustness check, presented in the Appendix). Additionally, political variables are used to avoid the omitted variable bias that might arise regarding their relations with *protest* and *support for the ANC* as political determinants of grant provision. We have chosen two variables for this purpose: *politicization*, which captures the degree of an individual's politicization, and *ideology*. Lastly, we have included the following opinion variable in the analysis: *the satisfaction with governments' way of handling the issue of social assistance provision*. It is originally a categorical variable with five opinions ranging from *very dissatisfied* to *very satisfied* (please see Appendix for details of control variable operationalization).

Results

Our descriptive analysis shows that while 57.8% of our sample receive at least one of the eight social assistant benefits available in South Africa, 34.7% of people benefit from the CSG. This is perfectly in line with World Bank ASPIRE dataset, which indicated that all social assistance coverage in South Africa was 56.6% in 2005 and 60.1% in 2010, confirming the validity of our sample (World Bank 2018). Moreover, our descriptive Table 2 reveals an ostensible increase in the incidence rates of the CSG over time, from 29.9% in 2008 to 38.9% in 2016. The incidence rate, furthermore, varies across different provinces. Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga have the highest rates with 45.8% and 44.2% respectively, whereas the lowest incidence is observed in Western Cape and Gauteng with 21.1% for both. Further descriptive analysis reveals that the CSG incidence rate is the highest in the informal settlements. 54.8% of informal rural and 45.4% of informal urban residents receive the CSG, which is followed by formal rural and urban residents by 34.1% and 24.6%. Table 2 also shows sizable differences in the percentage of social assistance beneficiaries among different races: 44.8% of black African population receives the CSG, whereas the rate decreases to 27%, 5.8%, and 1.1% for the colored, Indian/Asian, and the whites,

respectively. Further difference can be observed between men and women. While only 22.5% of men benefit from the CSG, 42.7% of the women receive the grants.

Table 2: The Child Support Grant Incidence Rates by Different Subpopulations.

We also observe that among the ANC supporters (71.27% of all respondents), 42.2% receive the CSG, whereas this ratio is 16.2% for the non-ANC voters. Those who took part in protests (10.84% of all respondents) and those who did not, in addition, have almost similar coverage rates, 34.7% and 35.1%, respectively. However, a cross-tabular analysis shows that the incidence rates between protestors and non-protestors vary when the ANC-support is taken into consideration (see Table 3). Among those who voted for the ANC, those who did not participate in the protests have higher incidence rates than protestors, 43.1% and 35.8%, respectively. In contrast to the previous rates, when we look at the incidence rates among the non-ANC supports, we observe that protestors have higher coverage rates – 30.7% compared to 15.3% for non-protestors.

Table 3: Cross-Tabular Analysis of the CSG Incidence by Protest Participation and Voting for the ANC (the italicized text indicates the standard deviation).

Lastly, when we look at the protester and ANC-supporter percentages in population across different provinces, we observe that Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces have the most ANC-supporters, CSG beneficiaries and the least number of protestors whereas provinces of Western Cape, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal have the lowest support for the ANC and relatively high number of protests whereas it is hard to generalize their incidences rates (see Table 4. For further demographics of the protestors, see Table 8 in Appendix). Although descriptive analysis does not provide evidence regarding the impact of political factors in the provision of the CSG, these initial observations encourage us to conduct regression analyses in the following subsection, through controlling for many socio-economic, demographic, political and opinion factors in order to test our arguments.

Table 4: Percentages of protestors, ANC-supporters and the Child Support Grant incidence across provinces.

In order to establish the impact of contentious and electoral politics on the provision of the CSG, we have conducted a set of logistic regression analyses, given that the dependent variable (whether receiving the CSG or not) is binary. Note that the general logistic regression model ensures that the probability estimate is bounded between 0 and 1. The logistic function can be defined as follows:

$$P(Y_i = 1 | \underline{Protest_i}, \underline{ANC_i}, x_{1i}, x_{2i}, \ldots, \underline{x_{Ki}}) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-(\beta_0+\Phi_1 Protest_i+\Phi_2 ANC_i+\Phi_3 Protest_i ANC_i+ \beta_1 X_1+ \ldots +\beta_K X_{Ki})}}$$

where, subscript i refers to the individuals. In the equation, the outcome variable is the probability of receiving the CSG and it is based on a non-linear function of the best linear combination of all independent variables. While Φ_1 and Φ_z refer to the log-odds of participating in protests and voting for the ANC respectively, Φ_3 refers to the interaction log-odds of interaction variable. To facilitate the interpretation of coefficients, we used the odds ratios obtained by exponentiating the log-odds coefficients. The odds are defined as the probability of having the CSG divided by the probability of not receiving the CSG. In all of our models, we included fixed effects on the province level to account for unobserved, stable, province-level differences that influence patterns of social assistance distribution. As the number of beneficiaries varies across years, a year dummy is also included for each year. All models are estimated with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors, clustered by provinces. Table 5 below shows the findings of the main analysis (for coefficients and standard errors of all variables, please see table 10 in Appendix).

Table 5: Models with Odds-Ratios. Controls are gradually introduced.

Since the Child Support Grant is a means-tested social assistance program, we controlled for the socio-economic and demographic factors in all models. The first three models suggest that as we take protest participation and voting for the ANC as independent factors without interaction, protest participation is not statistically significant and voting for ANC is only slightly significant.

When we introduced an interaction variable to the fourth model that captures the joint impact of protest and ANC vote, both political factors became not only statistically significant but also substantively sizable, signaling the existence of a conditional relationship between these political factors and CSG provision.

We added political controls in model 5 and a variable for social assistance satisfaction in model 6. Based on the sixth model, the findings suggest that after controlling for province and year specific factors and clustering standard errors by the provinces, for those who have taken part in protests in the last 12 months, the odds of receiving the CSG are 147% higher than for those who have not participated, as holding other factors constant. This coefficient is statistically significant at 0.1% significance level. Moreover, when compared to not having voted for the ANC in the last national election, voting for the ANC increases the odds-ratio of receiving the CSG by 28%, while other variables are held constant at 0.01 significance level.

The coefficient and significance level of the interaction variable have a number of implications: First, those who both have participated in protests and voted for the ANC have an odds ratio 1.05 (calculated by multiplying the coefficients of ANC vote, protest and their interactions 2.474 X 1.282 X 0.330 = 1.05). Consequently, their odds of receiving the CSG increase by only 5% compared to those who neither participated in a protest nor voted for the ANC, as holding others constant (see Table 6 below). The interaction variable is statistically significant at 0.1% significance level, whereas its first substantive impact is not sizeable. Second, those who vote for the ANC but do not participate in protests are 22% more likely to receive CSG, compared to those who vote for the ANC and participate in protests, with an odds ratio of 1.22 (calculated by 1/(2.474 x 0.330)). In short, non-protesting ANC supporters are more likely to receive the CSG than protesting ANC supporters. Third, those who do not vote for the ANC but participate in protests are 136% more likely to receive CSG, compared to those who voted for the ANC and participated in protests, with an odds ratio of 2.36 (calculated by 1/ (1.281 x 0.330)). In short, protesting ANC non-supporters are more likely to receive the CSG than protesting ANC supporters.

Table 6: Interpretation of Interaction Term Based on the Sixth Model.

The comparison among our models indicate that the effect of protest participation is conditional on the individuals' voting behavior. In other words, protest participation does not explain the variation in the likelihood of CSG benefit by itself. Protest participation leads to higher CSG only for those who do not vote for the ANC. Also, not participating in protests leads to higher CSG only for ANC supporters. This relationship holds true in other models as well. Among those who do not vote for the ANC, when the predicted probabilities of receiving the CSG are taken into consideration with other variables fixed at their mean values, the predicted probability of those who participated in protests in the last 12 months is considerably higher than those who did not participate (see Figure 1). Nevertheless, if the individuals voted for the ANC, the predicted probability of receiving the CSG for those who did not protest is statistically and substantively higher than in the protestors. In short, the odds of the CSG benefit are higher among two groups of people: ANC supporters who do not participate in protests and ANC non-supporters who participate in protests (see Table 7). Hence, concerning CSG benefits, either *uncontentious supporters* (ANC vote + non-protest) or *contentious non-supporters* (non-ANC + protest) are more likely to be rewarded (see below for our discussion of these concepts).

Table 7:Relative Levels of Odd-Ratios of CSG Benefit by Type of Electoral and Protest Behavior.

Once the control variables are introduced, we observe only slight changes in the odds of the independent variables, suggesting that after controls are exposed, the variables suffer little from the omitted variable bias. Note that in the models 4, 5, and 6, pseudo R-square is considerably high: 0.444, 0.445, and 0.446, respectively. Despite socio-economic, demographic, political and opinion controls, protest participation and voting for the ANC are still statistically significant, reinforcing the argument that political determinants play crucial role in the social assistance provision. The findings prove to be robust after a series of robustness checks (see Appendix).

Figure 1: Predicted Probabilities of Interaction between Protest and ANC Support. Other Variables fixed at mean values.

Table 8, moreover, shows the results of our further analysis that aims at investigating the effect of the protest type on CSG receipt. We conducted the analysis based only on the 2016 SASAS survey, as previous years do not have the data on protest type. We expected that as protests

and social movements became more violent, they posed greater threat to political and social stability, hence generating more propensity to receive the CSG. Therefore, we attempted to establish if the protest type explains the variation in CSG provision after controlled for all other relevant factors. All four models were controlled for several socio-economic, demographic, and political variables. The province and year-idiosyncratic factors were controlled as well, and the standard errors were again clustered by provinces.

Table 8:The Odds-Ratios of Receiving the CSG based on Protest Types during the last five years.

The models in Table 8 divide protests into three different categories: peaceful, disruptive, and violent protests. Participating into peaceful and violent protests are significant at 5% and 0.1% significance levels respectively, whereas disruptive protest is not statistically significant. Moreover, we found voting for the ANC and its interactions statistically insignificant. What is most striking is that participating in peaceful protests decreases the odds of receiving the CSG by 60.5%, whereas participating in violent protests increases the odds by 451.9% (by a factor of 5.519). This is both statistically and substantively significant, implying that those who participate in violent protests are much more likely to receive CSG than others. This correlation supports the argument that people who take part in violent protest are seen as a threat to the state, which uses the CSG as a containment strategy. While, as illustrated in our previous models, protest in general has an effect on the CSG which is conditioned by voting preference, the effect of violent protest has statistically significant and sizable effect on the CSG irrespectively of the people's voting preference. In other words, violent protestors from all parties receive higher CSG, *ceteris paribus*.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has shown that controlling for a wide set of relevant factors that would officially determine an individual's chances of benefiting from Child Support Grant, variables related to contentious politics and electoral politics appear to be associated with the likelihood of CSG receipt. We found that the likelihood of benefiting from the CSG was particularly high among two groups of people: first, those who vote for the ANC and do not participate in protests; and second, those who do not vote for the ANC and participate in protests. The first group of people support the governing party and they do not express their grievances or demands in the form of

protest. They are party supporters who do not challenge the party by taking to the streets. We call these people the *uncontentious supporters*. The second group of people do not vote for the ANC (they either support the opposition or abstain from voting), and they participate in protests. We call these people the *contentious non-supporters*. Our quantitative analyses show that individuals in these two groups are more likely to benefit from the CSG. Individuals who are part of the other two groups, namely ANC voters who protest and non-ANC voters who do not protest, are equally less likely to receive the CSG, compared to the first two groups. It is important to note that we control for all possible intervening factors; therefore, our analysis leads to the conclusion that these groups receive more CSG not only because of their higher poverty, but also because of their political characteristics. In other words, even among people of the same poverty level, uncontentious supporters and contentious non-supporters are more likely to receive the CSG. Another compelling finding of our analysis is that the effect of a protest is very much aggrandized if the protest is violent, independently of voting behavior – contrary to the effect of protests in general. In other words, violent protestors of any voting preference are much more likely to receive the CSG. This striking finding is not empirically conclusive in itself but it lends strong support for the argument that participation in violent protests may cause the state to direct higher social assistance to violent contenders. This result has theoretical implications for social policy research, and – perhaps to a greater extent – for the research on social movements.

What do our findings mean? First of all, our results do not constitute an ultimate proof for a causal effect of contentious-electoral factors on social assistance provision in South Africa. For such a proof, experimental or quasi-experimental research designs would have been needed. Rather, our findings provide strong evidence in support of our argument that ANC governments uses social assistance in order to contain contentious non-supporters and especially violent protestors as well as in order to sustain the support of uncontentious supporters. We also do not claim that provision of social assistance programs is only related to political purposes. Rather, this is a multidimensional phenomenon, which is shaped by a wide array of demographic, economic, and fiscal, in short, structural factors. What we tried to uncover is a previously unexamined but still very substantively significant factors, the joint effect of electoral and contentious politics. Hence, we acknowledge that structural factors are important in driving the provision of social assistance policies. Yet, these factors do not automatically dictate the form, content and trajectory of these policies. Rather, the ANC government likely considers structural factors to the extent that

these factors lead to the politicization of grassroots groups, which can threaten political stability or garner political support for the government.

As such, it is likely that the ANC government sees the non-ANC protestors as a real challenge, while protests coming from ANC voters are seen more manageable and less threatening. Similarly, ANC voters who do not protest may be considered a reliable base that should be looked after primarily. ANC voters who do protest, on the contrary, may be seen as internal opposition and hence are not treated with higher CSG provision. With this matrix in mind, one of our central findings is that protest participation alone does not affect CSG receipt, but its effect is mediated by ANC vote. In other words, to capture the effect of protest participation, which we found sizable and statistically very significant, one needs to take into account the joint effect of electoral politics. The ways in which electoral and contentious politics condition and shape each other have significant ramifications for social policy. Therefore, in addition to confirming the disruption-violence hypothesis of Piven and Cloward, our findings also lend strong support for the political mediation theories of Amenta and Piven-Cloward, as we show that for protest to have a significant impact on social assistance, there need to be peculiar overlaps of electoral and contentious political behavior.

Yet there remains a significant question to be answered: Through what mechanisms do these political factors shape the provision of the Child Support Grant? How does the South African state give higher social assistance to the *uncontentious supporters* and *contentious non-supporters* as well as violent protestors? We would like to close our article by presenting a number of working hypotheses about these mechanisms, based on the interviews that we conducted in South Africa with prominent scholars of social policy and politics and on our analysis of the existing literature. As such, we came to think that this observed disproportional allocation of the CSG for uncontentious supporters, contentious non-supporters and violent protestors could occur through a combination of geographical targeting and local level discretion.

First of all, South African constitution behooves the state to progressively ensure social security for those in need (Delany and Proudlock 2016). CSG application and decision processes are *officially* declared objective and programmatic. In a Weberian sense, this process is supposed to be formally rational, i.e. characterized by universally applied rules, laws and regulations that aim to rationally maximize the goal of alleviating poverty, as opposed to a substantive rationality,

whereby rational decisions and procedures are employed to attain certain value-oriented, political, ideological or ethical objectives. Yet, there are clear signs of substantive rationality in the allocation of the CSG, which entails the maximization of political goals related to garnering electoral support and containing social unrest simultaneously.

If the government seeks to positively discriminate in a clandestine way the *uncontentious supporters, contentious non-supporters* and violent protestors, they should first locate these people. In South Africa, there is no community targeting, and all CSG applications are evaluated as individual cases. We believe that locating these groups based on geographical distribution of protests and votes is the mostly likely scenario. As Dodlova et al. (2018) have recently shown, in the case of pro-poor social transfers, geographical targeting is often utilized when "the incumbent leaders/parties can use it to reward loyal districts or, on the contrary, avoid social unrest in certain districts (strongholds versus swing voters). Especially in combination with other targeting mechanisms, geographical targeting may become more political than pro-poor" (Dodlova, Giolbas, and Lay 2018).

For an effective geographical targeting strategy, adequate state capacity is needed to collect protest and constituency data and distribute the resources accordingly. In the South African case, we hypothesize that the government may have been relying on data on crowd-related incidents that are available to authorities through the Incident Registration Information System (IRIS). Maintained by the South African Police Service (SAPS), the IRIS is a database composed of comprehensive and detailed data on crowd-related *peaceful* and *unrest* incidents all over South Africa "to monitor incidents, to develop strategies, and to distribute resources" (Alexander, Runciman, and Maruping 2016; Runciman et al. 2016; Alexander et al. 2018). IRIS is updated by local police officers who report approximate locations of incidents (Alexander, Runciman, and Maruping 2016). Although the events that the IRIS provides are not protests but incidents that police units are likely to report and register, including recreational and cultural events, through IRIS, it is possible that the government could target overall areas that experience the most contestation. But, we need further research to substantiate this hypothesis. In addition to the protest data, party support trends can be captured through voting statistics or polls. Hence, government can prioritize neighborhoods according to the geographical distribution of crowd-related events

and party support. According to this information, one can adjust the number of SASSA offices, budget allocated to these offices and implementation of eligibility criteria.

Once the target groups are identified, the number and distribution of the SASSA offices where people apply for the CSG can play a role in the disproportional receipt of the CSG by the *uncontentious supporters, contentious non-supporters* and violent protestors. As SASSA offices are not distributed evenly, the people from the townships and villages far from the nearest SASSA offices face considerable cost of transportation, discouraging them from applying for the grant. Provided that the most eligible individuals for social assistance are most likely to be affected by the transportation and inconvenience cost, deciding where to open or not a new SASSA office has an important impact on determining the beneficiaries. In other words, we believe that an individual's chances of receiving the CSG are dependent on the proximity and availability of SASSA offices, and the decision-making of opening new SASSA offices might have played a significant role in geographical targeting of *uncontentious supporters, contentious non-supporters* and violent protestors. The micro and macro politics of distribution of SASSA offices has not been studied yet. Further research might shed light on the underlying political motives of opening new SASSA offices.

Within this broader geographical mechanism of disproportional resource allocation, we also hypothesize that local discretion may play a role in targeting uncontentious supporters, contentious non-supporters and violent protestors. Many studies have shown that even in social welfare programs, which are *officially* rule-based and programmatic, there is still a broad space for discretion, within which local case workers, bureaucrats and politicians can navigate within boundaries of official rules, subjectively interpret regulations and soften or tighten requirements so as to politicize the entire process (Herzfeld 1993; Gupta 2012). For example, analyzing the flagship social assistance program in Turkey, the Green Card program, Yoltar (2009) shows that despite broad legislations sets by the relevant law and decrees, "the eligibility and usage criteria foreseen by [the] general framework leave ample room to the discretion of local authorities. A further element of uncertainty has to do with the very ambiguities and illegibility of the criteria and rules set out by the legislative framework. The criteria and procedures described in the law do not lend themselves to straightforward application; instead, they often require extensive interpretation, which inevitably broadens the room for local discretion. As a consequence of this

inherent ambiguity at the heart of the scheme, local officials try to come up with various strategies to make these rules legible to themselves" (Yoltar 2009, p. 773). In other words, since these applications occur in a highly informal setting (many applicants even do not have ID cards), there are no direct ways of objectively determining people's incomes and other eligibility conditions, and indirect ways of means-tests always contain a degree of ambiguity and discretion. There are indications that in South Africa, concrete mechanisms exist to create a similar discretionary space as have already been reported by NGOs (Black Sash 2012). To receive the CSG, primary caregivers apply to the SASSA with the birth certificate, biometric data, fingerprints, photographs, and voice recording as well as the formal documents showing income and assets for means-test (Westphal 2016). In addition, a crucial aspect of such possible discretionary actions is related to the application system that requires a reference letter from a reputable person such as a local councilor, police officer, traditional leader, social worker, or a religious leader, who knows the applicant and the child based on a sworn testament (Westphal 2016). This is especially required for children whose legal parents are not present or who lack official identification documents, which is quite common among the poor in South Africa (Morrell and Beukman 2010). Herein, political determinants might be influential in the provision of the grant through the discretionary power of SASSA officials in approving the application of such people. SASSA officials might approve more applications in the protest hotspots or the ANC strongholds by interpreting the eligibility rules in a more generous way.

Even though the SASSA system is officially declared to be a very bureaucratized and regulated structure of social assistance, there is still ample room for politicized allocation of grants. The approval of Child Support Grant is largely automatized through computational systems, and this might cast doubt on the validity of our findings, implying that the grant might be distributed on "objective" grounds that would determine the applicant's need. However, the existence of automatized and computerized systems does not automatically guarantee programmatic allocation because it does not rule out the possibility of top-down political strategies and local level discretion. First of all, even if application is automatically evaluated, the number and location of SASSA offices, which affect individual applications, are centrally determined, and this decision may be politically conditioned. Second, automated systems still involve discretion as the input for these systems are generated in a quantified form out of an otherwise very unstructured data, including many dimensions of means-test parameters for informal and undocumented people.

Therefore, SASSA offices make decisions about how to frame certain information from the input form into the computer system and this transformation of data leaves space for subjective decisions.

There might be another counter-argument for our analysis: those who participate in protests are more likely to be politicized, they have greater political consciousness concerning their right to CSG and hence they apply more than others. In order to fully rule out this possibility, we need to compare CSG rejection rates in protest hotspots and other regions and need to analyze micro data which compares CSG application rates among protestors and non-protestors. We do not have access to such data, but in our analysis, we controlled for a *politicization* variable, which represents how much an individual is interested in politics, and as well as controlling for *education* and *ideology*. Our results still hold when we control for these factors, which may capture what is likely to determine one's political determination to apply for the CSG as a right. This allows us to partly rule out this possibility, but we like to point out the need for further research with additional data.

In other words, even though there are studies showing that most of the community protests are about local grievances, we believe that this does not necessarily mean that the central government does not feel threatened by these protests, which would contribute to the overall political instability in South Africa. Thus, we suggest that CSG could be used by both local (municipal) and national governments in order to contain local protests and reward the partisan. Moreover, this politicized provision of the Child Support Grant is likely be a joint outcome of centrally coordinated distribution of SASSA offices and local-level discretion, in which municipal authorities can contain grievances against local issues. Political containment strategies require a combination of national-level coordination of resources and local-level information gathering and implementation capacities. The local level is important because there is a body of research asserting that despite being computerized, the CSG provision is interrupted and disrupted by "non-bureaucratic barriers," including the requirement of identification documents and the presence of SASSA offices nearby that could determine who can apply and not informally.

As we have stated above, these are only possible mechanisms that could explain the occurrence of the observed disproportional targeting of *uncontentious supporters, contentious non-supporters* and violent protestors in South African CSG provision. We believe that the existence of such mechanisms can be confirmed through empirical analyses with more fine-

grained data on SASSA offices and extensive ethnographic research that would examine the quotidian application and decision-making procedures in SASSA offices as well as macro level policy-making processes within the bureaucratic and political domains. We encourage scholars to conduct further research to shed light on the hidden abodes of social policy making in South Africa, and perhaps elsewhere. This might illustrate that the logic of social assistance in the USA of the 1960s underlined by Piven and Cloward now undergirds recent social assistance expansion in South Africa, and perhaps in other countries in the Global South.

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