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# Monetizing State Services to the Poor: Intentional Analysis of Three Latin-American Conditional Cash Transfer Programs

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## Abstract

Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) have been described as fundamental to the “post-neo-liberal” turn in Latin America. Through an analysis of the stated and unstated goals of three CCT development programs in Latin America, Mexico’s Progres-a-Oportunidades, begun in 1997; Brazil’s Programa Bolsa Familia (PBF), started in 2003; and Argentina’s Asignacion Universal por Hijo (AUH), started in 2009, this paper suggests that CCTs portend the continuation of long-established economic monetarist policies in the region, providing poor families with meager amounts of money, barely sufficient for their subsistence. Despite the fact that progressive populisms in Brazil and Argentina have imbued cash transfers with new discursive qualities, recent CCT programs’ goals replicate those set forth by Mexico’s 1997 Progres-a program. Rather than signifying a new state protection from the market, we argue that CCTs ultimately push for the integration of poor children into an idealization of the market and situate poor mothers into a relationship of asymmetrical accountability with the state. Consequently, CCTs imply a deterioration of state responsibilities to the poor through a discourse of opportunities for the development of human capabilities. The assumption of a post-neoliberal present in Latin America, marked by the monetization of state services, does not account for the fact that the ultimate goal of these programs is the creation of citizens who are less inclined to demand state services.

**Keywords:** cash transfers, Latin America, development, money

Latin America, according to some scholars, is in the midst of “a new historical moment” (Kaltwasser, 2011, p. 228) described as “post-neoliberal” (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012; Kaltwasser, 2011). In response to the widening inequality and high levels of poverty that resulted from prescribed “neoliberal” policies implemented in Latin America in the 1990s, the last decade has been characterized, at least in part, by a turn away from adherence to the Washington Consensus<sup>2</sup> (Kaltwasser, 2011, p. 227; Taylor, 2009; Lavinás, 2013). While definitions of post-neoliberalism vary somewhat<sup>3</sup>—as do those of “neoliberalism,” its supposed precursor—the shift toward post-neoliberalism is consistently characterized by a widening, or “reclaiming” (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012) of state authority and the implementation of social welfare programs. This shift, however, does not constitute a complete abandonment of the market-driven economic policies associated with neoliberalism. On the contrary, a “Polanyian double movement”<sup>4</sup> [has occurred] in which a market society is constructed on the one hand, and a protectionist countermovement arises against it on the other hand” (Kaltwasser, 2011, p. 227). Such a countermovement, in large part, has been identified not with the undertaking of structural changes to the economic system but with the creation of social programs intended to alleviate the damaging effects of a free market society, particularly for populations deemed “vulnerable.”

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs, in particular, have become increasingly popular methods of responding to “neoliberal” effects in the region. As Sugiyama points out, “By 2008, nearly every Latin American country had adopted [a CCT program]”<sup>5</sup> (2011, p. 251). While there are some differences among CCT programs throughout the region, most follow the same basic scheme initiated in the late 1990s by Mexico.<sup>6</sup> According to this model, the state provides a pre-determined cash benefit to poor mothers,<sup>7</sup> contingent on their compliance with certain behavioral requirements or conditionalities. These conditionalities—*e.g.*, ensuring their children’s school enrollment and attendance, regular health check ups and vaccinations—are explicitly aimed to develop the “human capital” of poor children. Mexico’s CCT PROGRESA, now referred to as *Oportunidades*, was initially implemented in 1997 as a measure to disarm the Mexican welfare state as Mexico adapted its economic structure to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Paradoxically, the self-described progressive governments of Brazil and Argentina have resorted to this same measure, implementing their own national CCTs—*Programa Bolsa Familia* in 2003 and *Asignacion Universal por Hijo* in 2009, respectively—as antidotes to perpetual poverty and inequality, which the governments blame on neo-liberal policies implemented during the 1990s.

Rather than seeing CCTs as indicative of a shift away from neoliberalism, we suggest CCTs portend the continuation of long established economic monetarist policies in the region. In seeking to break the cycle of poverty, CCTs have been described as having two other concurrent objectives: (1) to impact the lives of the poor by providing poor mothers, specifically, with immediate access to small sums of cash and (2) to increase the “human capital” of poor children. Through CCTs, small sums of cash are distributed to poor mothers in the short-term; the mothers are then “incentivized,” through the attached health and education conditionalities, to ensure the development of the “human capital” of their children. Through an analysis of these three CCT programs in Latin America—Mexico’s *Oportunidades*, Brazil’s *Bolsa familia*, and Argentina’s *Asignacion Universal por Hijo*—we problematize some of the assumptions of the CCT schema and suggest the existence of a third, no less important goal of CCTs: garnering popular political support. It is not our intent in this work to flatten the differences among these three programs, their architects, or the contexts in which they were implemented<sup>8</sup> but rather to highlight an overarching logic that has made them useful for different states across the region. To that end,

our analysis suggests that cash transfers are not adequately designed to break the cycle of poverty or to prepare the poor for market-driven redemption but that such transfers are instead implemented to induce political support from the bottom up.

After a brief overview of each program's implementation, we begin our analysis with a focus on the role of the market in CCT policies. Rather than provide a protection from the market, we argue, CCTs work to foster market inclusion for the poor and, in doing so, privilege the market as the site for redemption for the poor. Subsequently, in the second section, we examine the CCT goal of investing in the human capital of children. The third section explores the role of program conditionalities—the means by which children are expected to be incorporated into the labor market and the intergenerational transmission of poverty is meant to be broken. We take up the positioning of mothers in CCTs in the fourth section, where we suggest that the impacts of CCTs on familial and gender dynamics have yet to be fully explored. To this end, we problematize popular assumptions that directing the cash benefit to mothers necessarily results in their “empowerment.” In our fifth section, we trace the genealogy of conditional cash transfers and argue that they intentionally seek to foster popular support for state governments. Finally, we explore the implications of one of CCT programs' most explicit goals: breaking once and for all the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty. We suggest that CCTs aim to produce new subjects, the monetized poor, and task them with the new duty of striving in the marketplace for survival while also being grateful to, or at least recognizant of, the new national donor state.

### **Progres-Oportunidades (1997- )**

Before Mexico implemented PROGRESA-Oportunidades, the CCT that would eventually cast the nation in the role of “exporter of ‘social technology’” (Yanes, 2013, p. 68), it implemented a program of unconditional cash transfer, PROCAMPO, which targeted agriculturalists.<sup>9</sup> PROCAMPO was devised and anticipated to minimize social turmoil and economic losses produced by concrete policies, including, among others, the creation of NAFTA's agricultural market (1994 - 2008), the peso crisis (1995), and the Social Security Law reform (1997). Salinas de Gortari, the man responsible for the development and implementation of PROCAMPO, was well aware of the potential extra-economic uses of development programs. He explores this potential in his 1978 PhD dissertation at Harvard University, titled, “Public Investment, Political Participation and System Support: Study of Three Rural Communities” (published as a book in 1982 with a significant change in the Spanish title as *Producción y participación política en el campo*). Following an economic impact evaluation of two rural development programs implemented in the first half of the 1970s, Salinas' dissertation and book analyze the extent to which political participation and support for the government were fostered by these two programs.

According to Salinas's research, development programs targeting the rural sector should be regarded as incentives for political participation (“independent variable”) and political support (“dependent variable”) for the state and federal governments. Salinas concludes that the more participation a community engages in, the “[fewer] dependency bonds it develops with the National State” (Salinas de Gortari, 1982, p. 321). Salinas, therefore, is concerned when communities that have received abundant resources from the state did not seem to develop “attitudes of support” towards the political “system” (Salinas de Gortari, 1982, p. 321). In constructing a chronology of cash transfers, we suggest Salinas' PhD dissertation established a

framework for the use of development in fostering political support as early as 1978. Thus, in 1994, Salinas' PROCAMPO program "proposed a particular transformation of the Mexican state subject, the 'peasant,' into the poor, as a step toward one of the program's main objectives: to bypass local leadership by creating a transitional relationship between the federal government and its new subjects" (Dapuez, 2013, p. 30).

A decade before Salinas' dissertation research was conducted, another Harvard PhD, Richard Zeckhauser, suggested that attaching conditions to welfare had political utility: [W]riting a RAND report in 1968, [Zeckhauser] asked: "How should assistance [programs] to the poor be structured so as to maximize the utility function of the representative citizen?" The answer was [by] "targeting" [benefits and requirements to match desired outcomes], such as, for example . . . encouraging the poor to work [by granting them] tax incentives—something Zeckhauser recommended to the Nixon Administration in 1970, [having been] influenced by Milton Friedman's ideas on a "negative income tax." Positive incentives were only one form of targeting, however: Zeckhauser subsequently suggested that allocation of transfers could also be improved by imposing "restrictions on recipients." In order to qualify, recipients would have to meet certain "deadweight costs," heart-warmingly referred to as "ordeals," [such as] "demeaning qualification tests and tedious administrative procedures," or a work requirement that meant accepting precarious, "menial" jobs with low wages. (Lavinias, 2013)

Zeckhauser's work, according to Lavinias (2013), laid the groundwork for the future model of CCTs that would proliferate throughout Latin America. Interestingly, his work was regarded as "endogenous" to the region despite its basis on expert knowledge cultivated in U.S. universities and funded by international organizations.

In 1997, Santiago Levy, who received his PhD from Boston University, devised Mexico's Conditional Cash Transfer program PROGRESA, renamed *Oportunidades* in 2002. As the Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit of Mexico (1994-2000) during PROCAMPO's introduction as Mexico's major cash transfer program, Levy was well aware of the nature of the programs described by Zeckhauser and the intentions of such programs. With PROGRESA, Levy implemented a top-down cash transfer program that specifically targeted mothers. Expanding upon the existing cash transfer schema, Conditional Cash Transfers could also, Levy knew, potentially foster support for the state and bypass local political intermediaries. Additionally, the conditionalities attached to the cash transfers would impose restrictions on recipients that would purport to facilitate the development of "human capital."

### **Programa Bolsa Família (2003- )**

With the institution of *Programa Bolsa Família* (PBF) in 2003, the Brazilian state unified a series of existing cash transfer programs that had been separately implemented by municipalities, states, and the federal government.<sup>10</sup> In the decade since, PBF has been consolidated into one of the largest instruments in Brazilian social policy (Sant'ana, 2007; Satyro & Soares, 2009), reaching more than 13 million households. PBF constitutes an intersectoral policy arena by connecting various political and social spheres.<sup>11</sup> As they are responsible for disclosing information about the program to potential recipients and for the registration and selection criteria, municipalities act as the "gateway" to PBF benefit. However, in order to limit the "intervention of any manager, whether it be federal or municipal, in the effective selection of

beneficiaries” (Soares & Satyro, 2009, p. 32), the Caixa Economica Federal (CEF) was designated, in 2003, as the program’s new operator and its actual payer.<sup>12</sup> In order to both centralize the administration of benefits and incorporate the transfers (and their recipients) into an official banking system, the 2003 law that established PBF also stipulated that transfer payments be distributed directly to beneficiaries via ATM cards provided by CEF.

### **Asignación Universal por Hijo (2009- )**

Most recently, President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner announced the creation of *Asignación Universal por Hijo* (AUH), Argentina’s current cash transfer program aimed at children, by presidential decree in 2009. AUH was developed as an ambitious CCT that would subsume existing social benefits;<sup>13</sup> in the words of its architects, it was “a social inclusion program without precedent in the history of [the] country”<sup>14</sup> (ANSES, 2012, p. 9). The beneficiaries of this non-contributory cash allowance are Argentine children under the age of 18, disabled children, and, more recently, pregnant women. According to the National Social Security Administration, responsible for the distribution of the benefit, the requirements attached to the receipt of cash are meant to “condition [recipients] to promote both the health care and the formation of human capital of [their] children” (ANSES.gob.ar). In this sense, AUH was explicitly designed to respond to public need (through the distribution of cash benefits) while simultaneously promoting the development of “human capital” through the education and health of poor children.

### **Market Redemption**

Rather than understanding Conditional Cash Transfers as “post-neoliberal” (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012; Kaltwasser, 2011) protections against the effects of the market on vulnerable populations, our analysis suggests that CCTs ultimately work to ensure the participation—but not the success—of the poor in the market. In other words, small amounts of money, regularly distributed to poor families across various contexts and conditions, are imagined to fecundate new subjects that must thrive in future markets. Critically, however, the proactive exchanges CCTs imply for subsequent generations do not take into account the role markets may have played in the production of societal margins, where the mothers and fathers of poor children struggle to care for them. In short, not one of these three programs mentions how markets have actively produced margins, by marginalizing and impoverishing people as a means of taking advantage of them. Rather than being understood as an expected and purposeful effect of markets themselves, marginality is instead blamed on previous administrations’ mismanagement of market policy—and on something vague—an objectified “neoliberalism,” which is constructed as though it were a project of the past rather than a present reality.

Worthen argues that state concern with “market-led growth” in poverty alleviation programs “has provoked a reconfiguration of state-society relationships, whereby individuals and civil society organizations are encouraged to mobilize their entrepreneurial spirit and ‘social capital’ to engage with the state in ‘co-responsibility’ projects for social welfare” (2012, p. 366). In this vein, neoliberalism may be cited as the cause of poverty, but the perpetuation of poverty following CCTs is blamed on a lack of inclusion in the market or the failure of individuals to harness the requisite “entrepreneurial spirit” once the tools for inclusion have been granted them through CCT programs and the conditionalities associated therewith. In the end, however, this

individualized, pro market-based approach to poverty alleviation does not simply open up the market for wider inclusion; it requires that the impoverished subject take on the responsibilities associated with stepping into markets, which are *a priori* assumed, uncritically, to be perfect allocation devices.

CCTs perpetuate the understanding of poverty as a self-reproduced phenomenon, independent from markets and modes of production. Following the suggestions of the World Bank's 2001 report "Attacking Poverty," the CCT method presumes that cash transfers represent "sustainable poverty alleviation [that] entails measures [undertaken] to increase the 'security' of the poor, through developing their capacity to 'cope, mitigate, or reduce' their risks" (Molyneux, 2006, p. 430). This prescription of poverty alleviation "links risk management explicitly with economic growth and argues that reducing risk or protecting the poor against income and consumption variability will allow them to invest and accumulate" wealth (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 1). In this scenario, the poor are always considered responsible for their poverty. Rather than directly tackling the social risks facing the poor (which can be structural and contingent), policies that follow the risk management framework instead prioritize reduction of economic risks (2004, p. 6-7). This continues to be the case in Brazil's and Argentina's CCT programs. Despite their acknowledgment that poverty, in an abstract sense, is a result of structural problems, all three CCT programs suggest the best way to address these problems is through individual and family-level intervention.

Ultimately, CCTs are designed not only "to 'modernize and civilize' the poor but also to equip them with the attitudinal wherewithal to manage their own destinies, 'free' of state dependency but subordinated to the discipline of the market" (Molyneux, 2006, p. 430). This conceptualization of "dependency" permeates discussions of CCT programs. Notions of dependency include both reliance on state-rendered services (such as healthcare and education) as well as reliance on cash distributions in place of formal employment, thus de incentivizing work. In response to critiques that CCTs foster dependency in beneficiaries and de incentivize work, Hall counters:

In the face of continued high structural unemployment amongst the poor, this trend [of unemployment] may be inevitable and will be reversed only when the economy is able to generate more jobs. It does not follow, therefore, that cash transfers are necessarily displacing paid work and encouraging "idleness." In fact, three-quarters of those in receipt of income transfers in Brazil are employed ("economically active"), an almost identical proportion to that of the wider population. (2008, p. 815).

Interestingly, debates concerning dependency on the state and CCTs are frequently grounded on the assumption that "dependency" in general is unquestionably undesirable or represents a failed state of being. Marketing one's own labor, in these debates, is set up as the antithesis of "dependency." Obscured by this constructed dichotomy is the fact that CCTs encourage children's future continued dependence on the market.

### **Human Capital Investments for Imagined Futures**

The assumption underlying CCT programs—that poverty results from a lack of human capital or capabilities—legitimizes the nature of CCT conditionalities, which focus on the health and education of children. The programs' ubiquitous allusions to incentives (in the form of cash transfers to mothers) and investment (in their children's futures) reveal underlying monetary logic at work. In this sense, we would argue that CCTs do not reflect a "Polanyian double

movement” (Kaltwasser, 2011, p. 227)—in which states seek to establish “self-regulating” market societies that imply less state responsibility for the provision of protections, while countermovements push for states to provide social protections and services. Rather, we argue that CCTs are consistent in their aims: they seek to reduce poverty—and dependency—by increasing the human capital of the poor. Following a popular development scheme, the increase of human capital focuses on the long-term future as a field in which initial investments in the individual—through health, education, and training—bring concrete gains in economic capital (Becker, 2008). By promising recipients’ children’s full incorporation to the market of labor in the long-term future, CCT programs, like other monetarist policies, promote the abandonment of the “near future” for distant horizons (Guyer, 2007, 2012). CCTs temporal framing reflects “the combination between fantasy futurism and enforced presentism” (Guyer, 2007, p. 410)<sup>15</sup> by subsidizing petty consumption in the present while projecting the realization of policy promises into the distant future. This allows for some leeway when it comes to accountability for program promises. In 2013, the expiration of *Oportunidades*, the longest running and most controlled and analyzed CCT program, was extended to 2030, and its objectives were reframed to coincide with such a long-term horizon. Keeping in mind that the program started as PROGRESA in 1997 and that the period of a “generation” is conventionally considered to span around 20 years, it might seem odd that the program has postponed accountability for its “human capital” aims for another one and a half generations.

Human capital is increasingly defined and discussed according to Amartya Sen’s “capabilities” approach to development. According to Sen, “Poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes” (Sen, 1999, p. 87). Since 2005, *Oportunidades* has suggested that through its intervention, poor children are expected to develop such capabilities. Agudo Sanchíz (2012) has identified and analyzed how this transition from human capital accumulation in the poor to Sen’s capability approach is clearly objectified in *Oportunidades*. Ultimately, however, both the accumulation of “human capital” (ANSES.gov.ar) and “development of capabilities” are expected to break the “vicious cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty” (OPORTUNIDADES, 2003, p. 1; Molyneux, 2006, p. 433; ANSES, 2012), according to their own formulation.

Pushing for the development of poor children’s human capital and capabilities works to individualize poverty and facilitate the children’s eventual incorporation into the market:

This capital is integral to the person who possesses it and consists of both physical predispositions and the skills acquired as a result of ‘investment’ in education, training, and improvements in physical capacity. A human being, thus, is deemed a ‘machine-stream ensemble,’ even a ‘capital-ability.’ This actively responsible agent is a subject of the market and is obliged to enhance her quality of life through her own decisions. In this schema, everyone is an expert on herself, responsible for managing her own human capital to maximal effect. A politics of the self emerges wherein we are all induced to ‘work on ourselves’ outside the purview of the social. (Mahmud, 2012, p. 483)

CCTs, therefore, do not protect children from the market by challenging market logic or even by signaling alternative markets within which the poor might develop their capabilities. Instead, CCTs propose the development of poor children’s capabilities so that the children can more easily be incorporated as a potential labor force into an idealized future market. Answers to questions regarding the uncertainty of the present and the future of this market, how the children’s future labor will be situated within it, and which actual capabilities they should accumulate or develop to avoid being poor like their parents remain unarticulated. In this



schema, individuals are left alone to reconstitute their selves, attune to naïve and idealistic market-driven lives, seemingly performing the most important pedagogic movement.

### Conditionality, Rights and Citizenship

As Molyneux (2006) has pointed out, CCTs are designed around the principles of participation, empowerment, and co-responsibility, a combination suggested by the World Bank's 1990 New Poverty Agenda. These principles, along with the social risk model, "situate 'users' as 'stakeholders', with interests and responsibilities, who are 'participants in the policy process'" (Molyneux, 2008, p. 783). In particular, the notion of participation "serves to provide development projects with some measure of legitimacy on the assumption that those involved have helped to shape the direction and outcome" (Molyneux, 2008, p. 782). According to *Oportunidades* program materials, for instance, conditionalities or "co-responsibilities" are integral to the program's aims, distinguishing it from other poverty programs: "The participation of families allows them to take on a role as active subjects in their own development. For [family members], co-responsibility implies the challenge of acting as autonomous agents capable of setting goals that conform to their aspirations and . . . [working] to realize them" (*Oportunidades*, 2003, p. 58) (translation by Adato & Roopnaraine, 2010, p. 341).

However, in CCTs, this participation is limitedly prescribed; participation is conceived as properly performing required behavior. In fact, "the close relationship between participation and overcoming poverty in the local programs strengthens the instrumentalization of participation, leaving aside the more active aspects of citizenship" (Dagnino, 2006, p. 35). For the poor, the participation prescribed by the CCT schemes is limited and certainly not reminiscent of the active participation that includes "the right to participate in the very definition of that society and its political system, to define what we want to be members of" (Dagnino, 2006, p. 26). Instead, CCTs define citizenship "as mere individual integration to the market" (Dagnino, 2006, p. 18) and, consequently, link rights to market access. As such, CCTs have shifted discourses and practices of citizenship to include responsibilities, at least for the poor.<sup>16</sup>

The characterization of CCT programs as a form of "social protection" is called into question when one considers the demands made on beneficiary families through conditionalities. One might ask if the vulnerability of beneficiary families, and thus their greater difficulty in fulfilling the conditionalities, weakens the supposedly protective function of CCTs. There are, of course, those who defend the permanence of conditionalities based on the program's aim to increase human capital. From this perspective, the conditionalities are deemed more important than the monetary benefit, since what is at stake is the encouragement of human capital of beneficiary families. This encouragement, as a rule, occurs by binding the monetary benefit to the supply of and access to education and health services. As Cotta and Paiva suggest, the "offsets" are the differential of CCTs over other types of transfers of government income, so that [Conditionalities] constitute an induction system seeking to affect the behavior of the adult members of vulnerable families. [The receipt of] a financial award [is meant to facilitate the making of] socially optimal decisions [regarding use of the money], such as investment in health and education of the next generations. In this sense, [conditionalities] establish a causal link between the transfers in the present and [the] future emancipation of [the] children and youth of families served, via improvement of their educational level. (2010, p. 60)

Although authors such as Cotta and Paiva claim that conditionalities could be considered “the ‘soul’ of the Programas de Transferência Condicionada de Renda [CCT] model” (2010, p. 67), in the case of PBF, there is no consensus among experts that this is the case. Some critics argue that PBF should be more rigid in controlling conditionalities, since the legitimacy of transfers of financial resources to populations of working age is often questioned. In the case of AUH, 20 percent of the benefit is conditioned and distributed at the end of the yearly cycle, coinciding with the beginning of the school year, as long as the beneficiary provides the office with documentation of her compliance with the program’s requirements (ANSES, 2012). In theory, the beneficiary’s continuation in the AUH program is contingent on this compliance, but the extent to which this is enforced is debatable (Alvarez et al., 2009). Regardless, the conditionalities of AUH are described by the Argentine government as “critical” because it is the meeting of the conditionalities associated with cash transfers that is seen as paramount to “breaking the chain of poverty in the future” (ANSES, 2012, p. 19).

As part of an anti-poverty strategy that coordinates various policies aimed at ensuring social rights, the PBF also relates cash transfers to education, health, and social policing actions. By offering compliance with conditionalities that would work as “inductive systems of beneficiaries’ behaviors” (Cotta & Paiva, 2010, p. 64), money stands for family commitments with the state. Thus, the program designers consider conditionalities to be *a priori* commitments made by households (which must fulfill the conditionalities) and public authorities (which are responsible for the provision of services). By conceiving conditionalities as “compromisos,” the program’s official discourse aims to transform cash recipients into virtuous users of state provided services such as education, health, welfare, and social care. In this sense, cash is imagined to allow beneficiaries access to basic social rights, a sentiment also echoed in official CCT discourse.

CCTs are often conceived of a less paternalistic method of “allowing the poor to access their citizenship rights” (Molyneux, 2006, p. 441) than in-kind transfers of goods and services; as Argentinean President Fernandez de Kirchner put it, AUH benefits “do not constitute a gift, but a right” (Mustafa, 2010). The conditionality aspect of the program, however, suggests that “the rights and entitlements of social citizenship have morphed into social responsibilities” (Luccisano, 2006, p. 59). In the case of PBF, experts and common people also contest the way in which the program frames PBF beneficiary families’ situations of vulnerability to justify distributing cash transfers to them. This critique is based on the fact that the PBF benefit is not a right, even though some authors consider it to be an “almost right” (Medeiros, Britto, & Soares, 2008; Cohen, 2012). Nevertheless, by making the poor’s access to these rights contingent on their behavior modification, through what Lu Vuolo has described as “punitive conditionality” (2013, p. 60), CCT program architects suggest that the citizenship of the poor is a precarious citizenship.

### **Monetizing and Gendering Familial Obligations**

While the targets of CCTs are officially the children of the poor, it is their parents—specifically, their mothers—who must administer the funds and ensure their children’s attendance in school, routine health checks, and proper vaccination. The decision to task mothers in particular with the conditionalities of the program has been attributed to assumed gendered distributions of care and perceived disparate levels of responsibility within households (Molyneux, 2006; Agudo Sánchez, 2010; Delgado, 2013). As a result, many analyses of CCT

programs have rightfully pointed out the inherent contradiction between the programs' empowerment claims and the fact that they make mothers solely responsible for their children's development. As Dapuez (2013) points out in his research concerning *Oportunidades*,

In such an enterprise, developers burden mothers with the task of not reproducing "their [own] poverty" in the futures of their children, [relieving program developers] from any responsibility for the success or failure of [the] program[s]. Through a transaction of cash, the developer resituates a social problem, such as poverty, into the family sphere. The [program developers'] flawed reasoning implies that poverty is a familial, self-reproducing] phenomenon. Taking for granted that all other economic phenomena would work perfectly (assuming the existence of a demand for a labor force of high schooled youths, for instance), [CCTs seek to] avoid the . . . reproduction of poverty [by promising that] poverty can and will be eradicated by empowered mothers. (2013, p. 135)

Here we expand on Dapuez's contention that CCTs contribute to the "monetization of poverty" (2013, p. 62) by the Mexican state and further suggest that there is at work a monetization of gendered familial obligations. Development economists and functionaries, instead of trying to fix the structural problems contributing to poverty, monetize family relationships, impinging on spheres usually reserved for psychologists, anthropologists, and social workers. This monetization is purposefully perpetuated through CCT programs, which suggest that providing mothers with cash benefits will not only incentivize their investment in their children's development but also help them gain more influence within their families. In particular, as administrators of the cash benefit, mothers are expected to exert newly "empowering" control over family resource management. Molyneux and Thomson suggest that CCT discourse links empowerment to resource control; upon receipt of the benefit, women are meant to experience "financial autonomy . . . to increase their self-esteem and their negotiating power with their spouse" (2011, p. 10). Existing ethnographic research, however, has revealed that in many cases, women already manage household expenses and, further, that intra-household relationships can affect how resources are pooled and spent (Adato & Roopnaraine, 2010; Bradshaw, 2013; Iversen, 2003).

As the officially designated recipients of CCTs throughout the region, poor mothers are treated as mere "conduit[s] of policy" (Molyneux, 2006, p. 439) expected to redirect the futures of their children. Argentina's AUH program, for instance, was implemented as a "comprehensive protection of the rights of girls, boys, and adolescents" (1602/09) via cash transfers to those "responsible for their maintenance" (1602/09). The responsibilities tied to the cash transfer are, apparently unquestionably, linked to a gendered division of labor within the household that appears naturalized by CCT architects' assumptions. Hornes finds, congruently, that among AUH recipients in Argentina, "The responsibility for household economic practices and social uses of money are invested with moral values tied to representations and social constructions of the gender of its members" (2013, p. 74). Mother recipients of CCTs are thus incorporated "into the economy and into political discourse not as citizens with rights but as mothers with increased social responsibilities" (Luccisano, 2006, p. 55). Their access to state benefits and, it could be argued, identification as citizens are made contingent on their ability to properly perform "good motherhood" as prescribed by CCT conditionalities.

Furthermore, proposing that giving mothers control over the cash benefit and, by extension, control over family budgeting and resource management, is necessarily empowering assumes that women are otherwise disempowered in the family. While the main selection criteria for becoming a PBF beneficiary is based on family income, many of the agents tasked with

implementing the program consider it more important to target the “poorest of the poor” (or the so-called “vulnerable”) than to target merely the “poor.” Thus, in the “pre-selection” process meant to ensure that the benefit is extended to families that “really need” it or, in other words, to those that “need it most,” would-be beneficiaries develop strategies based on a rhetoric of suffering to convince social workers of their “real” needs. The program prioritizes women as beneficiaries, as they are considered better suited to the management of domestic finances than men are and, furthermore, are deemed a more “vulnerable” group than their male counterparts are. Women’s supposed vulnerability is based on their greater difficulty in being integrated into the formal labor market and their tendency to remain with their children following a separation from their partners.

In this sense, the PBF program’s prioritization of women stems from the assumed absence of fathers in family life or, in the case that fathers are present, the assumption that men are not as capable as women in taking on the responsibility of caring for their children. By focusing on women, mothers, adolescents, and children, the program’s rules suggest that the supposed absence of men is an unquestionable starting point for demonstrating the needs or “vulnerabilities” of families. In addition to the program’s omission of men, by providing benefits to women as mothers, PBF reinforces a traditional division of labor according to gender: fathers/men as providers and mothers/women as caregivers. The program also emphasizes the supposition that “typical families” (i.e. those with both a mother and father present) should not be “needy.” In doing so, the program promotes constant tensions between various values and morals across different settings, including the very notion of family and the expected obligations and duties it entails.

In the case of *Oportunidades*, Dapuez (2013) critiques not only program developers’ assumption “that it is not necessary to consider the complexity of the mother-child relation” but also their tendency “to express and legislate this relation in contractual terms, through the tropes of ‘obligations’ and ‘co-responsibilities’” (2013, p. 94). The co-responsibility framework of CCT programs discursively “suggests an equal relationship between the Mexican state and poor families” (Delgado, 2013, p. 64) and frames the program as a partnership of sorts between the state and poor mothers in investing in their children.

According to Agudo Sanchíz, the *Oportunidades* transfers produce two apparently contradictory phenomena in an indigenous Chiapas community. One is the constraint affecting women recipients, related to “a particular form of oppression within the family, where the script[s] of their lives have been written by others—often men—for them to perform as child-carers and domestic servants in their own households” (Agudo Sanchíz, 2010, p. 547). Meanwhile, “their husbands, brothers and sons . . . can rely on [the women fulfilling] such ‘traditional’ female roles” in order to permit the men the opportunity “to pursue their own aims (e.g. seeking employment through migration) within a relatively less-reduced capability threshold” (Agudo Sanchíz, 2010, p. 547). Agudo Sanchíz refers to the continuation of this dynamic as “a perverse aspect of ‘intergenerational reproduction of poverty’ that is unscripted in the *Oportunidades* policy narrative” (2010, p. 547). The second phenomenon Sanchíz notes, appearing somewhat contradictory to the first, is that in some important aspects, the *Oportunidades*’ cash transfers “do have a positive influence on men’s attitudes to women, something that may improve the latter’s capabilities for control over their material environment and for basic education and literacy” (2010, p. 547). Furthermore, participating mothers who can count “on a regular stipend become reliable as subjects of *credit* in the eyes of local storeowners, relatives, and other women (Agudo Sanchíz, 2010, p. 547).<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, even though Agudo

Sanchiz describes some forms of “empowerment,” he later concludes that the implementation of *Oportunidades* “perpetuates vertical relationships” between the program representatives and people incapable of “reciprocal exchange” (Agudo Sanchiz, 2011, p. 282). Fathers, on the other hand, seem to be excluded entirely from this exchange.

While the expectations of proper motherhood are to be taught in practice through the program’s conditionalities, references to fatherhood are notably absent. Their omission burdens mothers with the sole responsibility of child development (Franzoni & Voorend, 2012, p. 390) and, we would argue, simultaneously disregards the potential of fathers to contribute to their children’s future success. By framing poverty as a problem of intergenerational import and mother-empowerment as a meaningful obstacle to its self-reproduction, CCT program designers also seem to suggest that fathers, unlike mothers, are incapable of contributing to the correction of this supposed intergenerational transmission. In their omission from program implementation, fathers of poor children are not only disappeared as actors in their children’s lives, they are also conceptualized as negative influences.

Through the process of receiving the money and deciding how to spend it, states appear to expect mothers to experience a transformation based on “financial autonomy, which helps to increase their self-esteem and their negotiating power with their spouse” (Molyneux & Thomson, 2011, p. 10). The *Progres-Oportunidades* program schema, setting the standard for later CCT programs, assumes that empowerment and self-importance, even within the family, are necessarily tied to resource control. Consequently, to remediate women’s perceived lack of power, which the programs associate with their dependence on a husband’s management of family resources, monetarist developers only disburse cash transfers.

The stated purpose of increasing the “financial autonomy” of recipients can also be linked to a disciplinary concern for “financial literacy” among the poor. Lavinias notes, “CCTs have been a key mechanism for the propagation of ‘financial literacy’: recipients of benefits are often encouraged to attend talks and short-term courses on the subject” (2013, p. 36). This is the case in Mexico, where banks offer courses to *Oportunidades* recipients to “reinforce the [behaviors] that lead to greater saving, more prudent spending, justified and manageable levels of indebtedness and a culture of risk-prevention” (Lavinias, 2013, p. 36). In Argentina, 20% of the AUH benefit is retained until the end of the benefit cycle, when recipients are expected to provide evidence of compliance with conditionalities and register for benefits for the next year with local ANSES offices. The timing of this windfall—coinciding with the beginning of the next school year—implies that the accumulated benefit should be spent on costs associated with school attendance. It would not be overstepping to suggest that by setting aside a portion of the benefit on behalf of recipients, the state is attempting to inculcate “financially sound” saving habits. Lo Vuolo has suggested that holding 20% of the benefit in this manner can be understood as a disciplinary measure, representing “an unjustified differential treatment when compared to the formally employed, who neither face income retention nor need to comply with conditionalities in order to receive the benefit for their dependent children” (2013, p. 58). While CCT programs explicitly target mothers as recipients based on assumptions about their responsibility and propensity to spend the transfer for the betterment of their households, in effect, the programs seem intended to “teach” this desired behavior to recipients.

### Equalizing Opportunity or Redistributing Responsibility?

A growing body of literature positively evaluates the effects of CCT programs in terms of education and health (Schady et al., 2008; Behrman et al., 2009; Ham, 2010; Dubois et al., 2010; Fernald et al., 2012; Manley et al., 2013). If one scratches the surface of the supposed success of CCT programs, however, one can see beyond development propaganda. In the case of Mexico, especially, poverty endures. One World Bank document from 2004 states that in Mexico, “[d]espite the gains [made] between 1996 and 2002, particularly for the extreme poor, poverty remains widespread, [measuring] only slightly below levels prevailing before the 1994/1995 crisis” (World Bank, 2004, p. 1). The same World Bank that funded the *Progres-a-Oportunidades* program in Mexico and subsequently funded similar programs around the world admits that poverty levels in Mexico in 2004 are unchanged from (if not worse than) the period before the program was put into effect. Once again, in another official document, this time from CONEVAL (National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development, 2012), one finds that the majority of Mexicans in 2010 are poor (46.3%) or extremely poor (11.4%).<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, states continue to adopt and support CCTs based on their supposed ability to facilitate more equal access to health and education services. This focus on access, however, not only overshadows glaring service inequalities, it also potentially legitimates a meritocratic understanding of inequality (Ham, 2010, p. 5). If the government can claim that it has increased (or is in the process of increasing) opportunities for the poor, then the burden then falls on the poor to “take proper advantage” of these opportunities. If the individuals remain poor, then, their failure can be understood as a personal, individualized failure rather than a structural or systemic one. In this way, poverty is linked to a lack of opportunity and, if the prescribed widening of opportunity fails to cure a family or an individual of their poverty, then the individual’s effort is questioned, not the state’s. CCTs thus become a “money substitute [for] state obligations, resituating [these obligations] in the family sphere” (Dapuez, 2013). To this end, through CCTs, the state attempts to equalize opportunity, at least in theory, in order to reduce state responsibility to its citizens in the long term. At work are the simultaneous expansion of state power and the shrinking of state responsibility (Escobar, 1990). Despite the supposed partnership being constructed between poor mothers and the state, “there is a smooth transition from co-responsibility in which the state’s shared responsibility for lifting the poor out of deprivation becomes the duty of a sole recipient in each of the families concerned” (Delgado, 2013, p. 64).

Fernández de Kirchner’s insistence that “public education is the great social leveler” (Página 12) reflects what Ham (2010) describes as an “equality of Opportunity Approach” to inequity. According to Roemer, inequities can be categorized either as resulting from “factors beyond individual control” or arising “solely from differences in efforts” (Ham, 2010, p. 4). If a world is “totally equitable,” yet “inequality still exists,” Ham suggests, then the inequality can be attributed to “the effort allocation for each individual” (2010, p. 4). This same logic of opportunity, in which individual effort (or lack thereof) accounts for inequality in an equitable world (Ham, 2010, p. 4), drives the CCT focus on increasing the poor’s access to education and health services. Rather than “equaliz[ing] outcomes,” CCTs are meant to “equalize opportunities” (Ham, 2010, p. 6). These goals are differentiated in their time frames. If a program equalizes opportunities, then the results of this supposed equalization are observable only in future generations. The equalization of outcomes (through widespread wealth redistribution, for instance), on the other hand, would be more immediately observable. However, CCTs refute the need for equalizing outcomes by downplaying the significance of

seeing more immediate results, claiming (ironically) that while the equalization of outcomes “may yield important short-run benefits,” it is only through the equalizing of opportunities that recipients’ “efforts are the source of differences in outcomes” (Ham, 2010, p. 6)—again attributing inequality to individual effort (or lack thereof).

At the heart of discussions of equal opportunity through education and health services is the assumption that the quality of these services is equal. Some evaluations of *Oportunidades*, for instance, highlight the positive effects of the program in health and education statistics (Delgado, 2013). However, as Delgado argues, “These positive effects do not reveal, and indeed can conceal, the poor quality and basic provision of health and medical services in rural Mexico” (2013, p. 62). As many researchers have noted, in fact, *Oportunidades* was often only implemented in rural areas that already had existing educational facilities and health service providers in place (Rawlings, 2005; Sewall, 2008; Soares et al., 2010). As a result, “The poorest of the poor cannot benefit from *Oportunidades* because this group (estimated at about 500,000 people) lives in communities so small that there are no [state-provided] educational and health services for them to utilize” (Sewall, 2008, p. 181). Even taking for granted that accessible services exist, the extent to which opportunities are actually “equal” is debatable.<sup>19</sup> As Hall notes in the case of Brazil, “Notable expansion in non-contributory benefits in Brazil through CCTs and other welfare [programs] has been accompanied by a significant drop in longer-term social investment in several sectors” (2008, p. 816).<sup>20</sup> These findings are especially troubling if CCTs continue to be heralded as the best solutions to poverty and inequality.

CCT program aims are typically so generally stated, and so inadequately adapted to the specific contexts in which cash is distributed that when they do fail, it is always easy to place the blame on the recipient. By portraying cash transfers and their conditions as a pertinent remediation of poverty, CCT programs propose that any continuation of poverty suggests failure on the part of poor parents, who must not have appropriately spent the monetary benefit. However, there are other ways of explaining *Progres-Oportunidades*’ failure to break the cycle of poverty. In his book, significantly titled “Good Intentions, Bad Outcomes” (Levy, 2008), *Progres-Oportunidades*’ ideologue, Santiago Levy, acknowledges that the current social policy that he also designed contributes to trapping the poor in poverty and that *Progres-Oportunidades* runs the risk of becoming a permanent part of the poverty cycle. He noted, “Despite increased years of schooling for future cohorts of poor workers associated with PROGRESA-OPORTUNIDADES, firms are unlikely to offer them formal jobs, and they are unlikely to seek formal jobs” (Levy, 2008, p. 229).

Levy, currently vice-president of the Inter-American Development Bank, goes on to suggest further social security reform as a possible solution to this problem. If the Mexican state no longer required employers to contribute to social security for their employees, for example, Levy argues, then employers would be more willing to hire PROGRESA-OPORTUNIDADES subsidized youths. He proposes that instead of requiring firms to pay for social coverage (from health coverage to pensions), the necessary funds should be collected through the direct consumption tax, from which the state could collect 5% of the Mexican GDP. This reform, Levy argues, would provide universal social coverage and, at the same time, foster productivity. Once again, Mexican development would involve a bold pro-market monetarist movement, i.e. taxing the poor with a regressive tax scheme,<sup>21</sup> counterbalanced by the populist one of providing universal social and health coverage.

## Conclusions

According to the current CCT scheme, investment in the “human capital” of children is adequate for the children’s future incorporation into the labor force and, consequently, ensures their future independence from state support. Using CCT investment language, the state’s initial “investment” in the lives of poor children in the present, it is supposed, will result in future gains (which, from the point of view of the state, means less demanding citizens). In this sense, describing CCTs as providing “permanent” benefits is misleading, to a degree, as they are most frequently linked to children, a population that will eventually age out of eligibility as the targets of state support. At the point of adulthood, the state’s period of investment ends, and the “direct relationship” with the state is abruptly severed or, in the case of new mothers, reconfigured. As Dapuez points out, “This negligence or conscious abandonment of those in the process of transforming themselves into definitive economic agents speaks to an ongoing process of disengaging new generations from the State” (2013, p. 90). This process, ideally, is meant to conclude with the previous beneficiary, now an individual-citizen, integrating herself into the market (Dagnino, 2006, p. 18).

The extension of state-provided cash transfers to the poor does not imply an expansion of the responsibilities of the state. In fact, cash transfer programs’ purposeful reconceptualization of state responsibility limit the scope of CCTs to (1) equalizing (to the greatest extent possible) the “redistribution of opportunities and capabilities more than of resources” (Jenson & Saint Martin, 2003, p. 91), (2) “refashioning . . . the institutions of the state . . .,” and (3) seeking “a closer, more direct relationship between the executive and the ‘people’” (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012, p. 5). Importantly, however, the objectives of CCTs are not aimed toward building more state accountability but towards the creation of a monetary framework of “co-responsibility” that, unfortunately, does not empirically guarantee the emergence of equalized opportunities and state support.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Neoliberal policy prescriptions from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the US Treasury Department were known, since the 1990’s, as the “Washington Consensus”. These international organizations based in Washington DC promoted policies for macroeconomic stabilization, economic opening, and the expansion of market forces within national economies all over the world.

<sup>3</sup> Exactly how this recent period should be characterized is a topic of debate. Some suggest a “new historical moment” called post-neoliberal while others prefer to consider it “alternative neoliberalism” (Cortés, 2009) or “contemporary neoliberalism” (Taylor, 2009). However, we consider it here as a continuity in the economic developmental paradigm in social sciences. Or, to put it in negative terms, we have not seen a paradigmatic revolution in Developmental studies that has transformed economics in Latin American “progressive” countries. While the “neoliberal” has been further conceptualized and outlawed, the post-neoliberal turn has not confronted the monetarist culture that infuses most of the economic knowledge in Latin America. It is still the case that “money—the instrument of exchange and account—is seen as the social oil that facilitates the rationality of the system” (Marcus, 2009, p. 26). For instance, and with some exceptions, Latin American central banks have



exponentially increased their dollar deposits, further pursued the financialization of their economies, and states have considered distributing cash to be an efficient way to end poverty. The “post” particle indicates a partial ending of the “neoliberal” but, as with the new designation “neo-developmentalism,” both composed terms also base their meanings on something considered to be part of the past.

- <sup>4</sup> According to Polanyi (1944), the dialectics of marketization, in the one hand, and the countermovement of creating social protection against such marketization produces the utopian imaginery of a self-regulating society.
- <sup>5</sup> In her analysis of the widespread implementation of CCTs in the region, Sugiyama suggests that initial positive reports concerning *Bolsa* and *Oportunidades* in Brazil and Mexico, respectively, contributed to the adoption of the CCT program scheme as the “new professional norm within the development community” (2011, p. 262). The fact that these first reports could not possibly evaluate the extent to which either program met its long-term goal of human capital development did not hinder their support by international development practitioners. In turn, as the new development norm, CCT programs were also more likely to be funded by international financial institutions, consequently incentivizing countries to adopt the schemes and further reinforcing them as the international norm. As Sugiyama succinctly puts it, “funding and norm-creation work in tandem” (2011, p. 264).
- <sup>6</sup> There are also some differences in *Bolsa Família*, however, that distinguish it from other CCTs in Latin America. As Soares et al. (2010) point out, *Bolsa* eligibility is assessed according to “self-declared income instead of a proxy means method,” it includes an unconditional cash transfer to extremely poor households (including childless ones), and “the decentralized nature of the application process and of the monitoring of conditionalities [allows] municipalities [to] play an important role” (Soares et al., 2010, p. 174).
- <sup>7</sup> The amount of the benefit varies among and within the three programs, as it is dependent on household composition, gender, and age of recipients, among other variables. For comparison’s sake, the basic benefit amount distributed per child enrolled in AUH is ARS\$ 460 or around US \$73.00 or US \$47.00 (depending on the official or the street conversion rate) (ANSES, 2013). A family enrolled in *Oportunidades* may receive a maximum amount ranging from MXN 1710.00 (around US \$132 per month) to 2765.00 (around US \$214 per month) whether they have two or more children in Primary and High school or in preparatory, respectively. PBF beneficiaries that fall below the extreme poverty line (a monthly income of up to R\$ 70 per person, around US \$30) and who have five or less children can receive up to R\$ 306 per month (approximately US \$130). Families that are considered poor (with a monthly income of between R\$ 70.01 and 140.00 per person, approximately US \$60), also with five or less children, can receive a maximum of R\$ 236.00 (US \$100) per month.
- <sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive comparison of CCT programs, see Lavinás (2013).
- <sup>9</sup> For more on PROCAMPO as an antecedent of PROGRESA and counterfactual modeling at the Inter-American Development Bank, see Dapuez, forthcoming.
- <sup>10</sup> The existing programs unified under PBF in 2003 include *Programa Bolsa Alimentação*, *Cartão Alimentação*, *Bolsa Escola*, and *Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil*. Prior to their unification under PBF, existing transfer programs were funded and administered by different agencies—with separate information systems. This decentralization meant that families with similar socioeconomic statuses were receiving different transfers (Silva et al., 2008, Silva, 2009, Soares, 2009b).
- <sup>11</sup> Despite being a national program, PBF requires the combined efforts of various actors beyond the government units directly responsible for its operation. Due to its decentralized implementation, the effective distribution of the cash transfer depends on the cooperation of municipalities. Municipalities are responsible for enrolling low-income families into the program and for updating Brazil’s Single Registry for Social Programs of the Federal Government database, CadÚnico, which that aims to identify all low-income families in the country (with incomes up to half of the minimum monthly wage per person) to improve the targeting of social programs for the poorest. CadÚnico was one of the first attempts at solving the problems of coordination and overlapping of the various programs of existing income transfer. Additionally, municipalities are also responsible for transmitting and monitoring data sent to the Caixa Economica Federal (CEF), for offering basic services related to conditionalities (including schools, health centers, Reference Centers for Social Welfare [CRAS]) and for monitoring and reporting compliance with conditionalities by beneficiary families.
- <sup>12</sup> The CEF was configured as a state financial institution that carries out the credit policies for the Brazilian federal government. The CEF is not only responsible for the payment of benefits, but it is also responsible for operating the program through CadÚnico, i.e. selecting automatically among registered people those who meet the criteria to receive the benefit. Federal Government offices are tasked with developing the general guidelines of the program, for the payment of benefits and processing of the information related to beneficiary families, state government officials, on the other hand, have to technically support and supervise municipalities (especially regarding the data entries of beneficiaries), while municipalities must effectively implement PBF.

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- 13 In terms of its target and its permanency, AUH diverges from existing social benefits in Argentina. *Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Deocupados* (JJH), an unemployment benefit initiated by the Duhalde administration in 2002, for instance, targeted individual unemployed adults according to a framework of temporary need. This contrast is made explicit in World Bank AUH funding documents, which note that previous social assistance programs in Argentina, including JJH, were “created as a response to the economic crisis in 2001-2002” but the Family Allowance program, on the contrary, was “created [as] a permanent, non-emergency related transfer program” (59201-AR). While JJH explicitly connected benefit recipients with labor, AUH recipients are tied to the work of facilitating human capital accumulation in their children so that they can be incorporated into the market as a future labor force. JJH, a benefit that targeted adults, was meant to address current unemployment. AUH, in contrast, focuses on children and, in that sense, postpones its effects to a long-term future.
- 14 AUH, however, is not the first CCT administered by the Argentine government. A similar *Plan Familia por la Inclusión Social* (PFI) was implemented in 2004 under the guidance of Minister of Social Development Alicia Kirchner. While *Plan Familia* also incorporated health and education conditions it did not, like AUH, explicitly focus on the accumulation of “human capital” as integral to its functioning (Alvarez et al., 2009). AUH consolidated both PFI (directed by the Ministry of Social Development) and JJH (under the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security) under the purview of the National Social Security Administration. AUH was promoted as an expansion of these programs by incorporating more beneficiaries and distributing larger cash transfers (ANSES, 2012, p. 16). While the government characterized Programa Familias and Jefes y Jefas as successful, it promoted AUH as a program that “pursues broader goals in the longer term” (ANSES, 2012, p. 17).
- 15 Guyer first recognized this combination in Nigeria during the 1990s in conjunction with structural adjustment policies. Guyer further argues that the attendant “evaporation of the near future in theory and public representations” (2007, p. 410) can be linked to monetary policies. “Monitoring movements in very specific indicators and applying financial instruments that discipline very specific temporal zones explicitly preclude linking long and short runs through a humanistically based concept of shared intelligibility” (2007, p. 412-13).
- 16 In this regard, CCTs would fail Standing’s (2008) suggested policy evaluation criteria. Among his five policy principles are the Paternalism Test Principle, which suggests “a policy or institutional change is socially just only if it does not impose controls on some groups that are not imposed on the most free groups in society” (Standing, 2008, p. 5), and the “Rights-Not-Charity Principle,” which suggests that “a policy or institutional change is socially just if it enhances the rights of the recipient of benefits or services and limits the discretionary power of the providers ... A right is possessed by virtue of a person’s humanity or citizenship, and cannot be made dependent on some behavioral conditionality” (Standing, 2008, p. 5).
- 17 According to Agudo Sanchíz, another positive effect of the *Oportunidades* CCT in this particular community was the determined appropriation of the state language of co-responsibility, obligation and contract by some indigenous Chiapaneca leaders.
- 18 CONEVAL’s 2012 Report considers a person to be “extremely poor” if she has three or more deprivations, or “carencias,” out of six possible deprivations included in the Social Deprivation Index: education backwardness, access to health services, social security access, household facilities, and access to food. According to the 2010 survey “methodology,” the population under the extreme poverty line had to have, in August 2010, at least the above mentioned three deprivations plus a monthly income below MXN\$ 684 (in rural areas) and MXN\$ 978 (in urban areas).
- 19 In Argentina, for instance, the degrading state of public education in the past four decades has been well-documented (Auguste et al., 2008). By and large, citizens who can, choose to educate their children in private schools and “public schools in Argentina mainly cater [to] the most economically disadvantaged sectors of the population” (Gvirtz, 2008, p. 4). Furthermore, public school teachers complain that the “growing demand in matriculation [as a result of AUH] is not reflected in a bigger budget or efficient management in order to resolve the daily problems seen in provincial schools.” (Yunker, 2010). As Mirta Petrocini, president of the Federation of Buenos Aires Educators (FEB), suggests, “the right to the AUH should imply an inclusive space, as such, the conditions to learn and teach must be in agreement with the needs of our children and teachers,” (Yunker, 2010).
- 20 On the other hand, the difference between the resources diverted from investment in universal welfare services towards cash transfers has yet to be comprehensively calculated. Briefly put, how much money have cash transfer programs saved the monetary populist state compared to investments in state facilities and services such as food subsidies, health care and education?
- 21 It would be useful to compare the fiscal reform proposed by Levy, which started to be implemented in 2013 by Mexican President Peña Nieto, to regressive USA fiscal systems such as the ones Newman and O’Brien (2011) analyze. In a detailed fiscal sociological account, they relate the effects of regressive tax systems to the production of systematic poverty.

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