



**Bolsa Familia Program:
A case study of Brazil's Conditional Cash Transfer Program and
its concepts of poverty**

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The work I have submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the material in the Dissertation, which is not my own work, has been identified and acknowledged. No materials are included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Signed: Ana Leticia Mafra Salla Date: 20 May 2013

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Abstract

Poverty has been considered the worst and most widespread human rights violation in the 20th century affecting millions of people. Many authors have tried to define poverty and several theories were created to conceptualize it. Despite sharing similar aspects, these theoretical streams do not form one single coherent theory of poverty. Rather they add to a complex multidimensional perspective of poverty. Concurrently, numerous public policies and programs have been developed to address and reduce poverty, some more successful than others.

For many decades Brazil has struggled with problems of structural inequality and poverty. In 2004, the federal government implemented a conditional cash transfer program called Bolsa Familia. This program aims to reduce poverty and break the intergenerational transmission of poverty by investing on children's human capital. In the last decade, the Bolsa Familia has grown considerably and became an international reference of public policy committed to poverty reduction. The Bolsa Familia has an intricate design that is based on a multi-levelled coordination of actions and centred on the multidimensionality of poverty.

Therefore, the aim of this case study is to explore how the multidimensional aspects of poverty are integrated to the Bolsa Familia design and to understand how the program operationalizes these theoretical concepts of poverty.

Key words: Poverty, multidimensional poverty, Brazil, conditional cash transfer program, Bolsa Familia, public policy, inequality

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List of acronyms

CCT	– Conditional Cash Transfer
GDP	– Gross Domestic Product
HDR	– Human Development Report
IADB	– Inter-American Development Bank
IBGE	– Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística
ICESCR	– International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICCPR	– International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights
IPC	– International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth
IPEA	– Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Avançada
MDG	– Millennium Development Goals
MDS	– Ministério de Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome
MIC	– Middle Income Countries
MPI	– Multidimensional Poverty Index
OHCHR	– Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights
PBF	– Programa Bolsa Família
PRSP	– Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
U.N.	– United Nations
UNDP	– United Nations Development Program
UDHR	– Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Glossary to Terms Related to Poverty

The terms in this section are constantly used in poverty literature; hence they will be quickly explained in order to facilitate their understanding.

Conditional cash transfer programs – This type of program is implemented in order to reduce poverty and raise consumption in the lower classes. The idea is that those participating in the program are living below a certain poverty line established by the government, and thus receive an amount in cash to complement their income. In exchange, the recipients agree to respect the conditionality aspect that can be from enrolling their children in the school and to participating of health programs. Hence, reducing poverty and enhancing human development.

Extreme poverty – In general, the term extreme poverty (also referred to as absolute poverty) refers to people living under the \$1,25 a day poverty line (as established by the World Bank). That reflects a severe deprivation state that people undergo due to inability to realise basic human needs, such as access to food, safe drinking water, health, education and decent living standards.

Inequality – Inequality refers to the gap created between the poor and the non-poor. There is a considerable debate around the idea of inequality and if inequality reduction should be pursued as a way to reduce poverty or as an end in itself (Warr, 2005). Inequality represents a social imbalance and will not disappear by itself independent of the growth rate (Warr, 2005). According to the Human Development Report “poverty and inequality disempower people and open them to discrimination in many aspects of life and to additional violations of their rights” (UNDP, 2000, 42).

Structural poverty – The term structural poverty refers to a broad set of factors beyond individual control and that “the fundamental causes of poverty are to be found in the economic, political, and social failings of society” (Rank, 2004:50). Rather than concentrating on individual attributes as the cause of poverty, it focuses on failings at the structural level. Some of the symptoms of structural poverty are unemployment, discrimination, “inequities in educational quality [...], systematic lack of political power of the economically disenfranchised, or the widespread patterns of racial residential segregation” (Rank, 2004:75).

“Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.”
Nelson Mandela

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Contextualization

A recent study from the British Overseas Development Institute (Sumner, 2012) shows that the global distribution of poverty has changed. The majority of the world's poor now live in middle-income countries. Half of the world's poor live in China (16.7%) and India (35%) and another quarter in other middle-income countries (MIC) such as Pakistan, Nigeria and Indonesia. According to this study, that is a direct result from economic development that raised 28 countries from low-income to middle-income (according to the World Bank's classification). Henceforth, as a reflection of that change, 90 per cent of world's extreme poor live in just 20 countries, Brazil ranks 16th on that list with 0.9% of the world's poor (Sumner, 2012).

Over the past decade, Brazil has had some remarkable results after implementing new social policies aimed at reducing extreme poverty, i.e the Bolsa Família program - PBF (Brazil's conditional cash transfer program). Since the 1990s, a succession of public policies have been developed to battle what is being called the worst and most widespread human right violation: poverty (Sane, 2004; Shetty, 2005; UNDP, 2000).

The Gini-coefficient¹ shows that inequality in Brazil is slowly reducing – from 0.60 in 2000 to 0.54 in 2010, the lowest level since the 1960s (World Bank Data). Despite this decrease, inequality in Brazil is still among the top ten in the world (Kakwani, Neri, & Son, 2010). Although these numbers show an improvement of the social (and economic) reality, according to the Census of 2010 (IBGE), Brazil still had 8,5% of its population (around 16,2 million people) living under the extreme poverty line established by the Brazilian government of R\$ 70/month². Inequality and poverty are intrinsically tied within the Brazilian society, which from a historical perspective can be traced all the way back to the colonization period (Maia & Buainain, 2011).

With a growing population of 191 million (IBGE, 2010), Brazil faces the challenge of overcoming its own past. The country has had more than its fair share of undemocratic governments in the past and policies that benefited primarily the higher social classes. As a consequence, the current social and economic reality of Brazil is one of massive structural inequality continuously maintained by a vicious circle that prevents lower classes from overcoming poverty and social exclusion (Vaitsman, Andrade, & Farias, 2009). Moreover, the concept of poverty in itself is an amalgam of complex interactions between economic and social issues, which demands the creation of a program capable of addressing such issues from different angles.

After many other not-so-successful social programs, the structure and implementation of the Bolsa Família program brings a change in paradigm when it comes to poverty alleviation initiatives. As a conditional cash transfer program with multidimensional approach to poverty, the PBF's core strategy to alleviate poverty is twofold (MDS, 2013). The cash transferred to the families as an immediate solution to lift people from poverty, and the conditionality system that link the cash payments upon compliance with commitments created to improve human capital (MDS, 2013). The program was developed to fit Brazilian society's needs and specificities, but still faces criticism and many challenges to its full implementation, as we will explore in the following chapters.

¹ “The Gini-coefficient of inequality is the most commonly used measure of inequality. The coefficient varies between 0, which reflects complete equality and 1, which indicates complete inequality (one person has all the income or consumption, all others have none) (World Bank website, 2013).

² According to the exchange rate in May 2013, R\$70 would be US\$35 (US\$1 = R\$2).

Nonetheless, is undeniable that Brazil is undergoing dramatic and unprecedented changes within its socio-economic structure. The Bolsa Família (Family Grant) program is one of the most important programs of the federal government under the current and past administration and it is making considerable strides towards poverty reduction. The PBF continued to expand since its creation in 2003 and by 2009 it had already assisted over 12 million households (UNDP, 2013).

1.2 Research Relevance to the Human Rights Field

As we will see in the next chapters, poverty has many dimensions and cannot be solely understood as income deprivation. Poverty has been considered the single most challenging human rights violation in the 21st century (Sane, 2004; Shetty, 2005; UNDP, 2000) due to its widespread and multidimensional characteristic. An impoverished life means not having clean water or enough food to feed yourself and your family, as well as not having access to good healthcare and being denied access to education and choices. It represents in itself a lack of power and security to realize your human rights. Hence, poverty reflects the violation of human rights in different levels and scales.

The idea that poverty is a violation or denial of human rights is basically centred on the notion that poverty is detrimental to human dignity, one of the core values of human rights as stated in the preamble of several international human rights treaties. For UNDP and OHCHR, main proponents of this perspective, the connection between human rights and Sen's capability approach to poverty is based on the denial of basic human freedoms (OHCHR, 2004).

The United Nations (U.N.) upon its creation and later with the adoption of some of its core international human rights treaties recognizes substantive rights to which all human beings are entitled. Even recently the U.N. continues to recognize and adopt documents that underscore rights and values that are essential to every human being to live a full life. Below there is a list of some U.N. documents and bodies that defend the protection and promotion of values necessary to end the suffering and deprivation caused by a life in poverty.

Table 1: The U.N. and Principles of Freedom from Poverty

U.N. Documents and Bodies	Rights and values in accordance with the ideal of freedom from poverty
<i>U.N. Charter (1945)</i>	- Preamble: “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, [...] and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” (U.N. Charter, 1945);
<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)</i>	- Art. 22: Right to social security; economic rights, indispensable for personal dignity; - Art. 23: (1) Right to work and to freely choose one’s occupation; (2) Equality of wages; (3) Right to income support; - Art. 25: Right to the satisfaction of basic needs; - Art. 26: Right to basic education;
<i>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)</i>	- Preamble: “Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, Recognizing that these rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person, Recognizing that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want...” (ICESCR, 1966); - Art. 6: Right to work; - Art. 7: Right to just and favorable working conditions, (i) fair wages; (ii) decent living conditions; (b) safe and healthy working conditions; - Art. 9: Right to social security; - Art. 11: (1) Right to an adequate standard of living; (2) Right of everyone to be free from hunger; - Art. 12: Right to health; - Art. 13: Right to education
<i>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)</i>	- Art. 6: Right to life; - Art. 8: Freedom from slavery; including (a) Forced or compulsory labour; - Art. 9: Right to liberty and security of person; - Art. 14: Fair trial;
<i>Vienna Declaration (1993)</i>	- Art. 25: Extreme poverty and social exclusion as a violation of human dignity; promote the human rights of the poorest; end to extreme poverty and social exclusion;
<i>Independent Expert on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty</i>	The Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights (2012);

Sources: U.N. Charter, 1945; UDHR, 1948; ICESCR, 1966; ICCPR, 1966; Vienna Declaration, 1993; and OHCHR website, 2013).

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),

A human rights definition and understanding [of poverty] leads to more adequate responses to the many facets of poverty, responses that do not trample on rights in the pursuit of growth and development. It gives due attention to the critical vulnerability and subjective daily assaults on human dignity that accompany poverty. Importantly, it looks not just at resources but also at the capabilities, choices, security and power needed for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other fundamental civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights (OHCHR website).

Poverty, thus, is a multifaceted and complex concept making it hard to obtain a clear definition, as it will be discussed in the next chapter. In an attempt to clarify the connection between poverty and human rights, Costa (2008) classifies three conceptual variations concerning the interconnection between poverty and human rights: first, poverty as violation of all or several human rights; second, as an independent human right (freedom from poverty); and third, as a cause or consequence of violations of human rights (Costa, 2008).

The first proposition, poverty as violation of all or several human rights, is centred on the idea that poverty is “incompatible with human dignity. Given that human dignity is the foundation for human rights, poverty is therefore a denial of all human rights” (Costa, 2008:86). The main proponents of this perspective are the OHCHR and the UNDP, which understand the notion of poverty as a failure of basic freedoms (Costa, 2008) and is directly associated with Sen’s concept of poverty as capability deprivation (as we will see in the next chapter).

The second perspective, poverty as an independent human right “focuses on the so called absolute (or extreme) poverty, defined as a deprivation of what is required to live a life that is worth living” (Costa, 2008:89). Even though the ‘right to freedom from poverty’ is not recognized as such in any international human rights law, “the legal dimension of this approach is built from one or several legally binding obligations that have already been recognized in international human rights law” (Costa, 2008:90) – i.e right to development and right to an adequate standard of living. Lastly, the third approach

conceives poverty as the cause of many human rights violations, mainly economic and social rights, but also civil and political rights. The difference with the first approach is that poverty is not considered a priori a human rights violation but a cause of human rights violations (because it socially excludes a group of people whose human rights are then systematically violated) (Costa, 2008:93).

Moreover, within the human rights field, poverty will always be understood as multidimensional, especially because of the capabilities deprivation approach that associates poverty to the violation of basic human freedoms. Hence, eliminating poverty and the

condition of extreme deprivation is a must in order to promote full respect of human rights for the present and future generations.

In addition, referring to the OHCHR statement above, adapting states' policies and laws to their specific reality has proven to be necessary in order to guarantee the development of an equal society that respects human rights and gives full rights to all its citizens - especially in developing countries where public funding is really restricted and must be used in the most effective way possible to achieve relevant impact (OHCHR, 2004).

1.3 Objectives and Purpose of the Research

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how the Brazilian conditional cash transfer program called Bolsa Família is integrating and operationalizing the concept of poverty. The analyses will focus on the Program's design and implementation as well as its recent achievements and limitations.

I am particularly interested in examining 1) how the concept of poverty as multidimensional is integrated to the structure of the Bolsa Família program, and 2) how this concept is operationalized by the PBF in order to alleviate poverty and promote social change. I believe that both questions will help me to achieve the ultimate goal of this research, which is to understand how the Bolsa Família program applies poverty concepts to implement poverty alleviation and empowerment measures.

Moreover, the choice to study this topic was made due to several factors. First of all, a personal interest in the topic of poverty, especially the new policies being implement in my own country, Brazil. Growing up in a country with such level of disparity and poverty made me very aware of privileges and responsibilities that I was given. Second, it was an opportunity to explore a recurrent topic at national and international arenas, and I sincerely believe that we are living a moment of change when it comes to poverty reduction, especially in Brazil. And lastly, I wanted to work on a topic with a more practical approach that would allow me to look at the theory but see a practical application to what I was studying.

1.3.1 Research Questions

- a. How does the Bolsa Familia program in Brazil integrate multidimensional aspects of poverty to the program's design?
- b. How is the concept of poverty operationalized in the Bolsa Familia program?

1.4 Methodology

The structure of this dissertation was developed following Yin's (1994) conception of research strategy for case studies. Yin established three conditions to identify when to use a case study strategy: "(a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioural events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events" (1994:4).

Hence, after assessing the topic and the research questions in relation to the conditions above, the use of a case study strategy was chosen upon confirmation that the topic fitted the pre-conditions. According to Yin, the application of a case study approach has distinct advantages in comparison to other methods when "a how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (1994:9). This theory applies to this case, since the primary data and facts (creation, structure and implementation of the program) under investigation cannot be manipulated.

Moreover, the advantages mentioned above include the fact that a case study allows to explore a contemporary phenomenon (the Bolsa Família Program) within its real context (the current socio-economic situation of the Brazilian society) using multiple data sources (documentation, archival records and interviews). Thus, ensuring that the issue in focus can be explored through a variety of lenses and permitting the examination of multiple aspects of the case under study (Yin, 1994).

1.4.1 Research Design

Considering a case study approach, Yin explains that the research “design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research question and, ultimately to its conclusions” (Yin, 1994: 19). The design is the blueprint that will guide and structure the research. Additionally, the research follows Yin’s (1994) logic of embedded single-case study design. In other words, the main unit of analysis is the Bolsa Família program, but in order to deepen the analysis of the program and its magnitude, it also explores subunits of the Bolsa Família, such as the cash transfer system and the conditionality aspect amongst others.

As for the analytical assessment, the research starts with a descriptive framework, which was considered the best option to organize the case study and pinpoint the appropriate evidences for analysis. This technique was specially used in chapter three and four to outline the program’s main features and challenges as well as in chapter five to explain and demonstrate the findings and how they relate to the research questions.

The content analysis method was considered the best option to transform the data collected into research results. Its malleable format allows the use of a subjective analysis of documents based on inferences and deduction to reveal latent meanings imbedded in the official documents and policies (Cappelle et al, 2003). Moreover, the research applies a content analysis as the strategy to systematically examine the data collected. In order to facilitate the analysis, a set of categories was formulated to guide the analysis of policies, laws, decrees and other official documents.

Consequently, this research design was organized and developed to allow for an in depth analysis of Brazil’s current conditional cash transfer program, Bolsa Família, whilst using techniques that permit to present and investigate the evidence in a logical and systematic structure.

1.4.2 Data Collection

As part of the case study strategy, the data collection should rely on multiple sources

of evidence (Yin, 1994). Thus, the sources of evidence concentrated mostly on documentation, but also benefited from archival records (survey data, such as census and reports). To some extent the research also used interviews, even though the interviews of relevant public officials were not carried out specifically for this work, but rather selected from media outlets. According to Bryman, the data collection “can entail different sorts of approach in terms of how structured or open-ended the implementation of the methods are” (Bryman, 2012:13).

In that sense, the data collection for this study relied on primary and secondary sources. Bryman (2012) defines primary data as data collected from first-hand contact with a source and yet not manipulated by other researchers. As for the secondary data, Bryman (2012) describes it as data collected or processed by others. Thus, in this study the primary data is comprised of official documents from international bodies and official documents from the Brazilian government, such as laws, policies and programs directives. As for the secondary data, it consists mainly of existing literature on the subject of this research as well as field research performed by other researchers. The criteria used to select the documents to this research were (1) pertinence to the research topic and (2) credibility of the sources.

The data collection was limited mainly to documents and secondary data since it was impractical to carry out field research (due to time and financial constraints), although I believe that it did not interfere with the quality and outcomes of the research. Doing fieldwork demands planning and is time consuming, focusing mostly on documents as sources of evidence allowed me to keep the focus on the topic.

1.4.3 Scope and Limitations of Research

- Case Study

This research was delimited to a specific conditional cash transfer program currently being implemented by the Brazilian government. It is important to notice that there are presently several different public policies aimed at reducing poverty being implemented in Brazil. After a thorough assessment, the Bolsa Familia program was chosen due to its specific characteristics that brought about a change in paradigm on social policies in Brazil:

conditionality aspect; extensive application throughout the whole country; fast-paced promotion of poverty reduction; and extensive international cooperation proposals to replicate the program in other countries. By choosing to analyse this program, issues such as defining time, place and context were simplified since the program's implementation occurs in a pre-defined set of conditions, as it will be analysed in the following chapters.

- *Theoretical Framework*

The theoretical framework consists of an overview of the most significant theories focused on elucidating the concept of poverty, i.e the multidimensionality approach to poverty and some of its dimensions (lack of income, capability deprivation and social exclusion). These theories were selected for their well-recognized contribution to the field-study of poverty and because they are intrinsically connected to the Bolsa Familia's design. This section attempts to go beyond the mainstream idea of using literature review as a search for answers to the research questions and tries to use it as a way "to develop sharper and more insightful questions about the topic" (Yin, 1994: 9). Such framework provides a solid foundation to the case study, which helps to construct arguments, reveals critical issues and assists to explore the case study in depth. Even though there are several interesting discussions regarding poverty and human rights, some of them go beyond the scope of this research and are just briefly mentioned.

1.4.4 Ethical Concerns

One of the problems identified concerns the use of statistics and indicators. The use of indicators seems to be used loosely by researchers in general and even the statistics provided by the government can be confusing and misleading. This problem of reliability and validity, as stated by Bryman (2012), refers to a fluctuation of definitions and methods over time to calculate statistics and indicators. The manipulation of indicators can be done intentional or unintentionally, and the use of these figures might lead to wrong conclusions about the program effectiveness. Therefore, the use of cross-referencing was used throughout the whole study as a strategy to keep any possible inaccuracies of statics and indicators to a minimum.

Another ethical concern was to remain unbiased during throughout this study. Remaining unbiased can be particularly challenging when discussing a topic related to human rights considering my personal and professional background as a human rights student and activist. The process of data collection was essential to maintain an independent position concerning the subject. Hence, during the process of elaboration of this thesis, I constantly applied Bryman's (2012) criteria to avoid bias to my methods: reliability, validity, credibility and applicability. In addition, identifying intentions and meanings behind discourses and documents became part of the process of analysis, allowing me to recognize positions and avoid pre-judgements.

1.5 Chapter Overview

Chapter one introduces the context of the research, the topic's relation to the human rights field and presents the methodology used to produce this study.

Chapter two presents the theoretical framework with the three main approaches that conceptualize poverty (income poverty, capability approach and social inclusion theory) and the multidimensional perspective, which will be used to analyse the case study. This chapter also discuss the structure of conditional cash transfer programs.

Chapter three and four focus on explaining the design of the Bolsa Família program and its singularities with some critical considerations to its implementation. The discussion is centred on the three main axis of the program: cash transfer, conditionality and complementary programs.

Chapter five elaborates on the findings and relates them directly to the research questions, with especial attention to how the program operationalizes the concept of poverty.

Chapter six presents the conclusions and draws recommendations based on the theoretical framework and the case study.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To comprehend the implications of applying the concept of poverty to practical capacities, we must first understand the meaning of poverty. Defining poverty is complex and yet essential. This very definition is applied to the construction of public policies aimed at providing an adequate response to the many aspects of deprivation caused by poverty (Misturelli & Heffernan, 2012). This chapter divides the concept of poverty in a theoretical and an operational perspective. Moreover, the theoretical part will be centred on three dimensions of poverty (lack of income, capability deprivation and social exclusion). The operational part will examine the multidimensionality approach to poverty and the model of conditional cash transfer programs and its application as a poverty reduction strategy.

2.1 Theoretical Context of Poverty

Historically, the standard conceptualization and measurement of poverty has had a strict unidimensional economic criterion focused on lowness of income or/and consumption. Many eminent scholars have studied the diverse meanings of poverty. The philosopher Aristotle perceived poverty as a hindrance to the functioning of man (Sen, 2000), and the economist Adam Smith identified a trait of social exclusion intertwined with causes and consequences of poverty in his well-known illustration of the inadequacy felt by a worker without means to afford a linen shirt³ (Lister, 2004; Sen, 2000; Wagle, 2008).

³ Adam Smith (1776) wrote, “A linen shirt, for example, is strictly speaking not a necessity of life... But in the present time... a creditable day labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt” (Lister, 2004, 26).

However, the narrow understanding of poverty as merely income deprivation has only fairly recently been taken over and articulated in terms of broader concepts (Lister, 2004; Mbonda, 2004; Wagle, 2008). The core notion of poverty has expanded to more innovative approaches that grasp it, for instance, as a matter of capability deprivation and in terms of social exclusion.

Lister (2004) explains that historically the discourses of poverty disseminated the idea of an underclass that suggested not only economic deprivation, but also implied moral and psychological shortcomings. On previous decades, if one failed to overcome poverty it was due to their own lack of decency and character, and not because of unfair socio-economic conditions preventing the lower classes from overcoming poverty (Lister, 2004; Wagle, 2008).

Hence, a change in paradigm slowly occurs where the old moral imperative no longer explains the presence of poverty; a rights approach reflects a legal and ethical obligation to people living in poverty not because they need it, but because they deserve as human beings to be effectively part of a society that shares values such as dignity and decent standard of living.

According to Townsend, the problem with the previous theories of poverty consists of not having fully articulated other non-income aspects even though they are at some level present in their views (Lister, 2004). Therefore, this broadening of the concept of poverty has shaped contemporary discussions going beyond the economic aspect and entering fields previously overlooked – such as social, political and human rights – and has culminated in the contemporary multidimensionality approach to poverty (Wagle, 2008).

Sen expresses the idea of poverty beyond the income aspect in the most basic and clear way possible, “we must look at impoverished lives, and not just at depleted wallets” (Sen, 2000:3). As a good example of what this change of conceptualization means in practical terms, the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2000) estimated that 1.2 billion people lived in income poverty and under the US\$1 a day poverty line in developing countries. However, the recently developed Multidimensional Poverty Index shows that the previous estimated number of people living in poverty was underestimated.

The recent measurement points to the staggering amount of 1.6 billion people living in multidimensional poverty today (Alkire et al., 2013). Even though some reports confirm that income poverty is reducing globally, the introduction of multidimensional approach to poverty identified a higher amount of people living in poverty than it was previously estimated. Nonetheless, a certain amount of caution is necessary when using data gathered from poverty measurement. Since the multidimensionality approach uses more complex format to calculate levels of poverty, it is important to understand how the data is gathered and evaluated (but we will focus on this discussion later on this chapter).

2.1.1 Poverty as a State of Deprivation

In general terms, amongst the theories it is possible to reach an agreement over the idea of poverty as a state of deprivation, that something crucial is missing and/or preventing people from enjoying a full and healthy life (Arnsperger, 2004; Lister, 2004; Mbonda, 2004). Beyond that, there are many theories that stress different perspectives of poverty. For the purpose of this thesis, we will focus on three of the most prominent theoretical lines that conceptualize poverty: income poverty, capabilities deprivation and social inclusion.

- Income Poverty

Based on an economic approach it considers if one has sufficient income or purchasing power to meet his or her basic necessities for a decent standard of living. If the answer is negative, then one is considered poor. But, even poverty is ranked according to its intensity. Poverty can be measured by indicating a poverty line⁴ (or threshold) and qualifying anyone below that as poor or absolute poor (Lister, 2004) – which can also be universal, i.e the World Banks’s U\$1/day extreme poverty line or U\$2/day poverty line, or specific, such as a national established poverty threshold. In addition, the term relative poverty refers to the placement of individuals “at the bottom of some distribution of quality-of-life indices” (Arnsperger, 2004:289). Thus, relative poverty separates people by

⁴ “Poverty lines are cut-off points separating the poor from the non-poor. They can be monetary (e.g. a certain level of consumption) or non-monetary (e.g. a certain level of literacy). The use of multiple lines can help in distinguishing different levels of poverty” (World Bank website: <http://go.worldbank.org/7X7NL8OZY0>).

comparing them to others, the ones in the bottom – below the average income – are therefore considered poor (Arnsperger, 2004). The relative poverty is also associated with the concept of inequality since it compares who is on the top and on the bottom of a wealth distribution pyramid.

Additionally, Wagle (2002) emphasizes that contemporary poverty standards that merely reproduce absolute (or categorical) concepts of poverty (i.e World Bank and several countries) end up validating the material deprivation aspect. In her own words, these “Economic well-being approaches to poverty definition and measurement, no matter whether they are absolute, relative, or subjective, are grounded on the material deprivation notions and have been fiercely criticised for their excessive focus on goods-centred explanations” (Wagle, 2002:162).

- **Poverty as Capability Deprivation**

Amartya Sen introduced the capability deprivation theory, which entails a more comprehensive understanding of poverty based on basic freedoms, functionings and capabilities. For Sen, functionings “reflects the various things a person may value doing or being [...] capability refers to the alternative combination of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve [...] is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom [...] to achieve various lifestyles” (1999, 75). Through this perspective poverty is understood as a capability deprivation that leads people to experience impoverished lives and suffer from lack of basic freedoms (Costa, 2008; Wagle, 2008).

Thus, poverty in this sense refers to a state of functioning failure or absence of opportunities deemed valuable in a given society or as Wagle explains it, “the concern under the capability approach is to assess the degree of freedom one enjoys in effecting the functionings that are valuable” (2008:65). Consequently, an individual is considered poor if he or she is not able to fully function in a certain dimension as a result of denial of opportunities being imposed on to them in a multidimensional setting.

This is an unprecedented change; concepts of poverty are starting to be formulated as a matter of rights, shifting the core definition of poverty from want to the more contentious

field of power relations. Being poor now means an inability to fully enjoy one's rights. It is the beginning of a rights perspective to poverty (Misturelli & Heffernan, 2012) – which underscores a strong link between the capability approach and human rights.

Sen states that “what the capability perspective does in poverty analysis is to enhance the understanding of the nature and causes of poverty deprivation by shifting primary attention away from *means* to *ends* that people have reason to pursue, and, correspondingly, to the freedoms to be able to satisfy these needs” (1999:90). As such, the concept of poverty when connected to the capability deprivation approach falls into line with human rights values. According to Costa, “ ‘capability approach’ is widely recognized as the conceptual “bridge” between poverty and human rights, since it incorporates new variables to economics that reflect the intrinsic and instrumental value of fundamental freedoms and human rights” (2008:85).

Nevertheless, Wagle (2002) call attention to some shortcomings of the capability approach:

While making tremendous contributions to the process of developing more realistic explanations of poverty, the notion of capability poverty has failed to recognise the significance of the social, political, and psychological processes that compel some to be poor. This suggests that any discussion of poverty is incomplete without incorporating the aspects of economic, political, and civic or cultural exclusion. This is because these resemble broader sets of social and structural forces that play a central role in providing people with opportunities or posing threats to them (Wagle, 2002:162).

- **Poverty as Social Exclusion**

In a wider sense, the term social exclusion is used to describe a social disadvantage (recurrently connected to long-term unemployment) that leads to marginalization from society and social isolation (Lister, 2004). Emerging in the 70s and 90s, the social inclusion approach focuses on those who do not necessarily suffer from income poverty, but are excluded from mainstream society (Costa, 2008). In addition, it also brings a relational factor to poverty by referring to people's relationship to social institutions to claim for participation and citizenship recognition (Wagle 2008; Sen, 2000). Unlike ‘the quality of life

factor' central to the capability deprivation theory and 'the material viewpoint' of the traditional income approach, the concept of social inclusion focuses on the level of political and social participation (Sen, 2000; Wagle, 2008) introducing aspects of social justice to poverty.

One might expand on the issue saying that the innovative aspect of this approach is the relational feature of the process of declining participation and access to activities within a society. This perspective allows for whole groups – that could be considered socially excluded or most vulnerable based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and disability – to articulate their demands in terms of discrimination and prejudice as cause and consequence of poverty⁵ (Wagle, 2008).

Sen (2000) also explores this theory and goes even further by identifying the difference between passive and active exclusion. The former refers to exclusionary facts caused by social or economic events (such as unemployment). The latter constitutes a deliberate action or policy that denies social and political rights (as preventing legal immigrants from voting, or not allowing land-rights to women). In any case, both of them represent a political failure since poverty would be a direct result from a bias in the structure of the society (Sen, 2000).

In that sense, social exclusion is seen as a complex and cumulative process of social disadvantage which result in people living in poverty “simply because they are excluded from various social processes” (Wagle, 2002:162). Moreover, it is a process of stigmatization that culminates in segregation of the underprivileged from the non-poor (Silver & Miller, 2003). Hence, segregation and discrimination are at once the cause and consequence of people's vulnerability to poverty. This social exclusion approach to poverty also introduces a slight change of focus from the individual to the institutions that perpetuate social structures compliant with vicious cycle of poverty.

⁵ The term social exclusion is widely known and may cover an exhaustive list of themes from social, political and economical issues; thus, as Sen (2000) explains it, the use of such approach has to be carefully applied not to transform all issues in a matter of social exclusion.

Table 2: Main Theories Conceptualizing Poverty

	Measured by	Examples
Income poverty	Income and/or consumption	- Inability to provide food, housing... due to low or lack of income
Capability deprivation	Deprivation of basic freedoms and lack of opportunities	- Liberty and economic means to move freely and to choose one's residence; - More years of education for women represent less domestic violence (change in the household power dynamics).
Social inclusion	Marginalization from the mainstream society	- Excluded from good jobs due to lack of child care or inferior public schools; - Inability to keep a home as an effect of unaffordable rents.

Source: Sen, 1999; Lister, 2004; Wagle, 2008.

Furthermore, these three approaches are intertwined at some level with one complementing the other whilst adding another layer of complexity to the concept of poverty. It is undeniable that poverty has an economic perspective, which might be its most tangible and perceptive characteristic (it is certainly the easiest to measure amongst the three approaches presented here). Nonetheless, the other dimensions of poverty are present, perhaps hidden behind an economic condition, and need to be acknowledged as such. Wagle (2002) emphasizes this notion as well by reaffirming that

it is the integration of all three – goods-centred, person-centred, and institution-centred – views that one way or another inseparably affects poverty. One factor might be more visible in one society due to some idiosyncrasies involved, while other(s) might be more visible in other societies. But one cannot do justice towards understanding the issues of poverty by embracing only one of these approaches (2002:162).

Hence, the multidimensional approach unites those dimensions without prioritizing or undermining them, but it sheds a light on the more contentious dimensions of poverty. One can see them as contentious since they require a change in public policies, of perceptions and concrete investments in human capital development.

2.2 Multidimensional Approach and its Implications to Poverty Reduction

The argument that poverty is multidimensional implies the idea that “poverty is not simply an economic problem but rather a complex social problem with various manifestations” (Wagle, 2008:56). This approach brings in itself both a conceptual and a methodological aspect about how to define and measure poverty. If the whole idea of multidimensionality is based on the various forms of poverty and deprivation, so the measurement of poverty through this perspective will reflect that. Instead of using only economic factors, this concept of measurement also includes parameters such as education levels, life expectancy, infant mortality, and access to health care, amongst many others (Alkire & Foster, 2011a; Esposito & Chiappero-Martinetti, 2010).

In addition, this approach was of significant influence to the Human Development Reports (HDR). The Human Development Reports consider the capabilities, social exclusion and the multidimensionality approaches as vital concepts to the notion of human development (UNDP, 2000; 2010; 2013). In fact, one can go as far as saying that the HDR operationalized the union of those poverty theories. Throughout any of the Human Development Reports it is easy (and recurrent) to spot a mention to the capabilities and the social exclusion approaches. They also introduced the concept of human poverty, which refers to the “impoverishment in multiple dimensions – deprivations in a long and healthy life, in knowledge, in a decent standard of living, in participation” (UNDP, 2000, 17), in a clear reference to the three approaches discussed above.

Now, even though the multidimensional approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of what poverty means, it also brings the challenge of how to operationalize the measurement of this concept of poverty (Esposito & Chiappero-Martinetti, 2010). In other words, if poverty has so many facets, how can one transform this concept into parameters which will be operationalized to measure and calculate not only the amount of people living in poverty, but also the level of deprivation experienced?

This is another crucial aspect when discussing poverty, depending on how the definition is elaborated it may affect the operationalization of the measurement process – revealing the old clash between theoretical perception and practical applicability. Notwithstanding, to answer this question would demand a lot more from this research than

its intended purpose. It suffices to say that poverty measurement involves complex mathematical functions in order to incorporate the multiple dimensions to be analysed – which might involve choosing indicators, establishing weights for the dimensions since some aspects are more harmful than others and determining a poverty threshold, amongst other factors (Esposito & Chiappero-Martinetti, 2010; Wagle, 2008). There is an extensive literature on the topic of poverty measurement methodology, especially concerning the multidimensional approach (Alkire & Foster, 2011a, 2011b; Chakravarty, 2003; Ravallion & Chen, 2003; Ravallion, 2011).

Thus, if developed appropriately, the concept allows for a more precise identification of people living in poverty (Alkire & Foster, 2011a; Lister, 2004; Wagle, 2008). In general, measurement of poverty is a complex process involving “selection of dimensions, dimensional cut-offs (to determine when a person is deprived in a dimension), dimensional weights (to indicate the relative importance of the different deprivations), and a poverty cut-off...” (Alkire & Foster, 2011a:290). In a multidimensional perspective, this is a constructive process in which one can choose the dimensions to be analysed according to the parameters of the research.

However, what is important to notice here is “the powerful interplay among the dimensions of poverty which provides an important value added to understanding how poverty is constructed and what policy measures may be needed to tackle it” (Wagle, 2008:60). Thus, poverty measurement contributes to policymaking since it guides the implementation of social and economic policies. Measurement helps to identify who is poor and who is not, besides, “how we measure poverty can importantly influence how we come to understand it, how we analyse it, and how we create policies to influence it” (Alkire & Foster, 2011a:290). An erroneous measurement might have adverse consequences, which leads to inappropriate policies with ineffective measures, mistaken target population and/or erroneously aimed policies (Wagle, 2008).

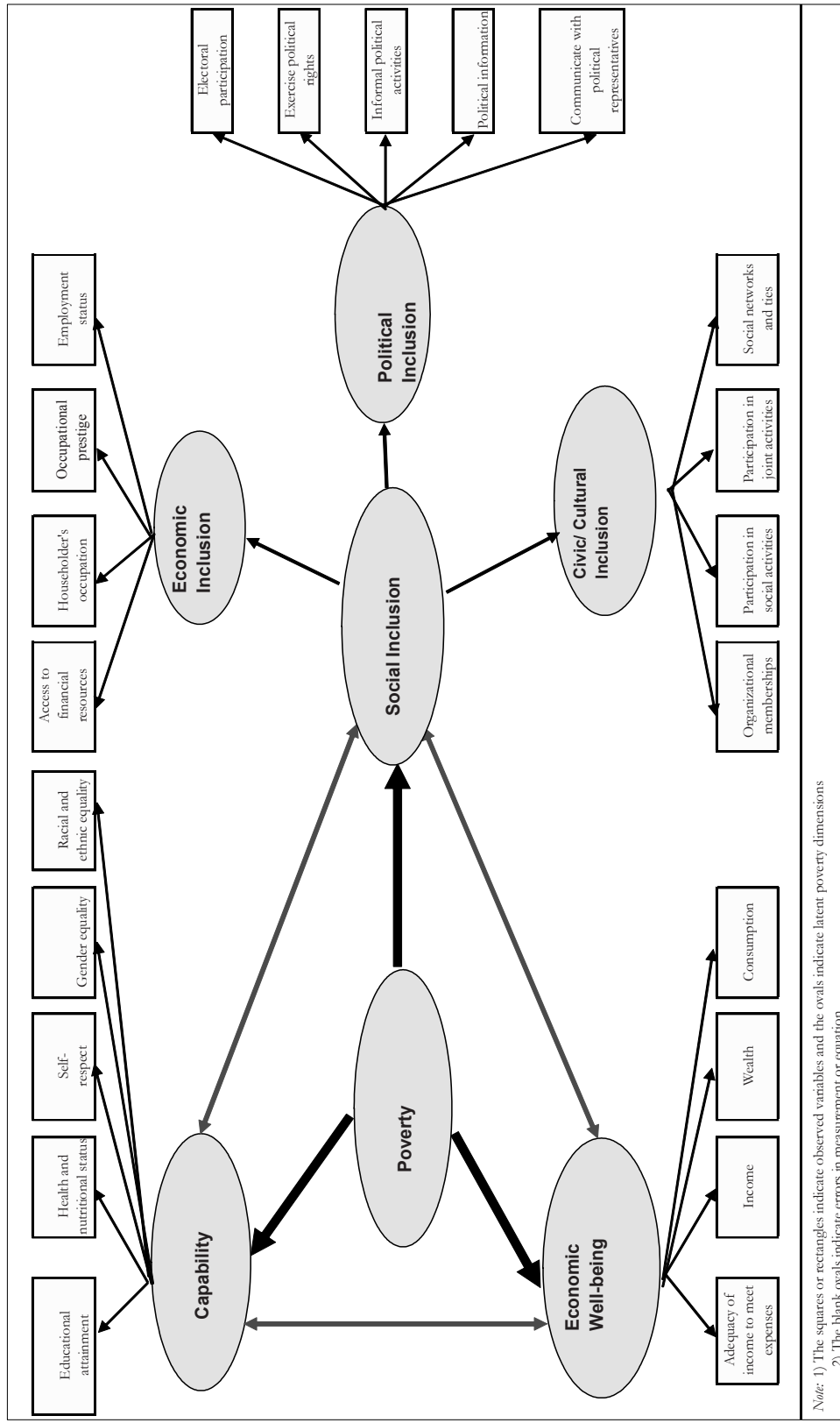
The figure 1 exhibits Wagle’s model (2008:63) of the multidimensional approach to poverty – one of many ways to construct a multidimensional model to poverty. It shows how the (sub)dimensions are interconnected and can be broke down into indicators for measuring each of them. Hence, one is considered poor if he/she is living under the poverty line established for the dimensions represented by the oval shapes in figure 1. Identifying the

kind of poverty that people are experiencing and the extent of it might result in very different policy implications. As explained by Wagle,

The information with identification of these different groups of the poor is enormously rich in understanding how different forms of poverty are constructed and re-constructed, what may be responsible for maintaining such statuses, and what policy prescriptions may be needed to address these issues (Wagle, 2008:70).

That is to say that addressing issues of capability poverty demands different approaches than the ones addressing poverty conditions caused by social exclusion and income deprivation.

Figure 1 – Wagle’s Multidimensional Poverty Model



Source: (Wagle, 2008:63)

Wagle's statement above is supported by the World Bank, which developed the concept of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers⁶ (PRSP). The PRSP is an approach designed to assist countries to develop and improve the effectiveness of poverty reduction policies. The PRPS consist of a strategy that "should be prepared by the government through a country-driven process, including broad participation that promotes country ownership of the strategy and its implementation" (World Bank, 2002:2). The use of this approach is widespread since any country receiving aid (debt relief or concessional lending) should foster policies based on the PRPS.

The conception of a Poverty Reduction Strategy should be underpinned by strategies which include but are not limited to: country-driven formulation and implementation of programs (meaning that each country should develop its own poverty reduction strategy considering its very own reality and specificities); result-oriented approaches; comprehensive in scope (considering the multidimensional aspect of poverty); partnership-oriented approaches (incentivising countries to look for expertise from knowledgeable countries); and a medium to long-term perspective to its programs (since poverty cannot be overcome overnight) (World Bank, 2002). I would also add an emphasis on a sustainable perspective of the strategy and its implementation considering its medium to long-term characteristic. Hence, what the Poverty Reduction Strategy brings to the discussion is an attempt to concentrate best practices aimed at orienting the operationalization of poverty reduction policies.

2.3 Conditional Cash Transfer Programs

Poverty is also known for affecting the most vulnerable people that for several reasons are unable to provide for themselves or realise their capabilities for lack of access to education and health care, for instance. In that sense, Sen (1999) talks about how empowering women has considerable effects when fighting poverty. When women are empowered they prioritize the education and health of the children; more years of education for women results in less domestic violence; the more their agency is respected and

⁶ The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) is one of many approaches aiming to operationalize how countries should go about implementing policies to reduce poverty. UNESCO and OHCHR also have produced guidelines and best practices to end poverty.

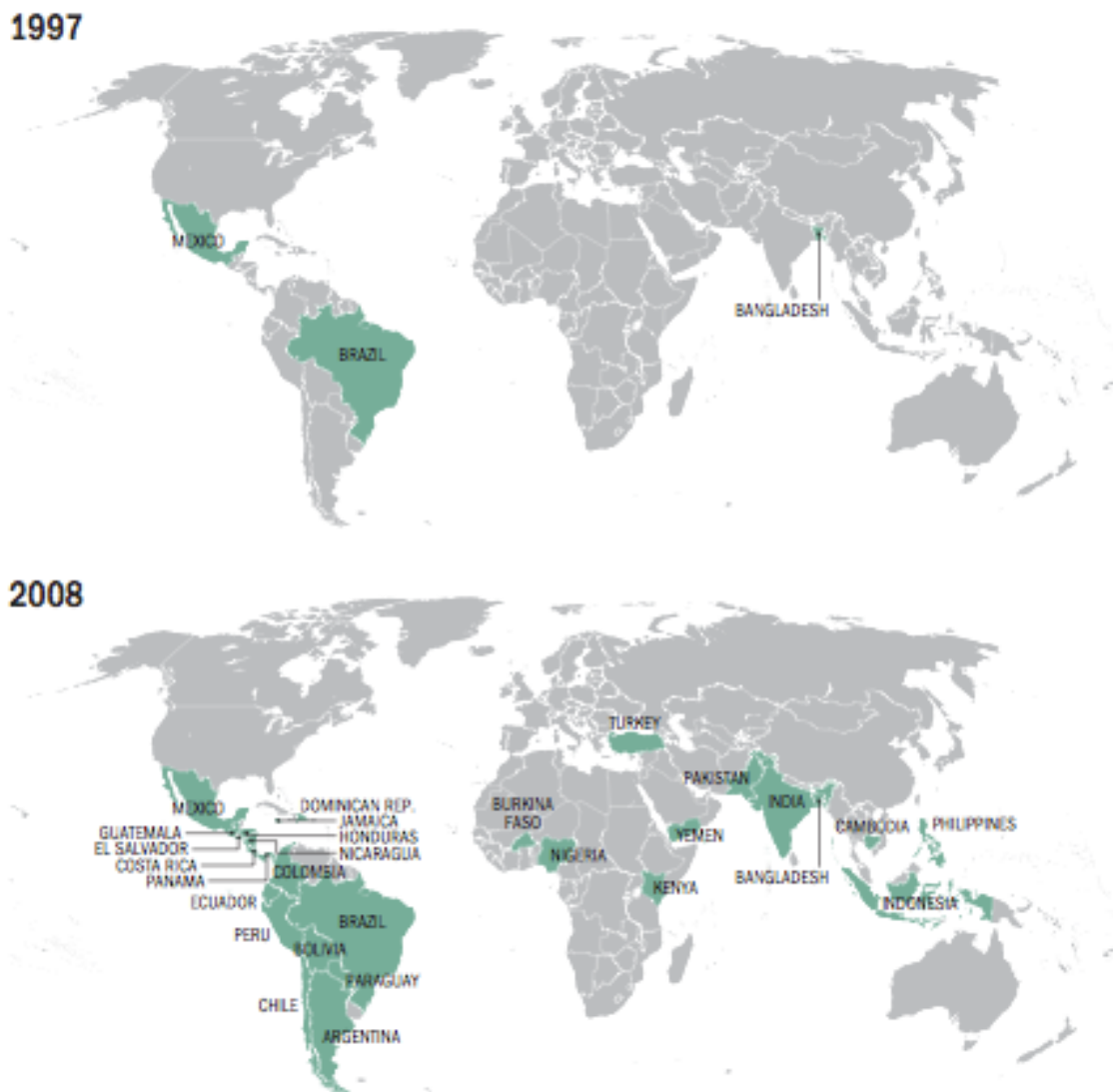
empowered, more influence they have in households decision (Sen, 1999), to name just a few advantages of incentivising women's empowerment.

The fact that women tend to prioritize child's needs is extremely important since children are among the most vulnerable groups to suffer from poverty. Poverty is especially damaging to children. As an example undernourishment affects the child's development (socially and mentally) as well as his or her health, which eventually leads to lack of job prospects (Lister, 2004). Therefore, focusing on lifting children out of poverty is in itself a goal to improve children's quality of life as well as an effective tactic to overcome intergenerational poverty.

The creation of social opportunities makes a direct contribution to the expansion of human capabilities and the quality of life... Expansion of health care, education, social security, etc., contribute directly to the quality of life and to its flourishing. There is every evidence that even with relative low income, a country that guarantees health care and education to all can actually achieve remarkable results in terms of length and quality of life of the entire population (Sen, 1999: 144).

In that sense, conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs have been widely adopted, especially in Latin America (figure 2), as a resource to reduce not only poverty, but to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Stampini & Tornarolli, 2012). In a nutshell, CCT programs transfer cash to poor households (as defined by a certain poverty line) on the condition that the recipients of such assistance agree to follow pre-specified demands from the government, aimed at improving human capital usually of children (Fiszbein et al., 2009).

Figure 2 - CCTs in the World, 1997 and 2008



Source: Figure 1 (Fiszbein et al., 2009:4)

The benefits (cash) vary according to the size of the family and level of poverty (the money is usually transferred to the mother of the household). The conditions are generally related to education (school attendance) and health care (vaccination and regular check ups for children and prenatal care for mothers) (Fiszbein et al., 2009). These programs have proven to be effective in reducing poverty, however their success is directly related to the programs' design being adapted to countries contexts and needs (Fiszbein et al., 2009) (see annex I).

The implementation of CCTs has many considerations which go from the amount of cash each family will receive – an amount high enough to lift families from poverty, but still

manageable so that the government can guarantee the sustainability of the program – to actual provision of education and health services – it is incongruent to demand children to attend school if there are no schools in their region or health check ups if there are no medical posts available (Fiszbein et al., 2009). However, the World Bank states that “the accumulating evidence of positive impacts has been instrumental both in sustaining existing programs and in encouraging the establishment of similar programs in other developing countries” (Fiszbein et al., 2009: 12). Moreover, we will deepen this discussion on the next chapter focusing on Brazil’s CCT program, Bolsa Familia.

In this chapter, I have clarified and discussed some of the most prominent theories conceptualizing poverty as well as summarised how the multidimensional approach to poverty and poverty measurement techniques are essential to the development of effective policies targeting poverty reduction. The next chapter will use this theoretical framework to expand on the issue of poverty reduction through the analysis of a practical case, thus aiming to answer the proposed research questions.

Chapter 3

CASE STUDY

Brazil: Bolsa Familia Program

The next two chapters focus on the structure and design of the Bolsa Familia program (PBF) as a conditional cash transfer program. The objective is to explore the programs' main features in order to understand its main challenges and limitations as well as some of the innovations that the program introduced to social programs in Brazil. Throughout this analysis I will connect the concepts of poverty, discussed in the previous chapter, to certain aspects of the Bolsa Familia design.

Thus, to explain how the PBF works, this case study is divided into two parts: the first, on this chapter, focuses on the programs' objectives and implementation issues; the second part, on chapter four, explores the PBF's three main axis (cash transfer, conditionality and complementary programs). Therefore, each section of chapters three and four reflects the main operational areas of the program facilitating thus to expose the correlation between the case study, research questions and theoretical framework.

3.1 Introduction

In a recent interview at the World Bank Live⁷, Professor Joseph Stiglitz affirmed that inequality has been growing globally with merely few exceptions; Brazil is one of those exceptions. Stiglitz expands on the topic by explaining that a decrease in inequality goes beyond global economic forces (which affects countries in similar ways, i.e globalization). He further observes that such a decrease is also highly influenced by implementation of good

⁷ The World Bank promotes a series of interviews, talks and presentations that are transmitted live on their website on diverse subjects, but mostly related to poverty reduction and development.

policies. Effective policies not only deal with the current inequality, but will also shape the form and extent of inequality in the years to come (World Bank Live, 2013).

In the case of Brazil, one can observe a gradual paradigm shift from the classical social assistance programs and social policies over the years. The shift is especially noticeable after the re-democratization process that followed the military dictatorship in 1985, and the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution (Bichir, 2010). The Constitution sets forth in Article 23 item X the state's responsibility to battle the causes of poverty and marginalization of the most vulnerable and underprivileged (Brazil, 1988). These traditional social programs were highly criticized for being extremely centralized (controlled by the federal government), fragmented, very bureaucratic, exclusionary and known for its low effectiveness and efficiency (Senna et al., 2007).

After the implementation of a few successful localised strategies and programs (in the 1990s), the federal government adopts nationwide conditional cash transfer programs in 2001: the Bolsa Escola⁸ (under the supervision of the Ministry of Education) and the Bolsa Alimentação⁹ (under the Ministry of Health) (Senna et al., 2007). However, according to Senna (2007) these programs still suffered from low coverage of the needy population and fragmented coordination of actions.

It was only in 2003 that this process of reformulation of paradigms in social programs culminated in the establishment of the Bolsa Familia Program (Programa Bolsa Familia – PBF), under President Luiz Inácio ‘Lula’ da Silva’s administration¹⁰. The Bolsa Familia program’s mandate (under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger - MDS) united the management and implementation of previous conditional

⁸ The Bolsa Escola (School Grant, my own translation) program was created in 2001 and was a conditional cash transfer program with a specific focus on education, conditioning the cash transfer to the children school attendance (Suplicy, 2003).

⁹ The Bolsa Alimentação (Food Grant, my own translation) program aimed at promoting the well-being of children and avoiding nutritional deficiencies and infant mortality, conditioning the cash transfer to a series of health related commitments (Suplicy, 2003).

¹⁰ Part of this gradual change had already start under the administration of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso with the creation of the Single Registry of Social Programs and the previous conditional cash transfer program Bolsa Escola (Bichir, 2010).

cash transfer programs (Bolsa Escola, Bolsa Alimentação, Programa Auxílio-Gás, Programa Nacional de Acesso à Alimentação e Cadastro Único)¹¹ (Brazil, 2004).

Today the Bolsa Familia is the leading strategy of the Brazilian government to fight poverty and the main safety net for social protection. Brazil (along with Mexico¹²) was the pioneer in an innovative and creative conditional cash transfer programs in Latin America (Stampini & Tornarolli, 2012). It is currently the largest program in the region and in the world benefiting almost 14 million families (Bichir, 2010; MDS[a], n.d.). Nevertheless, the program still faces criticism regarding its ‘paternalistic’ cash transfer feature and its political and economic sustainability in the long-term, not to mention accusations against the government of overpublicizing the program and its achievements for campaign reasons (Bichir, 2010), which will be discussed in the following pages.

This Brazilian model of conditional cash transfer program has also achieved an exceptional level of international recognition. With its so called ‘social policy diplomacy’, Brazil gives expertise and aid to countries willing to develop programs similar to the Bolsa Familia (Bunting, 2010). With several international cooperation agreements to share the knowledge of its CCT program, “Brazil has transplanted its successful school grant programme and its programme for fighting illiteracy to its African partners. In 2011, it had 53 bilateral health agreements with 22 African countries” (UNDP, 2013: 57).

3.2 Main Characteristics of the Bolsa Familia Program

Conditional cash transfer programs share some characteristics and structures that distinguish them from other poverty alleviation programs. The CCTs design corresponds to “targeting practices, benefit systems, conditions (including their definition, monitoring, and enforcement), monitoring and evaluation, and issues concerned with intersectoral and interinstitutional coordination” (Fiszbein et al., 2009:67). The programs are thus constructed based on these criteria but they may prioritize, to different extents, specific features depending on the program’s objectives.

¹¹ In my own translation: School Grant, Food Grant, Cooking Fuel Grant, National Food Program and Single Registry.

¹² Annex II shows a table comparing Brazil’s and Mexico’s conditional cash transfer programs.

Based on the model described above, the PBF was conceived with three main axes acting in different instances to help reduce poverty: cash transfer, conditions and complementary programs. The cash transfer feature works as an immediate solution for poverty, guaranteeing that people have sufficient means to live and afford basic necessities as they see fit (which might be food, medicine, water and etc.); the conditions focus on the access to social rights, such as education and health; and last but not least, the complementary programs aim to develop the capacities of the family and to provide opportunity to overcome, by themselves, their situation of social vulnerability (MDS, n.d.; 2009).

The table below shows in numbers a picture of Brazil before and after the PBF. It is possible to notice the program's growth throughout the years. The budget of the Bolsa Familia is six times bigger today than it was in the beginning of the program, reaching the impressive amount of R\$ 24 billions (just under 1% of Brazil's GDP in 2012). This serious investment on the PBF's budget indicates the government's commitment to the program's success. The number of families enrolled in the Bolsa Familia has also increased significantly. However, in spite of the programs achievements so far, the estimated number of people living in poverty and extreme poverty is still staggering.

Table 3 – Bolsa Familia Program in Numbers

	2004	2013
<i>Brazil's population</i>	169.799.170 (IBGE, 2000)	190.755.799 (IBGE, 2010)
<i>Number of people living in extreme poverty</i>	25.406.000 (IPEA, 2001) = 14% of Brazil's pop.	16.270.000 (IBGE, 2010) = 8,5% of Brazil's pop.
<i>Number of people living in poverty</i>	58.488.000 (IPEA, 2001)	39.631.000 (IPEA, 2009)
<i>Number of families registered at the Single Registry of Social Programs</i>	N/A	25 million families (= 81 million people)
<i>PBF number of recipients</i>	3,6 million families	14 million families
<i>Program Budget (year)</i>	R\$ 4,3 billions	R\$ 24 billions (less than 1% of Brazil's GDP)

Source: MDS, 2013; IBGE, 2000; 2010; IPEA, 2001, 2009.

3.2.1 Program Objectives

Upon its creation, the program had as main objectives to reduce extreme poverty and break the intergenerational transmission of poverty (MDS[a], n.d.). The first objective would be achieved via the cash transfers to the families, whilst the second would be reached through

the conditionality feature aimed at the improvement of education levels and health care (Kerstenetzky, 2009).

These two goals demonstrate how the program initially uses the concept of poverty to build its framework of action. The cash transfer addresses the aspect of income poverty whereas the conditionality tackles capabilities deprivations (as described by Sen) whilst aggregating a human capital perspective. A study from the Inter-American Development Bank (2012) describes the Bolsa Família as a program that is

aimed to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty by conditioning payments on compliance with co-responsibilities aimed to develop children's human capital. These included regular school attendance, health check-ups for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers, complete vaccination records [...] The ultimate hope, although never explicitly stated in these terms, was that conditions would allow the accumulation of sufficient human capital to drive the next generation out of poverty, so that social assistance would no longer be needed in the future. (Stampini & Tornarolli, 2012:2)

Conversely, these objectives could not have been established without a clear understanding of Brazil's social reality. The objective of any public policy, especially CCTs, must take into consideration several aspects before implementation. As we have seen in the last chapter, a poorly developed program might prove to be a waste of time and public funding's on the wrong targeted population (Fiszbein et al., 2009).

It is important to observe though that when we talk about poverty in Brazil it has a different meaning than poverty in other countries dealing with similar poverty levels. In Brazil, as mentioned before, poverty is intrinsically related to inequality and wealth concentration. It is so strikingly persistent and widespread that is also referred to as an 'unacceptable inequality stability' (World Bank, 2003). Up until the beginning of the 2000's, the richest 10% of the population in Brazil controlled almost 50% of the country's wealth (IBGE, 2001).

This wealth concentration created a very specific social reality where the poor and rich share the same space, but have completely different accesses to it (Santos, 2002). An example of such difference is that of urban situation in Rio de Janeiro, where the favelas (shantytowns) are constructed right next to luxurious condos. This condition represents not only real social

exclusion but also creates a feeling of exclusion felt by those who encounter inaccessible comfort and wealth daily.

Consequently, this unequal and persistent socio-economic reality that has been withstanding for decades became one of the priorities of president Lula's administration. Hence, the creation and expansion of PBF's criteria for eligibility and benefits were drawn up against this specific socio-economic scenario (Osório & Souza, 2013). Furthermore, this scenario reveals the multidimensional aspect of poverty where income and capabilities deprivation lead to a persistent process of social exclusion.

The Bolsa Familia primarily used the minimum wage (as it was in 2003, R\$200) to establish the poverty base for the program: families with income equivalent to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the minimum wage are considered poor whereas families with only $\frac{1}{4}$ are considered extremely poor (Osório & Souza, 2013; Osório, Suarez, & Soares, 2011). Additionally, the PBF was shaped to involve the three levels of the government (federal government, states and municipalities) in a decentralized and shared management of the various aspects of the program.

For instance, the municipalities are responsible for locating and registering the families in the Single Registry to join the program whilst the federal government prioritize and select the beneficiaries (MDS[e], n.d.). The states are responsible for giving training support and capacitating the municipalities to work with the PBF, implementing complementary programs and verifying if the educational conditionality is being fulfilled (MDS[e], n.d.).

3.2.2 Criteria for Eligibility

The program instituted two basic criteria that must be fulfilled to be considered eligible for receiving the benefits. The first criterion (as indicated by the name of the program) defines that the family is the unit receiving the benefit, but the benefit itself is calculated according to the number of family members (Brazil, no.10.836, 2004). Using the family as the centre of the program was conceived of as the best approach to reach the program's main targeted public: children and adolescents (Senna et al., 2007).

The definition of family used by the program is broad enough to adapt to different concepts of families (and therefore not limited to the traditional concept of the nuclear family i.e two parents and children). The law instituting the program refers to family as any nuclear unit formed by individuals who share kinship or affinity and constitute a household under the same roof which is maintained by its members contributions (Brazil, 2004). The second criteria, redefined by the decree no.6.917 of July 30th 2009, outlines that the inclusion of families to the PBF will be based on the family's income. Most specifically, families whose monthly income per capita is up to R\$140 (U\$70) are characterised as poor, and those with income up to R\$70 (U\$35) are considered as extremely poor.

Thus, according to the program's current design, children and adolescents from 0 to 15 years old, teenagers from 16 to 17 years old, pregnant women and mothers with infants up to 6 months old are eligible to the PBF as long as they fall below the poverty lines stated by the program (Brazil, Law no.10.836, 2004). Pregnant women will receive the benefit for 9 months independent of how far long the pregnancy has gone, and even in case of miscarriage the benefit will continue to be paid as a support to allow for a mourning period (Brazil, 2004).

Therefore, the PBF uses a cut-off point based only on low income or proxy means testing. Using income deprivation as the sole cut-off measure is not an ill judgment, but a practical decision regarding the program's operationalization. This is a characteristic of conditional cash transfer programs that need clear and yet simple criteria to reach its targeted public. The targeting result however is "not inherent to the design of CCTs, but reflect the political will and technical effort made" (Fiszbein et al., 2009:79) by the countries implementing them. Nevertheless, it is a characteristic of CCT programs, in general, and of the Bolsa Familia in specific, to prioritize children and adolescents since they are among the most vulnerable groups to be affected by poverty and inequality (Fiszbein et al., 2009).

This phenomenon is so well recognized by the international community that extensive empowerment campaigns have been created to address this situation. This women's vulnerability to poverty is so widespread that it became known as the feminization of poverty (Lister, 2004). Hence the program also adopts (although not so explicitly) a social exclusion perspective of poverty by concentrating efforts on reintegrating vulnerable groups into the society. Figure 3 below presents changes in the program's eligibility criteria and benefit design since its creation in 2003 up until the end of 2012.

Figure 3 - PBF Adjustments and Changes in Benefit Design, 2003–2012

Year	Changes and adjustments	Benefit design (at year end)
2003	OCTOBER Creation of the PBF, with two levels of eligibility that referred, but were not bound, to the amounts of 1/4 and 1/2 the minimum wage (R\$200 in early 2003) of per capita household income, with a basic benefit given only to extremely poor families, and a variable benefit, given per child aged 0–15 years, for a maximum of three children.	Extreme Poverty: income up to R\$50 Basic: R\$50 Children: R\$15 to R\$45 Poverty: income from R\$50 to R\$100 Children: R\$15 to R\$45
2006	APRIL The eligibility levels are adjusted for the first time, with no change to benefit design.	Extreme Poverty: income up to R\$60 Basic: R\$50 Children: R\$15 to R\$45 Poverty: income from R\$60 to R\$120 Children: R\$15 to R\$45
2007	JULY The benefits are readjusted. DECEMBER The benefit design is altered for the first time, with the creation of a benefit for up to two 16- and 17-year-old adolescents.	Extreme Poverty: income up to R\$60 Basic: R\$58 Children: R\$18 to R\$45 Adolescents: R\$30 to R\$60 Poverty: income from R\$60 to R\$120 Children: R\$18 to R\$45 Adolescents: R\$30 to R\$60
2008	JUNE The benefits are readjusted.	Extreme Poverty: income up to R\$60 Basic: R\$62 Children: R\$20 to R\$60 Adolescents: R\$30 to R\$60 Poverty: income from R\$60 to R\$120 Children: R\$20 to R\$60 Adolescents: R\$30 to R\$60
2009	APRIL The levels are readjusted to R\$69 and R\$137. JULY The eligibility levels are again readjusted to the amounts that would remain in effect at least until the end of 2012. The benefits are also readjusted in July.	Extreme Poverty: income up to R\$70 Basic: R\$68 Children: R\$22 to R\$66 Adolescents: R\$33 to R\$66 Poverty: income from R\$70 to R\$140 Children: R\$22 to R\$66 Adolescents: R\$33 to R\$66
2011	MARCH The benefits are readjusted, and the benefit design undergoes a second change, expanding the limit from three to five children.	Extreme Poverty: income up to R\$70 Basic: R\$70 Children: R\$32 to R\$160 Adolescents: R\$38 to R\$76 Poverty: income from R\$70 to R\$140 Children: R\$32 to R\$160 Adolescents: R\$38 to R\$76
2012	MAY The PBC's per capita transfer is introduced, aimed at households with at least one child aged 0–6 years, which, even after receiving the PBF benefit, had remained extremely poor. NOVEMBER The age range of children eligible to participate in the PBC is redefined as 0–15 years of age.	WITH CHILDREN AGED 0–15 YEARS Extreme Poverty: income up to R\$70 Basic: R\$70 Children: R\$32 to R\$160 Adolescents: R\$38 to R\$76 PBC: remaining <i>per capita</i> gap WITHOUT CHILDREN AGED 0–15 YEARS Extreme Poverty: income up to R\$70

Source: IPC Policy Research Brief (Osório & Souza, 2013:2)

3.2.3 Single Registry for Social Programs

The families' inclusion in the program is done through a system called Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais do Governo Federal (Federal Government Single Registry for Social Programs) created and regulated by the decree no.6.135, of June 26, 2007. The Single Registry is used throughout Brazil by the federal government, regional states and municipalities. It is a centralized system where every low-income family is (or should be) registered along with information about their families and households and is also used as a central registry system for several social programs (MDS[b], n.d.).

However, being registered in this system does not automatically enrol families in social programs. The selection is still done according to each program's criteria. In the case of the Bolsa Familia, families are given priority to enter the program according to their level of vulnerability to poverty (how low is the family income, amount of children and etc.) (MDS[b], n.d.). Which takes us to another controversial aspect of the program, since the PBF uses a quota system per municipality due to budget limitations¹³ (Bichir, 2010). The resources constrain is an obstacle to the overall objective of the program, since it leaves some families out of the PBF in spite of their socio-economic condition, which would deem them eligible according to the criteria (Osório et al., 2011).

This is also known as leakage effect or the dilemma of inclusion or exclusion errors. They refer to the circumstance when families with income above the poverty line are registered for the program (inclusion error) or when families eligible to participate in the program are not beneficiaries (exclusion error) (Bichir, 2010). Leakage is not uncommon to conditional cash transfer programs especially considering the scope of the PBF. However, this leakage might have different explanations, besides the obvious assumption of incorrect targeting mechanism, such as the volatile monthly income of poor families (Bichir, 2010).

From a different perspective, there is the notion (in the specific case of the PBF) that the inclusion error is less harmful than the exclusion error. The former might refer to the inclusion of families 'almost poor' to the program (and would probably enter the program in a near future), whereas the exclusion error prevents people from receiving assistance (Osório et

¹³ Even though the Bolsa Familia has a considerable large budget is still not enough to cover all families living in poverty in Brazil, thus the continuous concern to improve and expand the program's parameters.

al., 2011). Therefore, the priority of the PBF should be on reducing exclusion errors that can be potentially harmful to vulnerable families (Fiszbein et al., 2009). Nevertheless, inclusion errors must be carefully evaluated since in excessive amount they might seriously impact the program's budget and prevent poorer families from accessing it (Fiszbein et al., 2009).

Chapter 4

CASE STUDY

Main Axis of the Bolsa Familia Program

The Bolsa Familia design is based on three distinct but correlated lines of action intended to address distinctive dimensions of poverty. The benefits or cash transfer aims at solving immediate needs caused by poverty (hunger, sub nutrition, housing and etc.), the conditionality focus at increasing human capital of children and breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and the complementary programs or ‘exit routes’ offer to tackle social exclusion, enhance capabilities and re-introduce people to the society.

4.1 Benefits or cash transfer system

The amount of the cash transfer (or benefit) is calculated according to the size and characteristics of the family. The calculation of the benefit is done so that each member of the family can overcome the extreme poverty line established by the Bolsa Familia. As figure 3 (in the previous chapter) demonstrates, the benefits and criteria to join the program have been reformulated and expanded over the last ten years. These changes reflect the government’s efforts to reach people still living in poverty and yet not covered by the program. This alterations on the PBF’s benefit design also reflected an adjustment to the parameters used to calculate the benefit amount (Osório & Souza, 2013). Conversely, as Osório explains (2013), it was only in 2012 that this adjustment of the parameters was given more weight in determining the amount of the cash transfer. The adjustment refers to the fact that

the effectiveness of transfers hinges on the amount being enough to ensure that the per capita household income reaches or exceeds the extreme poverty line. Therefore, the extreme poverty gap – the difference between household income and the extreme poverty line – should be the basic parameter for setting the transferred amount, since it directly informs how far a family is from leaving extreme poverty behind (Osório & Souza, 2013:3).

To many families in the PBF, this monthly cash transfer represents their only source of income or fixed income (Dias & Silva, 2008; Osório & Souza, 2013). Thus, the cash transfer is essential to provide certain stability and a minimum financial assurance.

A common criticism towards CCTs programs in general is the possible ‘paternalistic’ facet of the cash transfer. The argument is centred on the idea that by receiving a direct cash transfer, the beneficiaries would become dependent on the program and not look for ways to improve their income through other sources (Bichir, 2010; Fiszbein et al., 2009). Nevertheless, it is unlikely that a family would willingly rely merely on the PBF’s benefit as their sole source of income. The amount of the benefit is without a doubt an important help to the families’ income, but it is not high enough to discourage search for other income generating activity or to create a dependency on the government’s assistance. (Dias & Silva, 2008; Fiszbein et al., 2009)

The benefits are paid through the bank system (through a federal bank called Caixa Econômica Federal) (MDS[c], n.d.). Every family receives a debit card (MDS[c], n.d.), which is preferably issued in the mothers or women’s name (Brazil, 2004). The women-centred card allocation is a standard practice in conditional cash transfer programs after the recognition by several studies that mothers tend to prioritize the use of benefits to guarantee better quality of life for their children (Fiszbein et al., 2009). Currently, the PBF has five types of benefits as shown in the table below:

Table 4 – PBF’s Types of Benefits

Type of benefit	Beneficiary	Amount
Basic (BB)	Families with income of less than R\$70/month, the benefit is paid even if there is no children in the family.	R\$70
Variable (BV)	Granted to families with children and adolescents (up to 15 years old), and with an income of less than R\$140/ month. Each is eligible to receive up to 5 variable benefits.	R\$32
Variable to adolescents (BVJ)	Granted to families with adolescents between 16 and 17 years old attending school. Each family is eligible to receive up to 2 BVJs.	R\$38
Variable with extraordinary character (BVCE)	Granted to any family that received assistance from previous social programs that were united under the PBF and whose migration to the Bolsa Família caused financial loss.	Variable
Overcoming Extreme Poverty in Early Childhood (BSP)	Granted to families with children from 0 to 6 years old that still remain in extreme poverty after receiving the Basic benefit. The amount of the benefit granted corresponds to the amount necessary so that each person in the family overcomes the poverty line established by the PBF of R\$70/month per person.	Variable

Source: (MDS[c], n.d.)

4.2 Conditionality System

The conditionality aspect of the program refers to the commitments families accept upon entering the program. In order to be enrolled in the PBF to receive the monthly cash transfer, the families must comply with the conditionalities, which in this case means commitments in the areas of education, health and social assistance (Brazil, 2004). According to the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MDS[d], n.d.), the conditionality also represents obligations by the state to provide and guarantee that all public services are available to the families. Therefore availability of resources is the first pre-requisite to guarantee compliance with the conditionalities.

Also according to the law no.10.836 that created the program, in the area of education, every child from 6 to 15 years old must be enrolled in school and respect the minimum frequency of attendance of 85% each month. The same is valid to adolescents from 16 to 17 years old, whose minimum frequency of attendance should be no lower than 75% per month.

As for the health conditionality, every child must be vaccinated and have health check-ups continuously up until the age of 7 years old. Women from 14 to 44 in case of pregnancy must as well attend regular check-ups and do the pre-natal care. The social assistance conditionality applies only to children up to 15 years old rescued from child labour and consists of participation (minimum of 85% of attendance) in social-educational programs (MDS[d], n.d.).

Additionally, the PBF also implemented a compliance verification mechanism, which involves different levels and government actors – the Ministry of Education is responsible for verifying school attendance whilst the Ministry of Health verifies if the health conditionality is being followed (MDS[d], n.d.). In the design of the Bolsa Familia program, the conditionality is

viewed as encouraging beneficiaries to take up and exercise their right to free education and free health care, so noncompliance is taken to be a manifestation of some kind of obstacle that the family cannot overcome to access the service rather than an unwillingness to comply. A beneficiary who is noncompliant will receive a warning (written notice) of noncompliance for the first period and may be visited by a social worker to see if there is a noncash-related problem to be solved. Only on a third consecutive occasion of noncompliance will the benefit be “blocked” for 30 days, after which the full amount, including the amount accumulated during the blockage, will be paid out (Fiszbein et al., 2009:89).

Therefore the conditionality aspect in the PBF, it seems, was not created to punish those disobeying the program’s rules, especially given the targeted population: the poorest and most vulnerable groups. Consequently, if a family runs the risk of non-compliance with the conditionality, they have the option of asking for help from the municipal manager and from other social assistance programs in their municipality.

Moreover, a second pre-requisite to the accomplishment of the conditionality, i.e availability and access to services, is the quality of the services being provided (Bichir, 2010). If schools do not provide for a good level of teaching and education, then it is almost pointless to impose an educational conditionality if children are not there to learn and develop

their capabilities but merely to graduate and improve the country's statistics concerning the levels of children's education and health¹⁴.

4.3 Complementary Programs

The complementary programs concern the development of the individuals and the families' capabilities as to increase their chances to overcome the state of poverty by themselves and maximize the effects provided by the conditional cash transfers (MDS, 2009). Anyone registered in the Single Registry can join any of the complementary programs offered (and articulated by the three levels of the government – municipality, state and federal government –in partnership with the civil society). These programs cover a range of trainings from specific educational classes to adults, professional training to acquire skills on demand on the job market, access to cultural activities and information as well as knowledge of citizenship rights, such as civil and political rights (MDS, 2009).

They are also known as the 'exit routes' to the Bolsa Familia Program, since they aim to provide alternatives and improve the families' capability to sustain themselves and generate an income higher than the poverty line without the government's assistance. This aspect of the PBF refers to Sen's concept of freedom to develop one's capability and agency as the way to overcome poverty. The PBF even cites Sen in one of its support materials to inform local authorities about the objectives of the complementary programs (MDS, 2009), thus making a clear connection between the PBF's core concept of poverty to Sen's approach (as discussed in chapter two). Thus, if people in vulnerable socio-economic conditions are unable to have access to opportunities and capabilities to overcome this state of poverty, through the PBF the government's intention is to make these opportunities available and by bring the necessary training and knowledge closer to people living in poverty as using it as an empowerment tool.

Nevertheless, several researches carried out in municipalities where the PBF is currently being implemented¹⁵ show that the complementary programs are still not widely

¹⁴ Education levels and children's health are two of the most used variables to calculate poverty and other important indexes that measure countries' levels of development. Hence, some countries might be more interested in improving statistics then ensuring the availability of an effective educational system.

disseminated or properly implemented by the local authorities and that sometimes they do not attend or reflect the necessities of the local population (Santos & Magalhães, 2012). In other words, the complementary programs are not always adequate to the public to which they are destined, which can hinder the potential of the program's 'exit routes'. This shows that despite the program's innovative format and contemporary conceptualization of poverty, there is still incongruence between theory and practice when it comes to the implementation of the PBF. It also highlights a top-down approach that does not recognize the local context demands.

4.4 PBF's Budget and Sustainability

As shown in table 3 (above), the government's expenditure with the Bolsa Familia Program has grown substantially over the past ten years. At its very start, the PBF operates currently with a budget of R\$ 24 billions for the year 2013 (a figure that represents less than 1% of Brazil's GDP), a significant increase if compared to the budget of R\$ 4,3 billions in 2004 (MDS, 2013).

Looking back to the amount of families (14 million) currently assisted by the program and considering the size of the PBF's budget, a concern arises in regard to the program's sustainability. One of the most important aspects of a conditional cash transfer program is its long-term perspective (Fiszbein et al., 2009). In order to bring about a positive and lasting change in the levels of poverty in Brazil, the program must be implemented in the long-term. This is especially true considering the conditionality system aimed at breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty by investing on better education and health for the children of vulnerable families. Good levels of education and health are not goals that can be achieved overnight, but ones that demand investment and time, which makes us question the issues of sustainability.

In order to the Bolsa Familia program to have a long-lasting impact at reducing poverty, the program must be sustainable in two fronts: political and financial (Kerstenetzky,

¹⁵ The MDS keeps on their website an 'observatory of best practices' with several researches and papers on the implementation of the Bolsa Familia Program throughout Brazil. The IPC also has a similar project called Bolsa Familia Virtual Library.

2009). The political sustainability of the program is a matter of concern. The PBF is highly connected to the image of the president's Lula and the Workers Party, since the program was created under his administration (Bichir, 2010). This has not been a problem so far since Brazil's current president, Dilma Rousseff, is also from the Workers Party and former chief of staff to president Lula.

Nonetheless, one cannot help wondering what might happen to the PBF when the Workers Party is no longer in power. On one hand, the program might be cancelled or substituted (which could hinder Brazil's fight against poverty). On the other hand, some believe that due to its scope and high levels of popularity, the program has achieved an unparalleled status of 'state/development policy', which means that cancelling the PBF would be considered highly counterproductive and unpopular to any politician or party (Kerstenetzky, 2009).

On the financial front, some authors question the government's capacity to maintain the program's robust budget as it is today. Brazil has been facing a quite positive economic period for the last years, in part because of the PBF, which allowed for an intensification of the consumption flow at the lower classes (Bichir, 2010; Kerstenetzky, 2009). Furthermore, there are debates about the program's extent in participating on the recent decrease in inequality in Brazil, with authors disagreeing on different weights of the PBF's contribution and a mix of other factors (for instance, the increase in jobs and of the minimum wage) (Bichir, 2010; Kerstenetzky, 2009).

Nevertheless, for the implementation of a responsible public policy, the government should be concerned about not only expanding the program to reach the targeted population, but also guaranteeing that the program will have enough funds to endure for as long as it might be necessary to achieve its purpose of alleviating poverty (Kerstenetzky, 2009). If the PBF is to last for another ten or fifteen years then a reliable and sustainable budget planning must be implemented.

The Bolsa Familia is a complex and multifaceted program that encompasses different dimensions of poverty in its distinct areas. As we have seen above, the program uses income-based poverty line as a cut-off to admit families, whilst applying Sen's capability approach

and the social exclusion perspective to guide the implementation of its main axis of action. Therefore, it is possible to recognize the three dimensions of poverty (income poverty, capability deprivation and social exclusion) being integrated to the program's design. Moreover, we can understand how the Bolsa Familia operationalizes these concepts. This will be subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS

After presenting the theoretical framework and the case study, this chapter proposes to highlight the specific findings of this thesis whilst addressing the research questions defined on chapter one. The findings are inferred based on a content analysis of the Bolsa Familia design and policies. The first section reports and relates the findings concerning the multidimensional aspects of poverty in the Bolsa Familia design. The second section of this chapter discusses how the PBF is operationalizing the concept of poverty in the main axis of the program (cash transfer, conditions and complementary programs). Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to emphasize the importance and applicability of the concept of poverty in different stages of the Bolsa Familia and underscore the main findings of this study.

5.1 Multidimensional Aspects of Poverty in the Bolsa Familia Design

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the Bolsa Familia program encompasses several aspects of poverty in its design and conception. The first indication of the multidimensionality of poverty in the program's design is stated on the PBF's objectives (MDS[a], n.d.). The program main strategies to poverty reduction is twofold: first, on a short-term and immediate basis through the direct cash transfer in order to address the urgency and unbearable situation of families living in (extreme) poverty; and second, a mid to long-term investment on the development of children's human capital aimed at breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

On a second instance, the program's eligibility criteria uses an income cut-off (or proxy means targeting) to identify the targeted population: families living under the poverty lines established by the federal government (R\$ 70/month for extreme poverty and R\$ 140/month for poverty) (MDS, n.d.). Although families without children are eligible to the program, the priority is given to families with children. Hence, uniting concepts of poverty in different stages of the programs implementation: the income based cut-off and the emphasis on children's development. Recalling that children are considered one of the most vulnerable and likely groups to suffer from poverty (as mentioned in chapter three).

Furthermore, the multidimensionality aspect is also observable in the three main axis of the program's operationalization (cash transfer, conditions and complementary programs). First, the cash transfer or benefit tackles the economic dimension of poverty with a palliative but effective measure to resolve a pressing situation (providing means to needy families) (Fiszbein et al., 2009). This part of the program addresses the economic aspect poverty (lack of income). The provision of a stable monthly income contributes to a limited economic security and allows for an increase of household consumption.

Second, the conditionalities target the development of children's human capital through better educational and health care opportunities (Fiszbein et al., 2009). When poverty and inequality become structural problems it refers to a pervasive socio-economic situation imposed by external factors preventing people from realising their full capabilities. Therefore, the chances of people overcoming poverty without help are diminished if the system, to some extent, works against them. Instead of providing opportunities, it prevents access to means and knowledge. Hence, focusing on breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty as a first step to end structural poverty.

Lastly, the complementary programs or 'exit routes' are responsible for empowering people and reintegrating them into society. These programs were conceived to tackle social exclusion and increase people's capabilities, empowering them to overcome poverty. The complementary programs are a redressing measure that attempts to reach out to those no longer in school age by giving them a second chance to learn and be involved in social, economical, political and cultural activities. Their goal is to

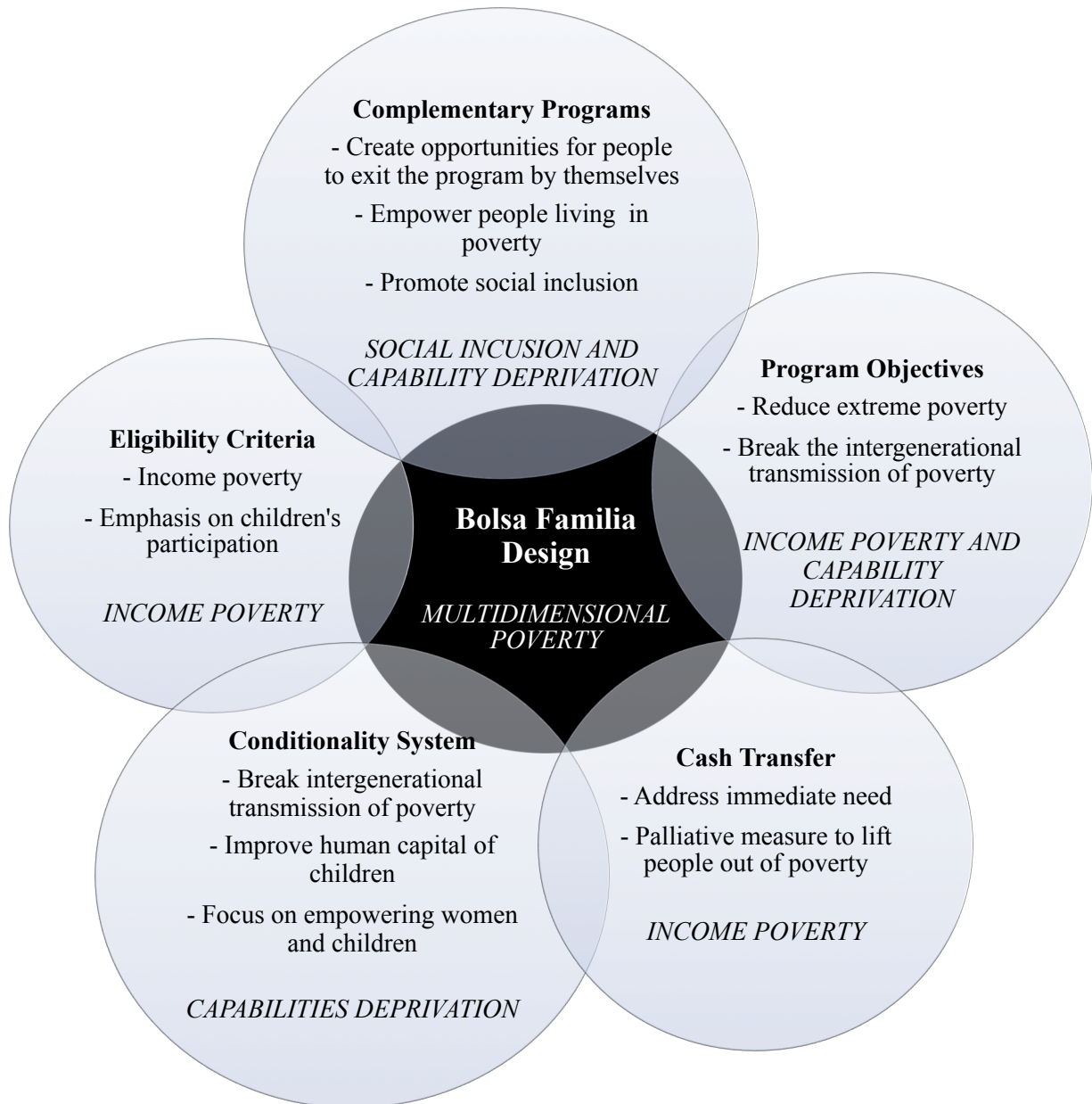
narrow a possible gap between generations in the sense that parents with a higher level of education make better informed decisions regarding their children.

Each part of the program features an element that characterizes poverty and when brought together they reveal the multidimensional conceptualization of poverty inherent to the program's design and actions. The notions of social inclusion and capability deprivation integrated to the Bolsa Familia display intent to surpass the unidimensional monetary conception of poverty (Santos & Magalhães, 2012). It integrates an attempt to empower poor families by providing belated opportunities to develop their capacities and agency.

Below, figure 4 is a schematic representation of the Bolsa Familia main features elaborated to tackle poverty through diverse approaches and dimensions. As it was previously discussed on chapter two the fundamental characteristic of conditional cash transfer programs is its capacity to address several facets of poverty through the integration of distinct tactics in a multidimensional context. This can be clearer demonstrated by the figure below which underscores the intersection between concepts of poverty and applicability of actions.

Referring back to Wagle's multidimensional model of poverty (figure 1 presented in chapter two), we identify parallels between the variables indicated by Wagle's and PBF's structure and actions. For instance, Wagle's three main dimensions of poverty (economic well-being, capability and social inclusion) correspond to the dimensions represented in the Bolsa Familia design (see figure 4). Additionally, the variables presented in figure 1 resemble circumstances that the PBF aims to address. Consequently, the figure 4 below illustrates how concepts of poverty can be operationalized and applied to public policies.

Figure 4 – Bolsa Familia and its Multidimensional Concept of Poverty



(Source: MDS, n.d.)

5.2 Operationalization of Poverty Concepts in the Bolsa Familia Program

The Bolsa Familia’s operationalization of the concepts of poverty has already been discussed throughout this study inasmuch as the main features of the program have been

presented and examined. However, this section pays especial attention to certain characteristics of this operationalization through the application of theory into practice.

Firstly, the Bolsa Familia as a conditional cash transfer program has some operational characteristics already predefined. CCTs' format and design are intrinsically based on a multidimensional approach to poverty and are best applied to circumstances of structural poverty (Fiszbein et al., 2009). They are specifically designed to build primarily children's human capital and to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty

The concept of poverty is then put into practice by actions, which implement the program, but also by the rules established to verify the eligibility criteria, as we have seen above. In that sense, the Bolsa Familia has taken the theoretical concepts of poverty and applied them into practice through a structured program design. As we can observe in figure 4, each division of the program is, to different extents, based on a dimension of poverty.

Thus, each feature of the program is constructed not individually but in conjunction to address different dimensions of poverty in order to achieve its ultimate goal. This particular design of CCTs allows for a better identification of the interconnectedness of deprivations. Thus, improving the program effectiveness in terms of actions coordination and resources allocation.

Secondly, the Bolsa Familia applies the CCT format to Brazil's specific socio-economic reality. Countries are highly encouraged to mould the design of conditional cash transfer program (and of other public policies towards poverty alleviation) to their needs and particularities (Fiszbein et al., 2009). The Brazilian government has shaped the targeting (eligibility criteria) to first prioritize families living in most pressing situations. Although any family living under poverty threshold levels can register for the program, the government selects first the ones in most need, families in extreme poverty.

The poverty lines were calculated based on Brazil's minimum wage at that time, and thus not arbitrarily chosen. The same is valid to the amount of the benefit paid to the families. It must agree with the government's budget and be politically acceptable; otherwise it risks threatening the program's political and financial sustainability.

Furthermore, the government has chosen to put children nationwide at the centre of its targeting strategies¹⁶. Another relevant decision concerns how the benefits would be transferred to the families. Brazil created a method through the bank system and transfers the cash (preferably) directly to the mothers' name¹⁷. It is a subjective way to empower and guarantee that the benefit will be properly used to provide for the children (Fiszbein et al., 2009). Even though the aim is to guarantee the children well-being, by establishing that the card should be on the mother's name it also empowers women as decision-makers within the household.

Additionally, the complementary programs are formatted to provide training and instruction according to specific needs of the families benefited by the program. Nevertheless, there is criticism regarding the implementation of the 'exit routes' and their relevance or applicability in addressing families' shortcomings preventing them from overcoming poverty.

The multidimensionality of the Bolsa Familia program is at once the origin of strength and complexity because it offers a margin for manoeuvre and covers a higher array of dimensions. In that sense, the Bolsa Familia should not be considered as an overall solution to reduce poverty, but as a part of a larger system of social protection (Fiszbein et al., 2009). The conditionalities and the cash transfer are social protection interventions to redress an unbalance of socio-economic inequality. By itself, the PBF can reduce the effects of poverty but it is not able (nor it is its purpose) to change the structural causes of poverty. Instead, the program brings "an enhanced attention to the behavioural consequences of social policies" (Fiszbein et al., 2009:202).

It is important to highlight that the PBF should be part of a broader social protection system since there are many other dimensions of poverty that are not comprised in the PBF's design. For instance, one aspect of poverty beyond the Bolsa Familia reach is that the program does not actually create the conditions for the current generation of workers to lift themselves out of poverty without the state's assistance.

¹⁶ Other CCT programs opt to use much more focused targeting strategies, i.e in some countries where girls' school enrolment and attendance are considerably lower than boys', the government directs the focus of CCTs to girls only; or countries where there is a considerable wealth disparity between regions, the government might choose to implement CCTs only in the poorest region of the country (Fiszbein et al., 2009).

¹⁷ Other CCTs give the benefit directly to the children. This method is still relatively new and has not been employed in many countries, however it might prove to be effective in certain cases (Fiszbein et al., 2009).

In addition, the executive secretary of Brazil's social-development ministry, Rômulo Paes de Sousa, points out that there are “‘old’ and ‘new’ poverty – old being lack of food and basic services; new being drug addiction, violence, family breakdown and environmental degradation. These “new” problems are more complex.” (The Economist, 2010).

Poverty reduction is a multifaceted and long-term commitment, which should involve efforts from entire societies and not only states. Impoverishment can affect anyone and one program can only go so far as to alleviate poverty. Even though the Bolsa Familia has made significant strides towards poverty reduction, there are still many dimensions of poverty that remain hidden behind a smoke screen and underexplored by public policies and theoretical fields. Whilst these ‘new’ dimensions remain ignored the goal of reducing poverty to a minimum incidence will not be fully achieved. The challenge is to create new programs and social policies that integrate and dialogue to conditional cash transfer programs, hence bringing a full integration of policies prepared to address the many dimensions of poverty.

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.”
Mahatma Gandhi

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes and concludes the main points developed by this thesis. We will present a brief overview of the arguments and findings of the case study on which we will base the formulation of recommendations for policies, researches and theories.

6.1 Concluding Remarks

To recapitulate, the purpose of this thesis was to investigate how public policies, more specifically the Bolsa Familia program in Brazil, is integrating the multidimensional aspect of poverty to its design and how the program is operationalizing this integration (in other words, applying the theories into practice). To answer those research questions, we started by exploring the theoretical framework in order to fully comprehend the distinct dimensions of poverty, followed by the presentation and analysis of the case study, which allowed us to observe the multifaceted design of a public policy.

The theoretical framework expounded on three of the theories attempting to define the concept of poverty. The income poverty centres its arguments in that poverty is a result of a lack of income or material beings. In turn, the capability deprivation focuses on explaining poverty as a lack of functionings and capabilities necessary to any individual to realise its rights and basic freedoms. Finally, the social exclusion approach understands poverty as

social disadvantages caused by structural failures within the society and basically connected to violations of social and political rights.

Nonetheless, the contemporary take on poverty understands that one dimension is simply not capable to capture all of its facets. The multidimensional approach purpose is to tackle poverty by addressing concurrently its different aspects (lack of income, social exclusion, lack of opportunities and etc.). It brings a new format to poverty reduction policies.

Conditional cash transfer programs employ the multidimensional approach to its design. It is an innovative method to address poverty in the short and long-term attaching the cash transfer to the compliance of educational and health care conditionalities. The purpose of CCTs, including the Bolsa Familia program, is immediate poverty alleviation and durable interruption of the intergenerational transmission of poverty, with special focus on developing children's human capital.

As we have seen, a multidimensional approach to poverty has many concerns that need to be factored into the whole scheme of creating and implementing policies towards poverty reduction. Fighting poverty is with not doubt a complex issue that involves many levels – from the conceptualization of poverty itself, to measurement issues and implementation of effective policies.

Therefore, different poverty definitions lead to different measurement strategies, which will then guide the type and scope of policies to be implemented. A mistaken measurement might lead to ineffective public policies, which instead of helping people to overcome poverty will end up perpetuating the exclusion cycle or the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Thus, adopting the right program, such as a conditional cash transfer program, has to be a well-pondered decision with special attention to countries' specific needs and context.

After decades of inefficient social programs towards poverty reduction, Brazil adopted the model of conditional cash transfer programs to be the forefront of its social policies directed at reducing poverty. The Bolsa Familia has brought about significant developments to poverty reduction and the elimination of extreme poverty. In addition, the program has broken the paradigm of traditional social policies in Brazil by introducing a new system that

applies the multidimensionality of poverty to its design, from the conception to the operationalization.

The case study concentrates on the analysis of the Bolsa Familia, as a conditional cash transfer program, and its main features: a) program objectives, b) eligibility criteria, c) cash transfer or benefits, d) conditionalities and e) complementary programs. Consequently, those features work towards addressing a particular dimension of poverty whilst creating interconnections between them, which ultimately characterize the multidimensional approach of the Bolsa Familia.

Moreover, the format of conditional cash transfer programs is intrinsically multidimensional; hence the concepts of poverty will be applied through this complex system. Thus, a better understanding of the concepts of poverty, how they are interconnected so as to form a multidimensional approach and comprehending how these approaches are operationalized into public policies demonstrate how theory and practice can work together towards creating better poverty reduction strategies.

The Bolsa Familia has achieved impressive results. Since its implementation, the program has lifted 22 million people out of (income) poverty (MDS, 2013). Nonetheless, the PBF is not equipped (nor should it be) to deal with all possible dimensions in which poverty manifests itself. The program has a clear goal and a target population, as stated above, and it should be understood as part of a larger social protection system prepared to deal with dimensions of poverty that are not integrated in the PBF's design.

Overall, the PBF does fulfil its role as a conditional cash transfer program, but that is not to say that improvements should not be considered in order to break the vicious cycle of poverty and inequality. The redistribution of human capital and income as well as the share of prosperity between classes and generations is essential to the achievement of a more just society, aligned with the core human rights principles of dignity and freedom.

6.2 Recommendations

Below there are a few recommendations based on findings and knowledge acquired throughout the research process to produce this study.

6.2.1 Conditional Cash Transfer Programs

Policy: Like any other public policy, CCT programs can only go as far as the political will allows. Hence, it is important that the program implementation is carried out with the support and commitment from all parties involved.

Research: This field could profit from more research concerning the impacts of CCT programs in the long-term. Even though CCT programs are still relatively new, they have already reached good results on the short-term. However, understanding the impacts in the long-term would be beneficial to future planning and implementation of program's designs.

Practice: Countries implementing CCT programs should pay especial attention to whether their socio-economic reality is consistent with the design of CCT approach. Conditional cash transfer programs are not the right policy to all poverty circumstances.

6.2.2 Bolsa Familia Program

Policy: An improvement of program evaluation and monitoring would be highly beneficial to track its progress. A better evaluation of what the PBF has achieved so far would contribute to well-informed planning of next steps and what area should be prioritized.

Practice: The Bolsa Familia could benefit from more commitment and investment to the development of the complementary programs, which are still underutilized. The same is valid for the quality of public services and of education and health care systems. This is especially true considering the scope of the PBF and the potential number of families that would profit from strengthening these areas of the program.

6.2.3 Theoretical Field

Theory: It is not unusual for a researcher to become involved with the topic of his/her research and lose track of the human aspect focusing only on theories and numbers. However, it is extremely important to keep in mind that behind the facts and numbers there are human beings who could benefit from breakthroughs in this field of study.

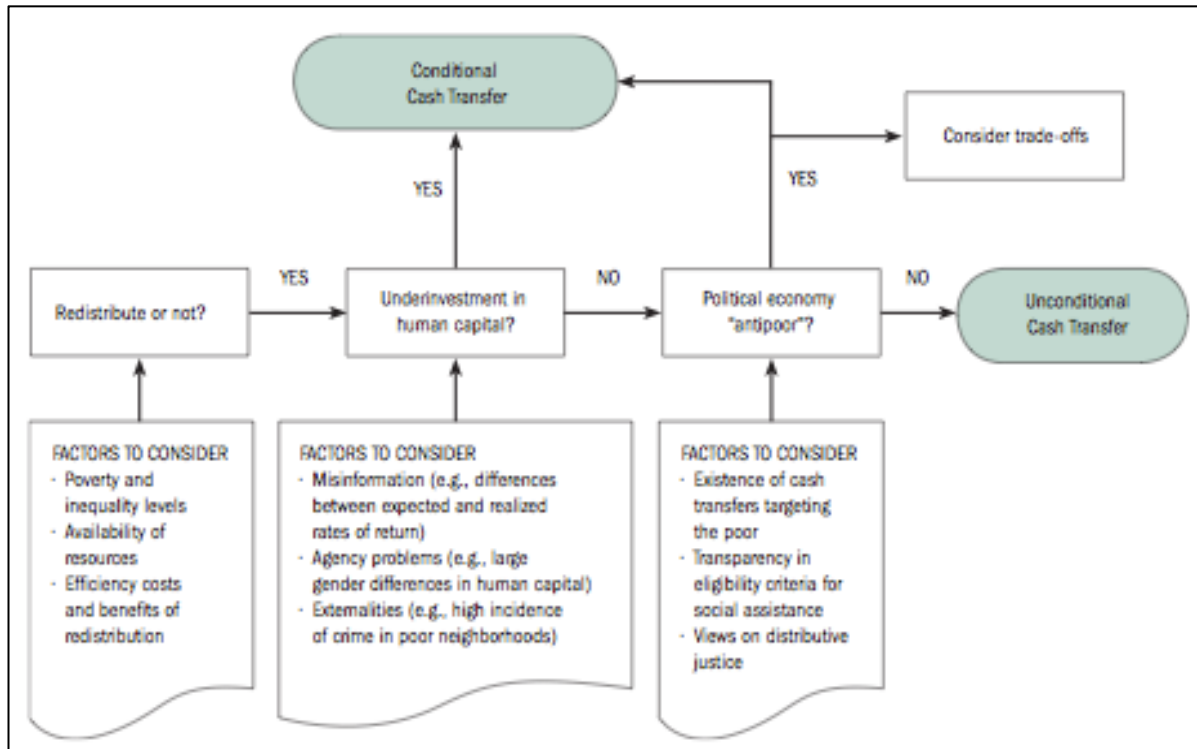
Theory: As we have seen, there are many theories attempting to explain the concepts and dimensions of poverty. Nevertheless, most of them still focus on studying the poor or the deprivation aspect of poverty. In that sense, this field of study could profit from a shift of focus. In order to fully understand the concepts of poverty and its relational causes and consequences, researchers could explore a more contentious political aspect, which refers to inequality, structural problems, and income distribution.

Word count: 15.850

Justification: The use of extra words is justified by the amount of data and complexity of the case study. The case study methodology requires an extensive presentation of facts and analysis of subjects.

Annex I

Decision Tree Approach to Identifying CCT Programs as the Right Policy Instrument



Source: (Fiszbein et al., 2009:12)

Annex II

Implementation of “Similar” Programs: Contrast between Mexico and Brazil

Program feature	Mexico	Brazil
<i>More-similar features</i>		
Program size	5 million families 25% of the population	11 million families 25% of the population
Definition of conditions	<p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School enrollment and minimum attendance rate of 85%, both monthly and annually • Completion of high school (for savings account) <p>Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance by all household members with the required number of health center visits and mother’s attendance at health and nutrition lectures 	<p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 85% school attendance in a 3-month period for children aged 6–15 <p>Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children 0–7: vaccination and follow-up of nutritional development • Pregnant women: pre- and postnatal visits, health and nutrition seminars
<i>Less-similar features</i>		
Targeting system	<p>Geographic targeting used to determine which rural areas participated initially</p> <p>Proxy means test used for household targeting within localities and in urban areas</p> <p>Program itself does targeting and program registration</p>	<p>Geographic targeting used to assign ration of slots in registry of poor households</p> <p>Means test used as household targeting system</p> <p>Municipalities do program targeting and program registration</p>
Evaluation	Explicitly taken into account in program design	No systematic attempt to integrate evaluation of program impact into design
Benefit structure	Differentiated by age, grade, gender	Differentiated by poverty level
Payment mechanism	In cash at program-specific payment points	Via debit card usable at banks, ATM machines, and lottery points
Enforcement of conditions	Rigorous, reduction in benefits at first round of noncompliance	Warning system, noncomplying households seen as in need of additional “care” and problem solving

Source: (Fiszbein et al., 2009:37)

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