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Gendered Poverty

An exploratory study of the Child Support Grant in Johannesburg

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Abstract

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The aim of this study is to examine the Child Support Grant (CSG), and its impact on social settings for women in South Africa, with particular reference to Johannesburg. For this study, theories regarding poverty, roles, commodification and de-commodification have been applied. For this study, field work has been carried out during six weeks in Johannesburg, and the material gathered was done so in collaboration with The Black Sash, which is a human rights organization that works to promote and advocate people's rights, as well as assisting those who need with support and legal advice. This study is based on a qualitative approach, in which semi-structured interviews have been conducted with female recipients of the CSG, thus it has applied a gender perspective. In conclusion, there are many obstacles for women in South Africa. CSG recipients are typically much more vulnerable in terms of unemployment and access to services. Also, the grant has worked to uphold traditional gender roles. This study shows that although being very progressive and innovative in its design, the CSG has had a very traditional outcome and a limited impact on poverty as a multidimensional concept.

Keywords: CSG, gender, South Africa, poverty, roles, commodification and de-commodification

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1.Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In South Africa, over half of the children are receiving the Child Support Grant (CSG). The CSG is a social assistance grant, aimed to reduce poverty levels in South Africa. Almost all of the caregivers are women, and of these the vast majority is Black Africans. This implies a rather traditional gender structure, where women have the primary responsibility to care for children, but it also shows that although being abandoned for almost twenty years, the structures of apartheid is still very much at large. However, the government of South Africa has taken steps, and is actively working against this, which can be shown by the introduction of the White Paper, which was published a few years after the ANC (African National Congress) came to power. This is a very ambitious welfare scheme, which aims to reduce poverty and increase inclusion and redistribution. As a step in this, the CSG was introduced in 1998, with the target group being children. It is rather unique in that it explicitly targets children, and not parents. The design of the grant was made to enable children without biological parents to access the grant, further it was also designed so that it could be accessed by both men and women, thus having the potential to lessen the cleavage between men and women. However, in reality, the grant has become highly gendered and is in 96% of the cases collected by a woman (Patel et al., 2012). So why is it that such a progressive and innovative grant has had such a traditional outcome?

In this thesis, the CSG will be thoroughly explored. Following this introduction, the purpose of the study will be presented, culminating in the research question being presented. The subsequent part of this thesis will present the method used for conducting this thesis. It will discuss primary data and interview material in particular, since this thesis is based on a field study in which interviews have been carried out. This thesis also draws on secondary data. The next section of this thesis will then discuss the theories and theoretical framework that this study is based on. It will explore the concepts of poverty, commodification, de-commodification and roles. After that, a background to the area, both in terms of context, but also to the CSG will be given. In the fifth section of this thesis, the findings in Johannesburg will be analyzed on the basis of the theories previously presented. The thesis will then terminate in an extensive conclusion.

1.2 Purpose & Aim

The aim of this thesis is to explore the social setting of women who are recipients of the CSG in South Africa, with specific reference to Johannesburg. The CSG was designed to target children instead of parents, and has therefore received much praise for being very forward and progressive. Although being collected and managed by an adult, the grant was supposed to be accessible by all children, thus it could be collected by any man or woman taking care of the child, regardless of biological connections. Yet, despite the progressive design of the grant, the outcome has been very conservative. It is 96% of the cases collected by women (Patel et al., 2012), making it a highly gendered grant, suggesting that it also reinforces traditional and stereotypic gender roles, such as it is the women's job to care for the elderly, or in this case, children. For this study, field work has been carried by interviewing female beneficiaries, and of the six interviews carried out in Johannesburg, only one was aware of a man collecting the grant. Furthermore, poverty is in itself a highly gendered issue, and as discussed by Patel et al., (2012), women are likely to experience poverty differently from men. This suggests that men and women have different roles in relation to poverty, and this thesis will explore the female role of poverty.

Another aim of this thesis is to explore why almost all of the recipients of the grant are women. Why is it that policy that is so progressive have had such a conservative outcome? Because the grant is mainly managed by women, I will use a gender perspective, and attempt to explore this by analyzing some of the issues brought up by the interviewees in relation to concepts such as poverty, roles and de-commodification. What are the set of roles and concomitant formal and informal rights, entitlements and obligations for these women? A final aim is to explore how the CSG has impacted on the social setting of the recipients. The question for this thesis is then to investigate *how do beneficiaries experience the process of applying and receiving Child Support Grant in Johannesburg, South Africa?*

2. Method

This thesis project has sought to execute an exploratory study of some the social implications for recipients of the CSG in Johannesburg. As a step in this, the thesis will be based partly on primary data gathered through interviews, collected during field work in Johannesburg, South

Africa, along with complementary secondary data. By using both primary and secondary data, it is hoped that a more holistic, and accurate view of the research will be the outcome. Since this thesis is largely based on qualitative data, and aims to investigate personal notions and ideas of issues that allows for many interpretations, it can per definition not be objective, hence this thesis will use an interpretivist approach and use methods that might not be very suitable for generalization or quantification. It will also be inductive in its nature and formulate theories from the data gathered, rather than prior to gathering it.

For this thesis, field work has been carried out in Johannesburg, South Africa. All of the interviewees were women who were the recipients of the CSG. This is because the CSG has become a highly feminized grant, and is almost exclusively managed by women. Because the grant is means tested, all of the women had similar economic situations, although some struggled more than others. The women were of varying age ranging from 34 to 79 and they were all black Africans, and resided in different regions of Johannesburg, although they were all categorized as being the “poorer” districts. For the interviews conducted in Johannesburg, women were deliberately chosen as they constitute the majority of CSG recipients, however, questions were asked about male recipients as well, and although one of the women was aware of one father receiving the grant, none of the others knew about this.

The field work has been carried out during a six week period, in which interviews were carried out with beneficiaries of this grant. The interviews were semi-structured in their nature, meaning that questions were prepared advance, and certain themes were covered. By using semi-structured interviews it is the hope of this thesis that information has been uncovered that would perhaps not have been thought of before by the researcher. Semi-structured may also be useful in the sense that respondents are able to elaborate on issues they find more imperative in a way that might not have been possible using structured interviews. This would then, as stated by Bryman (2008), hopefully provide a more holistic view of the research topic. The interviews were organized and in collaboration with the Black Sash, a human rights organization with a focus on advocating people’s rights and assisting people with various issues in relation to this, with four main focuses, namely to “*educate people about their rights; to advocate for policies which promote and protect those rights; to monitor rights-based service delivery and exercise vigilance when rights are undermined in communities in crisis; and to provide free paralegal advice to people on how to access rights within the law*” (Black Sash, 2013). The Black Sash also provided an interpreter, who was helped with translation and explanations to varying degrees in all of the interviews. By using an interpreter, it is acknowledged that there might be some error within the translation.

Furthermore, it may also be a filter for these women to speak freely, especially since the translator was a male working in an organization that many of these women depended on for various reasons. However, it may also have allowed both the interviewer and the interviewee to get a better understanding of the question or the answer as the interpreter also assisted with explaining and clarifying issues in relation to the interviews. All of the interviews were recorded, and then transcribed by the researcher after concluding the field work. As discussed by Bryman (2008), recording interviews allows the researcher to focus on the conversation and what was actually being said, and then to respond and ask follow-up questions, something that might not have been possible, had I been busy typing while conducting the interviews. The respondents were before the interviews asked for their consent to record it. They were also guaranteed that these recordings would not be made public, and only used for the purpose of this paper. Also, all of the respondents are fully anonymous, and in the thesis they will only be referred to as interviewee nr 1 through 6. There are of course downsides to using recording devices as well. Bryman (2008) points out that in some cases people might feel intimidated, and may not speak as freely as they would do otherwise, which is something that must also be accounted for when analyzing and using them in the thesis.

Further, secondary data will also be used in this thesis. This serves for two main purposes, firstly to emphasize and verify the information gathered with other sources. This thesis will not be able to generate any results that can be used for generalizing purposes, therefore secondary data will serve as a way to validate the information gathered through the interviews. Second, secondary data will also be used with the purpose to find contradicting arguments that challenge the primary data. This will serve as to create a discussion in the thesis, which will hopefully not only make it more intriguing, but also strengthen the arguments put forward here. Furthermore, as described by Bryman (2008), secondary data have many benefits in that it often is of very high quality which makes it very useful, in some cases perhaps even more so than primary data. Secondary data is also often more easily accessible, and may not be as time consuming to gather, thus allowing more time to be spent on the analysis of it instead. However, there are limitations to using secondary data as well. When interpreting secondary data, you are interpreting someone else's data, thus applying your own notions and beliefs on it. By projecting your own belief system on someone else's work, you open up for some errors to be made, perhaps by misinterpreting the information at hand (Bryman, 2008).

2.1 Boundaries & Limitations

This thesis will attempt to do an exploratory research of the CSG and investigate how women experience the application process as well as being the recipient of the grant. It is not the aim to provide any data or information that can be generalized or quantified, but instead to hopefully provide some challenging ideas that will serve as a foundation for further research into the topic.

For this study, field work has been carried out in order to collect primary data; however, this data will also be complemented by secondary data. Although both of these approaches have flaws to them, it is believed that they combined will provide good quality information. In the field work, interviews have been carried out with women. By choosing not to interview men it is acknowledged that some information and some perspectives might be missing, however, for the purpose of this study, female respondents seemed more suitable, as it was the female experiences of the grant that was in focus. Nevertheless, male perspectives might add another interesting dimension, and may be a good starting point for further studies of the topic. The reason for deliberately choosing to focus on only the female experiences of the CSG is because it is very much a gendered grant targeting those considered poor. Men and women tend to have different experiences of poverty (Patel et al., 2012), and thus it is important to investigate them differently. Since the CSG is so feminized, it would seem appropriate to examine it from a female perspective.

Since the aim for this project is not to provide quantifiable or generalizable information, the sample group did not have to be representative of the whole population, but rather a small number of women from varying age groups and with different relations to the child in their care was chosen. The information that they have provided will thus not be thought of as part of a wider structure, but rather as individual stories and experiences. It is indeed the personal stories of these women that are of most interest to this research. The different issues they describe may be connected to their social status, which in turn might depend on there are, level of poverty or place of residence, to mention a few. By interviewing women of different categories, what their stories have in common will also be fascinating to explore, as this will indicate that these issues are more universal in the sense that they do not depend on factors such as age. A small sample group will also allow for a more thorough analysis of the different stories, as it allows more time to be spent on each and every one of them. This might prove useful in this type of research as it aim to explore the personal experiences of women, rather than the collective opinions.

3- Theory

3.1 Poverty

When discussing poverty, it is important to understand that poverty is not a clear-cut concept. There are many ways in which one can define poverty, very much up to personal interpretation. As argued by Misturelli and Heffernan (2010), the concept of poverty is constantly evolving, including new aspects progressively. Further, the actual term “poverty” has been so frequently used, that it now has a number of different connotations attached to it, (Misturelli & Heffernan, 2010). This implies that we need not only to consider the actual term “poverty”, but also reflect upon the word in itself. A word so frequently used is likely to attain several meanings rather than a single one. This is something that needs to be taken into consideration when attempting to address the issue of poverty, as different notions of the word could have consequences for the outcome of policy alleviation strategies in the sense that the aim of those strategies would then perhaps not be very clear.

Even though the concept of poverty can be argued to be very much up to personal interpretation in terms of language, there has been an evolution of the concept as such, starting from a mere economic view, gradually changing to include the lack of basic needs, and further on, considering the social implications of poverty, eventually developing into the contemporary, multidimensional view which includes several different variables, (Misturelli & Heffernan, 2010). The current multidimensional notion of poverty has thus developed from a rather narrow viewpoint, in which the lack of financial capital was equal to poverty, to a broader, and hence more complex, definition of the term.

As Spicker (2007) argues, poverty can basically be defined in three ways, all of which include a cluster of different notions. Firstly, poverty refers to the lack of material need, both as pattern of deprivation, low standard of living or the lack of a specific need. The second definition of poverty refers to people’s economic circumstances; including the notion of poverty as a lack of resources, where people lack the resources they need in order to be able to acquire what they want. The second definition also refers to the economic distance between people in a society, and in addition, the relationship people have to the system of production, by Spicker referred to as economic class is also included. Finally, poverty can be defined as an issue of social relations. Here, issues such as social class, dependency, social exclusion and lack of entitlements are included. The issue of social class is connected to multiple issues, such as educational and economic status, and essentially refers to people who,

because of those reasons, lack opportunities that might be available to others. Dependency on the other hand concerns people who, for some reason, are dependent on external assistance, such as welfare provided by the state or the assistance of people around them. The concept of social exclusion is rather complex, as it refers to the issue of people being excluded *because* they are poor and vulnerable, creating a vicious cycle in which people are poor and therefore get excluded, and when they are excluded they become poor(er). The final concept is the concept of entitlements, largely based on the work of Amartya Sen. According to Sen; poverty should not be seen as a lack of necessities, but rather as a lack of entitlements to obtain those necessities. In Sen's view then, poverty should be understood in terms of various arrangements, both socially, politically and legally, hence poverty cannot be described in terms of resources (Spicker, 2007). In the era of multidimensionality then, lack of financial capital is still included, but is not seen as the single cause of poverty. Rather, issues such as formal rights, dependency, social capital and social networks, to mention a few, are of equal importance in the discussion about poverty today.

Furthermore, although the aim of the CSG is to reduce poverty, the impact that it has had on this is discussable. It has most certainly had an impact on poverty in terms of allowing these households to obtain material necessities and increased their bargaining power, the impact it has had on social issues such as social class and distance between people is relatively limited. If one then ascribes to Spickers (2007) definition of poverty as a multidimensional concept which include social relations, levels of education and entitlements, a concept initially first discussed buy Amartya Sen, the impact that the CSG has had on poverty is in fact rather limited. Although enabling households to attain essentials by providing them with financial support, it has done little to reduce social distances between people, hence the issue of inequality is still very much at large. One could also add another interesting dimension to this. Because the CSG is a targeted grant, meaning that in order to be eligible, one has to fulfill certain criteria; it is by its very nature also exclusive to only some members of society. And, as described by Mkandawire (2005), in order for targeted policies not to also include "non-deserving", they are likely to be created and designed so that they are disempowering and potentially also even humiliating, thus creating a stigma and becoming less appealing to citizens outside the target group. In this situation, the impact that social assistance grants may have on inequality is not only limited, but is also reversed. If targeted grants are created in this way, inequality is embedded in the very core of them.

3.2 Commodification & De-commodification

Another issue that is related to poverty and social networks is commodification and de-commodification. In the case that social protection networks do not exist, people may find themselves being commodified and depending on the labor market to get an income to survive. However, if social protection networks exist, people may have other entitlements and may be able to survive without depending on salaries from the labor markets. If this is the case, people are de-commodified, meaning they are not mere commodities to use in the labor market. This phenomenon is discussed by Esping-Andersen in his famous work *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, where he states that “[I]t is as markets become universal and hegemonic that the welfare of individuals comes to depend entirely on the cash nexus. Stripping society of the institutional layers that guaranteed social reproduction outside the labour contract meant that people were commodified.” (Esping-Andersen, 1990 in Pierson & Castles, 2006, p 163). Hence, in situations where people do not have access to social protection services they must rely on their ability to sell their labor to the market in order to make a livelihood. However, social assistance schemes as such will not function as to de-commodify people. If this type of assistance fails to truly liberate people from market dependency, the process of de-commodification is severely halted. This may occur in situations where assistance schemes are means-tested and have relatively small benefits attached to it, as well as being associated with social stigmatization. In this case, people will still be coerced into the labor market (Esping-Andersen, 1990). A high level of de-commodification is usually associated with high levels of social assistance, and an extensive social welfare scheme.

3.3 Roles

Since men and women tend to have different experiences of poverty, this implies that they may also have different roles in relation to it. Roles are interesting in the sense that an individual may have many different roles depending on the situation or the relationship. Although being a very progressive and innovative grant, the CSG has also served to preserve and reinforce traditional gender roles, as it has become such a gendered grant, where the lion's share of beneficiaries are women (Patel et al., 2012). Both men and women are subjected to many different roles, however, in this thesis the emphasis will be on female roles. Roles are not static, and may depend on the various relationships that people have with one another, but may also transform as a response to external factors. As discussed by Banton

(1965), circumstances may force people to adjust and ascribe to new roles, as well as allocating roles to others in their community. Allocation of roles are fascinating, especially in relation to the CSG, as the role(s) one is ascribed is not chosen, or even desired, but instead is formed on the basis of other people's perception of you and the grant. Just as poverty is a multifaceted concept, so is the notion of roles.

There are many ideas of what constitutes a role, ranging from the inclusion of behavioral aspects and status (Banton, 1965), however, one definition that might be useful is provided by Banton (1965, p 29) who states that a role can be understood as "*a set of norms and expectations applied to the incumbent of a particular position*". The position would in this case refer to the grant. By sharing these norms and expectations, networks which have different rights and obligations are created. Roles can either be ascribed to one or achieved (Banton, 1965).

4- Background

South Africa is a country that has become relatively well developed compared with many other sub-Saharan countries. However, it is also a country with huge inequalities and poverty. Poverty is a multidimensional concept that includes notions of gender, race and age (Triegaardt, 2005). Poverty is also intimately linked with inequality, making it difficult to discuss one without the other. In South Africa, women are particularly vulnerable to poverty, and are often poorer than South African men. They typically have a harder time finding employment, or have jobs which pay less. In addition, they often lack access to property and credit, and typically have lower levels of skills. Also, the levels of HIV/AIDS are higher amongst women (Goldblatt, 2005). All of these issues are serious obstacles to development, and are closely connected to the issue of inequality. Much of this can be traced back to the turbulent history of South Africa, but after the demise of Apartheid, South Africa made a huge effort to deal with those (and many other) issues with the introduction of the White Paper for social Welfare. The White Paper is an extensive welfare scheme created to tackle poverty, reduce inequality and foster economic growth (Patel, 2012). As part of this, South Africa has created a range of different social grants, one of them being the Child Support Grant (CSG). The CSG is, as the name might suggest, directed towards children, and aims at reducing child poverty. However, it is claimed by the primary caregiver of the child, who is almost always the mother, or another female relative such as the grandmother, and thus it has been argued

that it can be seen as a tool for empowerment for women (Patel & Hochfeld, 2011). However, if this has actually been the case is debatable, and some would argue that the CSG has instead reduced women's rights to the rights of their children, and that they in that case have no rights on their own, but rather through their children (Goldblatt, 2005).

Equality in relation to the CSG is also problematic in the sense that it has proven to be very selective in how it is distributed. In this instance equality is not only a gender issue, but it is also sensitive to issues such as levels of poverty and age. There have been cases where officials have admitted that they are biased, and are reluctant to assist young women since they are perceived to be less reliable and trustworthy, and therefore might not "deserve" the grant (Goldblatt, 2005). There is great problematic regarding who is deemed deserving and not. In cases like this, when officials decide to make that decision for themselves, rather than following standard procedures, this problematic becomes even larger. However, this is not the only issue in relation to distribution of the grant. It has been shown that while that grant has had significant impact on reducing poverty in poor households, it has also had difficulties reaching the poorest people in South Africa (Goldblatt, 2005). This is of course problematic, particularly in cases where the grant is the only reliable source of income that many households might have.

Further, there are a number of issues connected to the application process in itself, which can function as a barrier in terms of accessing the grant. In quite a few instances, officials require documentation of some sort, even though this is not legally required. For example, officials often demand that applicants provide a clinic cards or documentation stating which province the applicant is living in, although this is no longer necessary according to the law. This can be problematic in a number of ways. Firstly, the most vulnerable might not be able to afford this. Second, offices might be located in such a way that these women cannot get there, either in terms of travel costs, or simply because they cannot afford to leave their work or home for that period of time. Furthermore, if employed in the farm work sector, employers have been known to prevent workers from accessing the grant. This is particularly problematic since farm workers are one of the most vulnerable groups in relation to the grant (Goldblatt, 2005). Further, a number of conditions have been issued in order to prevent fraud, such as the applicant must also bring the child to the application office. This is of course very inconvenient since there are usually no facilities for the children in these offices. Also, by having to bring children, the transport costs naturally rises. All together, this can make it highly problematic for women to access the grant, and as stated by Goldblatt (2005, p. 249).

They [the officials] view welfare recipients, particularly the poorest (farm workers and residents of informal settlements), youngest (mothers not grandmothers), and most vulnerable (mothers who have no access to child care), as least deserving of assistance. The unfair treatment they receive is a violation of their rights and is a reflection of the limits to their basic human capabilities. The worst treated are generally the least equipped to stand up for themselves, defend their life choices and demand better service.

All together, this leads to a highly unequal situation, where the most vulnerable sadly are the ones that are having the most problem getting the grant, thus creating even bigger cleavages between groups in society. This is of course a serious issue to development, and needs to be addressed properly.

Even though Apartheid was abandoned in the 1990s, the structures created during this era have been difficult to remove completely. People are facing inequality both demographically, socially and economically. These are issues in the post-apartheid era, but have its roots in apartheid (Patel & Hochfeld, 2011). This is reflected in the fact that the vast majority of CSG recipients are black, African women with lower levels of education and lack of employment (Naong, 2011) they are also usually bigger than the average household and have low access to services (Patel & Hochfeld, 2011). Access to services is an issue that has close ties with apartheid. During the apartheid era, services was usually very well established in areas populated by white people, however, areas which where populated by black people typically had no, or low access to the same services (Wynand, 2012). In this sense, lack of access to services, regardless of the reason for it, is also an obstacle to development in that it is also unequal. In Johannesburg, lack of access to services is a huge issue, partly because it has many informal settlements, which make it hard to reach the people living there with the services provided.

Another issue that needs to be considered in relation to the CSG is stigmatization. As described by Hochfeld & Plageron (2011), there is sometimes an issue of stigma attached with being a recipient of the CSG in South Africa. In their article they explain that beneficiaries of state support are often looked down on and stigmatized due to believes that welfare beneficiaries are irresponsible and undeserving of social assistance and that one should be self-reliant and not depend on welfare support. In this case, although the CSG might assist in helping people buy material goods, it does very little in lowering inequality and

reducing the social distance between people, thus the impact it has on poverty in its multidimensional form is questionable. It has been reported that women not receiving the grant, or women that has another source of income as well, might perceive women who depend on the grant as less deserving, or that they might be lazy and expect the grant to support them, and that they therefore do not look for employment (Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2011). Stigmatization is a serious issue and an obstacle for development. As described by Erving Goffman, people usually have two social identities, one virtual and one actual. It is when there is a mismatch between those two that stigmatization occurs (Ritzer, 2009). The process of stigmatization depends upon there also being something that is considered normal that may be used as a reference point. Stigmatization can thus not occur in the absence of the “normal”, hence it is the normal that decides what or who is stigmatized. So what can then be considered to be normal? Normal may be different from one context to another; hence stigma is also contextual (Goffman, 1990 p. 14). It is also socially constructed since it is (what is considered to be) the normal that does the stigmatization by reacting to what it perceives as abnormal. The abnormal is thus merely constructed by the normal. One can then perhaps argue that everyone is at some point stigmatized because, as argued by Ritzer (2009), everyone is at some point or in some situations not the normal. Hence, although one might not feel abnormal to one self, one might still be subjected to stigmatization. Further, the level of stigmatization must also be considered. In situations where one might not feel as one is abnormal, although perceived so by others, the level of stigma might be so small as it does not affect the stigmatized, however, in situations where stigmatization is more obvious, people may find themselves being excluded or marginalized. The exclusion and marginalization is thus perhaps not something that the stigmatized can control, as the process of stigmatization is performed by the normal. However, if one knows or believes that one is in a position to become stigmatized; steps might be taken as to prevent this from happening. The abnormal is thus then aware that it holds a quality that might be perceived by others as abnormal, and might then try to hide or get rid of this abnormality.

The issue of inequality is also a major one. As mentioned, inequality is one of South Africa’s major developmental issues. As described by Patel & Hochfeld (2011), some would argue that because the CSG is mainly managed by women, it may also function as a tool for female empowerment. Indeed, if one assumes that it enables women to gain more control over the household spending, or simply by providing them with tools to improve their living standards, this may very well be the case. However, as discussed by Goldblatt (2005),

although being managed by women, the grant is in fact targeted towards children, and thus rather than promoting women's rights, it instead reduces them to those of their children.]

The Child Support Grant is one of the most innovative social assistance grants, and has received international recognition for being a progressive grant. It is very unique in the sense that it is not bound by biological connections, but can be claimed by the primary caregiver of a child, even if no biological relationship exists. It has since the beginning in 1998 expanded continually, and in 2012 it reached approximately more than half of the children in South Africa (Patel et al., 2012). The aim of the grant is to increase the well-being of children, and reduce poverty. It attempts to do so by using a targeted approach, thus the grant is a means tested one. In order to be eligible for the grant then, one may not earn over a certain amount of money, between R2 500 for a single person and R5 000 for married couples (Patel et al., 2012, p 5). However, as further described by Patel et al., (2012), the CSG is often the only regular source of income that many of these households have, sometimes accompanied by pensions, or disability grants. Poverty is indeed one of the major obstacles to development in South Africa, and by simply looking at the figures presented here, the extent to which poverty exists in South Africa is massive. Nevertheless, the CSG is currently the main social assistance measure in South Africa, and it has undoubtedly had some impact on several issues related to poverty, such as child nutrition and school attendance and performance (Patel et al., 2012). The impact on poverty as such, is however up for discussion, and will be more thoroughly investigated in this thesis. This emphasizes the fact that unemployment is a huge problem in South Africa. According to Patel & Hochfeld (2011), CSG households are typically affected to a larger extent than non-CSG households, not only in terms of unemployment, but also in terms of access to services and levels of education. Furthermore, it is also worth to reflect on the fact that all of the interviewees were black women. This is by no means a coincidence, since the vast majority of recipients are indeed Africans. According to the Department of Social Welfare (2006, p 5), an astonishing 94% of CSG beneficiaries were Africans, and more than 85% of them lack access to income generating activities. If added up, a picture emerges that displays an image of black, African women with no employment as the main target group of this grant. This may be a reflection of the social structures in South Africa that are still, despite being abandoned for almost two decades, influenced by the Apartheid era (Chibba & Luiz, 2011). Social structures are a major factor to consider in relation to what roles women have in different situations, and since these structures are, at least to some extent, shaped by the era of Apartheid, this issue can thus not be overlooked

Another factor that also needs to be addressed is that women and men often have different experiences of poverty. Poverty is a multidimensional concept that includes notions of gender, race and age (Triegaardt, 2005). Poverty is also intimately linked with inequality, making it difficult to discuss one without the other. In South Africa, women are particularly vulnerable to poverty, and are often poorer than South African men. They typically have a harder time finding employment, or have jobs which pay less. In addition, they often lack access to property and credit, and typically have lower levels of skills. Also, the levels of HIV/AIDS are higher amongst women (Goldblatt, 2005). All of these issues are serious obstacles to development, and are closely connected to the issue of inequality. Much of this can be traced back to the turbulent history of South Africa, but after the demise of Apartheid, South Africa made a huge effort to deal with those (and many other) issues with the introduction of the White Paper for social Welfare.

Johannesburg has for long been, and continues to be one of South Africa's primary actors in terms of development of the nation. It is constantly growing, largely because of great domestic migration, where people from other parts of South Africa move in to the city, and has several million inhabitants (City of Johannesburg, 2011). Yet, even though being one of driving forces in the South African development, it continues to have high levels of poverty and huge inequality. In the case of CSG, inequality is not only an issue between women and men, but even more so, an issue between women of different ages and levels of poverty.

The population of Johannesburg is relatively young, and this is partly due to the HIV/AIDS infection that is affecting the whole country. There are few people that live beyond 75 years, and the majority of the population in Johannesburg is between 30-39 years old (City of Johannesburg, 2011). The context of Johannesburg was deliberately chosen because much research on social policy has already been carried out here, thus there is already much existing literature that might help as to strengthen the data that has been collected. Further, Johannesburg, and South Africa for that matter, makes for an interesting case as it has developed very extensive social welfare scheme, the White Paper for Social Welfare. The White Paper for Social Welfare, which was published in 1997, was a proposal from the South African government to promote the development of social welfare in South Africa and included principles, guidelines and recommendations to foster this process (Department of Welfare, 1997).

5. Analysis

5.1 The CSG

Throughout the interviews, certain common themes were brought up. Although South Africa is a country that has become far more developed than many other Sub-Saharan countries, it is nevertheless still a developing country with huge levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment (Chibba & Luiz, 2011). This was well reflected in the interviews carried out. The CSG is a targeted grant, meaning that in order to be eligible one has to fulfill certain criteria, one of them being “poor” in the sense that one cannot earn more than a certain amount of money. Because the interviews were carried out with recipients of this grant, consequently none of them earned more than this. However, what was even more striking was that out of six, five were, and had for a long time been unemployed, and thus had no regular income more than this grant and, in some cases, also pensions. Although the CSG is a grant that can be collected by anyone who is the primary caregiver of a child, it is almost exclusively collected by women, usually with some biological connection to child, although not necessarily the mother (Patel et al., 2012). The CSG has thus become a highly gendered grant and reinforces traditional gender roles.

5.2 Some difficulties with the CSG

South Africa has indeed expressed a desire to have a universal and redistributive welfare system in place with their White Paper for social welfare (Department of Social Welfare, 1997), which would indicate an extensive welfare scheme; however, they have in many regards been quite unsuccessful in achieving this. In terms of the CSG, this grant will most likely have a very limited impact on the de-commodification process, as it is a means-tested grant that provides recipients with limited financial support. Thus, the CSG does not allow people to become independent from their labor, as they typically have a hard time managing on only the support money, hence they must still (try) to sell their labor. In cases where a stable social security network exists, people may perhaps still manage without being dependent on the market, but as explained, although a social protection network might exist to a certain extent in South Africa, for beneficiaries of the CSG this safety net often disappears after becoming recipients (Interviewee nr 2, 2013-02-22). The CSG does not only have a limited impact on de-commodification, but might even work to commodify people, as liberalization

from the market is not realized, and external social protection networks are withdrawn after receiving the grant money. The situation does indeed become a bit paradoxical.

5.3 Do you “deserve” the CSG?

How one experiences poverty is closely connected both the roles one is experiencing, as well as the level of de-commodification. If one is socially excluded and depending on the labor market, one might experience feelings of vulnerability and poverty. However, if one is part of a wider community, and have a social safety network, one might not feel as if one is particularly poor although one might be lacking what others would consider necessities.

By failing to assist younger mothers because they are seen as less deserving and irresponsible (Goldblatt, 2005), officials have given these women a role of not only being irresponsible, but also being inadequate mothers that do not deserve assistance. This is very problematic, as the role ascribed to them then hinders them from accessing services they are in reality entitled to. This may also serve as to exclude and marginalize these women even more from the society, which also reinforces the poverty cycle; the cycle in which people who are poor become marginalized, and because they are marginalized they become even poorer (Spicker, 2007).

As stated in the article by Hochfeld and Plagerson (2011), one recipient expressed that on top of the grant, she also had another income, and that was essential for her being able to make ends meet. Women managing on only the grant money was thus in her opinion not truly deserving, as they were capable to manage without any additions. They were receiving the grant because they were citizens of South Africa, thus they had a right to it, and not because they were really suffering. This implies that there is a notion amongst beneficiaries that if one has the right to receive the grant, one is also complied to fulfill certain obligations, and not only depend on this money. In her argument then, the beneficiary interviewed by Hochfeld & plagerson (2011), implies that her way to fulfill her part of the deal was more appropriate than other people who did not work, as they were then “not really deserving”. The right to social assistance in this case then is not seen as something positive.

Another theme that was very present was how the grant was being used. All of the women interviewed claimed to use the grant for food, schooling and/or transport (mostly to and from school), however, in five out of six cases, the women also expressed that although they were using the grant “wisely”, they had heard stories about other women misusing it. Even in the one case, were the woman said she did not know if there were beneficiaries who

misused it, she said that she was always given information about fraud and who was eligible and not when she went to collect the grant, and therefore she assumed that there must be some who did so. Thus, all of the interviewees claimed to know that some people were not using the CSG money as they should. This is interesting in several ways. First, by claiming that some women are not using the grant properly, these women automatically also assumes they themselves are using it correctly and that some women are less capable and less deserving, creating a situation of “us and them”. In this case, these women give themselves a role of superiority, because they know better than “the others”. Also, this is fascinating because it assumes that there is a correct way to use the money. Although the money should obviously be spent in relation to the child, by assuming that there is a right and wrong way to do this, these women fails to consider other explanations to why others may not use the grant in the same way as they do.

5.4 CSG- a gendered grant

What is also fascinating is that out all of the women interviewed, none were the biological mother of the child. Instead these women were the grandmothers or, in some cases, the aunts of the children. In some instances this was because the birthmother had died, typically in AIDS, but there were also incidents where the mother simply had failed to take responsibility for the child and these women intervened and took over that responsibility. In these cases, the application process became somewhat more problematic; however, this will be discussed in more detail further on in this thesis. What is interesting though is that this implies that there is some sort of social network existing within families that works to hinder people from becoming an outcast. This type of network may also exist within a community; however, as argued by Offer (2012), poverty often work as a complication in this, as these types of networks usually require some sort of reciprocity which many poor people might lack the ability to provide. Nevertheless, in the instances where familial social networks exist, some sort of social security is provided to other family members. However, it would seem as if this security is provided by women, as it is them that take responsibility for the care of others. When asked what the role of the father was, one interviewee even went so far as to say:

“No, no fathers. They disappear. All the fathers they disappear, they vanish”
- Interviewee nr 3, 2013-02-22,

This statement by one of the women interviewed indicates that the fathers are not present, and fails to take responsibility for the child. If this is the case, then the reason for women being

the primary care takers might partly be because no one else is willing to take this responsibility. However, one must be careful to make the assumption that men are irresponsible, and strays away from the care burdens. Men and women have traditionally had different roles, where the man has been seen as the breadwinner, and the women the care taker. If one then has made the assumption that men are less fit to take responsibility for the care of others, this might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, there are also reports of men escaping their responsibility. As discussed by Patel et al., (2012), in cases where the mother or another care giver of a child is single, some fathers have been paying private maintenances to the children, but evidence shows that becoming a recipient of the CSG have had a negative effect on this. If a woman is getting financial support from outside, the father may feel as he no longer has an obligation to provide for his child, since the child is already taken care for **then**. According to Goldblatt (2005, p 249), *“Many men and their families regard maintenance claims against them as an attack. There have been cases of violence and even murder at the maintenance courts”*. This is of course extremely serious, and would be a topic for a whole other thesis. Yet, this is not the only issue in regards to maintenance and CSG. In cases where the man does not live with the child, he might still feel as if he deserves part of the grant money too, and may confront the woman outside pay points to collect what he feels is his share (Goldblatt, 2005). Conflicts are thus not unusual outside pay points, and may also lead to violent situations.

Being a recipient of the CSG also has certain expectations attached to it. One interviewee explained that since she had been getting the grant, some people had become reluctant to help her. This implies that when getting financial support, the social security network is withdrawn. She explained that people would say that she *“was eating the money”*, if she did not manage to provide for herself and the child with the grant, and thus did not deserve any assistance from them (Interviewee nr 2, 2013-02-22). This is interesting as all of the women said they were living in areas with high uptakes of the CSG, and that the amount of money was too little and needed to be increased. This suggests that although women recognize that the amount of money is very little, and that an increase is necessary in order to be able to provide for the children properly, they also deem those who still have financial difficulties as incapable of handling money, and un-deserving of assistance. This is highly paradoxical, and shows that there is an inconsistency in how one see one self and how one sees others. Again, the “us and them” is clear.

Furthermore, during the interviews conducted, the majority of the women claimed to know about people misusing the CSG, implying that there is a right and a wrong

way to use it. While stating that some women use the grant money incorrectly, they also ascribe these women with the role of being an insufficient mother. There are also many prejudices against young women, claiming that they are purposively getting pregnant in order to be able to claim the grant, but hands over responsibility for the child to someone else as soon as they are receiving the money (Goldblatt, 2005). Although this is simply not true, and no evidence exists to support this claim, young women are automatically put in a vulnerable position. The role ascribed to them is then perhaps not only the irresponsible one, but also as calculating and deceiving.

5.5 The CSG as a right

Women have previously expressed worries that the grant will be “taken away” by the government if the issue of misuse continues (Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2011). Another big worry for many is that the government will “run out of money”, in fact many beneficiaries believe that the grant will cease to end one day as the state simply cannot afford it. This raises the question of the women viewing the CSG as a right or as a mere act of kindness by the government. By implying that it is something that can be withdrawn at any time by the government, and that one as a recipient has no say in this, it would be easy to state that most women do not see the CSG as right, however, in the cases where it is indeed seen as right, this typically have a bad connotation attached to it.

6. Conclusion

This thesis has sought to explore the CSG from a social and gender perspective. It has used both primary data collected during a field work process, and secondary data which have been analyzed in the weeks following the field work. The primary data has been interesting in that it has in some cases been in accordance with previous research, but it has in some cases also contested the findings of previous research. The CSG is in its design a highly progressive and innovative grant, yet the outcomes have been very traditional. Gender roles have been reinforced, and the impact on poverty is questionable. It is acknowledged in this thesis that the CSG has indeed had some impact on poverty in terms of financial assistance; however, if one

ascribes to the more multidimensional concept of poverty that Spicker presents, the impact has in fact been rather limited. Indeed, it is clear from this thesis, that the CSG beneficiaries that were interviewed did not feel as if their situation in society had changed.

The women collecting the CSG on behalf of a child are faced with numerous challenges, not only financial although this is a major issue. Firstly, since the grant has become so feminized, and because it re-emphasizes the stereotypic gender roles, female development is severely halted. Some have argued that because the majority of beneficiaries are women, the grant could have a positive effect on female empowerment by giving women control over the income, thus giving her increased bargaining power and a greater position in the household. However, this argument has been met with the claim that the women are merely handling the money on the behalf of the children, and thus their rights are reduced to those of their children. In this case, the CSG does not function as a tool for empowerment. Furthermore, because the amount of the CSG is very little, the possibility that it has to lift people out of poverty is diminished, as it does not help people to get out of a dependency situation. Although allowing people to buy food, and pay for school, it does not change the social status of the women (or children). Since the vast majority of interviewees were unemployed, the CSG was sometimes their only reliable source of income. Although this is difficult enough in itself, this was also met with prejudices by other beneficiaries that had employment. Women with no other income than the CSG are often seen as lazy, and undeserving of the grant. It is believed that because they are able to manage on only this money, they do not really deserve it, since there are households that need to work on top of the grant in order to make ends meet. By claiming that these women do not truly deserve the grant money, these women become even more marginalized, both for being poor, but also for not being poor enough. This is highly paradoxical.

Furthermore, there seems to be some sort of social protection network in place to hinder people from falling into extreme poverty. However, by providing women with financial assets, it seems as if this network disappears. As one woman stated, after getting the grant money, she could no longer ask for assistance, as people would then say that she was “eating them money”, and therefore did not deserve any assistance. By failing to provide CSG recipients with the same protection as non-CSG recipients, these women are then dependent on a financial income in order to survive, thus they become commodities. Although not being commodities in the sense that they are dependent on selling their work force in order to survive, they are dependent on the financial assistance that the CSG is, and must rely on this. They have no external safety net that will help them if this fails, thus they have very limited

entitlements. These aspects are important to take into account when creating and implementing policies aimed at reducing poverty levels. As this study suggests, a more holistic approach is needed in order to break cycles of poverty and empower those who are marginalized.

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