

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE BRICS COUNTRIES

Editors-in-Chief

Edward D. Mansfield

University of Pennsylvania, USA

Nita Rudra

Georgetown University, USA

❶ BRICS: The Quest for Inclusive Growth

Editors

Biju Paul Abraham

Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, India

Partha Ray

Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, India

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Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| <i>Preface</i> | v |
| <i>About the Editors-in-Chief</i> | vii |
| <i>About the Editors</i> | ix |
| <i>About the Contributors</i> | xi |
| <i>Introduction</i> | xvii |
| Chapter 1 BRICS: The Political Economy of Non-Inclusive Growth <i>Biju Paul Abraham</i> | 1 |
| Chapter 2 Future of BRICS as an Economic Block: Does Macroeconomic Heterogeneity and Unshared Political Mandate Stand in Its Way? <i>Partha Ray</i> | 19 |
| Chapter 3 China's and India's Economic Performance After the Financial Crisis: A Comparative Analysis <i>R. Nagaraj</i> | 39 |
| Chapter 4 Inter-Group Disparities in Growing Economies: India Among the BRICS <i>Achin Chakraborty and Simantini Mukhopadhyay</i> | 61 |
| Chapter 5 Inequality and Poverty in India and Brazil Since the 1990s: A Comparative Analysis <i>Sripad Motiram</i> | 79 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----|
| Chapter 6 | Sustainable Development and BRICS: Unity Amid Diversity? <i>Anup Sinha</i> | 99 |
| Chapter 7 | Universal Health Coverage in BRICS: What India Can Learn from the BRICS Experience? <i>Indrani Gupta and Samik Chowdhury</i> | 113 |
| Chapter 8 | Inclusive Finance: India Through the BRICS Lens <i>Saibal Ghosh</i> | 143 |
| Chapter 9 | Gender, Education, and <i>Programma Bolsa Familia</i> in Brazil <i>Aparajita Gangopadhyay</i> | 197 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 217 |

CHAPTER 9

Gender, Education, and *Programma Bolsa Familia* in Brazil

Aparajita Gangopadhyay

Centre for Latin American Studies, Goa University, India

Introduction

In Latin America, poverty and inequality run parallel. Every state in Latin America mirrors this reality. Also, the contours of inequality run broadly along racial and ethnic lines. Data on racial and ethnic minorities in Latin America are poor, and the criteria for classification of minorities vary. Estimates suggest that indigenous groups account for about 10% (50 million) of the region's population, while groups of African descent account for 30% (150 million).¹ Indigenous and Afro-descendent people are, when compared to the 'whites', as a rule, are less educated, less healthy, and have lesser access to such basic institutions like the justice system. They face greater difficulties in transforming educational and occupational achievements into income, generally earning considerably less for the same number of years of schooling.

Brazil is known for its striking levels of destitution and poverty. However, in the last few decades, democracy has promoted poverty alleviation and equity-enhancing

¹Indigenous people constitute a majority of the population in Bolivia and Guatemala and a significant minority in Ecuador and Peru. Afro-descendants are a majority in the Dominican Republic and Panama; they form 45% of the population in Brazil and more than 10% of the population in Colombia, Venezuela, and Nicaragua.

reforms. Since, the initiation of the redemocratization process in 1985, voting rights have been restored to the ordinary people; the constitution of 1988 was one of the most progressive constitutions of Latin America and reflected the activism by the social movements in advocating the rights of the poor. The role played by the center-left and left governments in Brazil since the late 1980s have extended such programs to previously excluded or marginalized peoples. They implemented new programs which were aimed at ensuring the most basic levels of social protection. Spending increased and the social protection programs have definitely reduced poverty, but the reduction is not commensurate with the resources spent. Socioeconomic equality remains acute; notwithstanding this, there have been modest improvements in income distribution over the last few years. However, reforms that systematically restructured the existing benefits toward equity enhancements have continued on in a laggard fashion over the years (Hunter and Sugiyama, 2009).

Despite recent increases in financing for education, the population as a whole remains poorly educated, especially in relation to Brazil's overall levels of development. Educational mobility is exceedingly low. Social mobility in Brazil remains closely tied to family background. Brazil's high incidence of poverty, low educational achievement, and middling health indicators explain its low ranking in overall human development indicators (Hunter and Sugiyama, 2009, p. 32).

The access to education, social security, healthcare, and housing are the core social sectors where the governments in Latin America, and Brazil, have tried to implement reforms for the marginalized. Of all the marginalized, the women suffer a kind of 'double discrimination'.² For instance, indigenous girls' performance in school contrasts sharply with the rule that throughout the region girls do as well and even better than the boys. In Guatemala, for instance, indigenous girls complete fewer than two years of schooling on average. Indigenous girls start school later and drop out earlier. For Afro-Brazilian women in urban labor markets in São Paulo in the 1990s, a lower return in their education and age, compared with 'white-men', accounted for 50% lower overall wages (Naercio and Scorzafave, 2012). In regard to physical violence statistics, the World Health Organization (WHO) surveys of 1999 and 2000 indicated that, for instance, in Nicaragua 27% of women had reported being physically abused (in Quito, 37%; in Lima, 31%; in Colombia, 1 out of 5 in 1995, which has since risen to 27%) (Naercio and Scorzafave, 2012). Social surveys also show that for instance, in urban households in 1999, poor and younger women with fewer years of schooling were likely victims of domestic violence than wealthier, older, and more educated women. Each year of schooling reduced the probability of

²Double discrimination is when a person or a group is targeted for more than one form of discrimination. In Brazil, women face discrimination for being women, poor, and/or being of say Afro-descent or belonging to the indigenous groups.

victimization by 1.4% (World Bank, 2007). In order to deal with the issues related to race and identity, countries in the region, like Peru and Honduras, have established mechanisms for the promotion of racial and ethnic equality.³ In contrast, Panama, Venezuela, and Dominican Republic although having significant Afro-descendants have failed to advance policies and address racial discrimination. Indigenous representation rose in Bolivia, Ecuador, and, to a lesser degree, in Argentina and Colombia. By 2004, 11 countries had instituted quotas establishing a minimum level of representation (20–40%) for women in political parties. The overall quotas increased women's presence in legislatures, but there was significant variation in the law. For example, whether it was obligatory, whether it only reserves a slot as in Brazil, or if it required a slot to be filled by a woman, or whether a woman must be placed in an electionable position, like in Argentina, also depended on the country's electorate system (Htun, 2003).

More than 15 countries have been collecting information on ethnicity through the census, but only a few, Brazil and Colombia, collect data on Afro-descendants. Peru and Guatemala follow the same for indigenous peoples. In Brazil, minorities like Afro-descendants account for 45%, Japanese 1%, and indigenous groups like Yanomami, Tukano, Urueu, Wau-Wau, Awa, Arara, Guarani (0.2–2.4%), and Jews 0.00056%. Brazil currently has 197 forest-dwelling indigenous groups (Telles, 2015).

In Brazil, nearly 80% of Afro-Brazilians live below the nation's poverty line compared to the 'whites'. Only 4% of Afro-Brazilians between the ages of 18 and 24 are in universities, compared to 12% of the 'whites'. Three-fourths of all Afro-Brazilians have not completed secondary school, and 40% do not complete elementary school. In the UNDP's Human Development Index, Brazil's rank continued to stay at 79 among 159 odd countries (HDI Ranking, 2017). In 2007, Afro-Brazilians earned 50% less than the national average income. Afro-Brazilians suffer from the highest homicide, poverty, and illiteracy rates in the country. They are seriously under-represented in professional positions and in middle and upper classes and over-represented in prisons (56%). The situation is similar among the indigenous peoples in the region. FUNAI's data (National Foundation for the Indigenous) showed that the indigenous people continue to suffer from disease, poor healthcare, loss of native culture, and recurring incursions, especially in rain forests (National Native News, 2017).

³Judith A. Morrison in her article entitled "Behind the Numbers: Race and Ethnicity in Latin America" in the *Americas Quarterly* (2016) examines the conditions of the indigenous and ethnic groups from Latin America and the initiatives made by various organizations and governments to deal with them. She further delineates the success and the failures of these groups to find a voice for themselves within these countries. www.americasquarterly.com.

Historical Antecedents of the Racial Issue

Often contrasted with the United States, Brazilian post slavery race relations were said to be harmonious, tolerant, and devoid of prejudice or discrimination. The image of presumed equality was based primarily on Brazil's unparalleled level of miscegenation among European, African, and indigenous peoples. Widespread intermixing of the population gave rise to a unique pattern of social differentiation in which, allegedly, 'racial appearances' (phenotype) rather than 'origin was key'. Due to the resulting ambiguity of racial identity, many Brazilians denied the existence of race or racism in their country. Race relations in Brazil, as a result, received much less attention among social scientists in Brazil. However, recent empirical research has amply documented the persistence of racial prejudice and discrimination. Brazil's image of racial equality has eroded greatly over the past two decades.

Today, vigorous public debate over Brazil's image of racial equality has displaced the ideology of 'racial democracy'.⁴ The overwhelming evidence makes it clear that racial inequality, prejudice, and discrimination are Brazil's social reality. Scholars have often argued that one of the basic determinants of contemporary racial inequality is the geographic polarization of Brazil's economy and population

⁴The term "racial democracy" refers to a certain pattern of race relations in Brazil. Specifically, it suggests that Brazilian race relations have developed in a tolerant and conflict-free manner, in contrast to the presumed hostile form of race relations that evolved in the United States. The concept of racial democracy had at one point received such widespread acceptance that it was regarded as an essential component of Brazilian national identity. Brazilians distinguished themselves as unique for having achieved a level of racial tolerance that few other societies had attained. The origin of the term racial democracy remains unclear. Antônio Sérgio Guimarães, a Professor at the University of São Paulo, suggests that its usage goes back to the 1940s, when the Brazilian anthropologist Arthur Ramos and the French sociologist Roger Bastide employed the term to link this pattern of race relations to Brazil's postwar democracy, which began to emerge at the end of the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas (1937–1945). However, the concept is more generally associated with the work of Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987), who proposed the idea in the 1930s in a daring departure from the scientific racist thinking that had prevailed within Brazilian intellectual circles since the beginning of the 20th century. Freyre stood the scientific racist thinking of the day on its head by arguing that Brazil's pervasive mixing of the races was not a factor in Brazil's failure to develop, but instead was testament to the achievements of a Brazilian civilization that had encouraged a pattern of tolerant race relations that was unique in the world. Freyre urged Brazilians to take pride in this, as well as in the displays of Afro-Brazilian culture that were prevalent throughout Brazil. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/racial-democracy-brazil>.

(Andrews, 1992, Figueiredo, 2015; Skidmore, 1992). Of the total population, it was found that Afro-Brazilians lived in the impoverished and underdeveloped Northeast, while the white population (52%) was concentrated in the industrialized Southeast (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, IBGE, 1996). Thus, because of locational disadvantages, Afro-Brazilians are said to be handicapped as they are concentrated in regions where there are fewer social and economic opportunities. Unequal regional development and population distribution has characterized Brazilian society since colonial times (Merrick and Graham 1979; Wood and de Carvalho 1988).

Population and regional imbalances are the legacy of the boom and bust cycles of three colonial export commodities: sugar, gold/rubber, and coffee. The scarcity of labor to fuel sugar plantations during the 16th and 17th centuries was the impetus for importing African slaves into the Northeast. In the 18th century, with the discovery of gold/rubber and the concomitant decline in sugar production, the economic and population center of gravity shifted to central and southern Brazil. This shift left the once wealthy northeastern plantation economy in ruins, and from this point on development favored southern Brazil.

It was the southern expansion of coffee exports during late nineteenth and early 20th centuries that led to the incipient industrialization of São Paulo, built first on slave and later subsidized European immigrant labor. Following the abolition of slavery in 1888, southeast coffee growers used the tax revenues from the great fortunes accumulated from coffee exports to provide the foundation to build São Paulo's industrial economy and attracted roughly 3.5 million European immigrants. By the 1920s, São Paulo became the most advanced region of the country, and by the 1940s the state had the largest concentration of manufacturing in all of Latin America (Wood and Carvalho, 1988).

The predominantly white regions of São Paulo and the southeast remained the nation's locus of manufacturing and finance (Kowarick and Campanario, 1986). Over time, the consequence of such cumulative effects was the sharp spatial disparities. Continued growth and diversification of the Brazilian economy lessened but did not eliminate the unequal distribution of wealth and population. From the 1950s, industrialization in south-central Brazil lured Afro-Brazilian migrants from the Northeast and rural areas to the dynamic urban metropolises, especially São Paulo. This was accompanied by notable gains in Afro-Brazilian urban employment. Between 1950 and 1980, the proportion of individuals of African descent employed in cities rose from 36% to 62% (Oliviera *et al.*, 1985). Yet, at the same time, the occupational structure moved toward more skilled jobs.

As a result, in 1991, Afro-Brazilians continued to be disproportionately concentrated in agriculture, construction, and personal services, particularly domestic

employment, and the lowest paid and most onerous jobs (Lovell, 1998). Brazil's four decades of rapid economic expansion and substantial social and demographic change erased neither unequal population distribution nor unequal regional development. Sharp inequalities thus remained between the north and south and between the blacks and whites.

In Brazil, affirmative actions have been more successful relatively when compared with Colombia. Nationally, the Federal Supreme Court, in its effort to reduce racial discrimination, established a 20% quota of job openings for Afro-descendants by service suppliers, in addition to another 20% of public service positions to be held by Afro-descendants in the Ministries of Justice, Culture, and Agricultural Development. Nevertheless, the issue has its shortcomings as equality by law is no guarantee of equality of opportunities for Afro-descendants; also, as there is a huge gap between what is decreed on paper and what is implemented.⁵

One of the most important sectors where the government in recent years has focused its attention has been on education. Ensuring high-quality mass public schooling, especially at the primary and secondary levels, historically has not been a central concern of the Brazilian governments, either democratic or authoritarian. For instance, according to the HDI statistics, the average mean years of schooling for women in Brazil is 8.1 years. The Gender Inequality Index places Brazil at the abysmal rank of 92 among 160 odd countries (HDI, 2017). Brazil spends a reasonable amount of its GNP on education. In comparison to its expenditure on education (primary and secondary schooling), Brazil ranks below that of most Latin American countries expenditure (Hunter and Sugiyama, 2009, p. 37).

In the 1990s, after all other factors were accounted for, racial differences accounted for one-fourth of poverty and inequality. Brazil's 1990s educational reforms were extending schooling rates for Afro-Brazilians between 7 and 13 years of age, which was more than for the 'whites'. But Afro-Brazilian students continued to record a higher repetition and dropout rates. At school, their exams results were worse than that of the 'whites', highlighting the socio-economic variables in the society (Telles and Paixao, 2013). In an ongoing effort to provide equity in education, the Brazilian government recently introduced *Affirmative Action Program* that includes the use of quotas in public university systems and in new scholarship

⁵See the report by the Organization of American States in IACHR, *The Situation of People of African descent in the Americas*, OEA/Ser.L/V/II, Doc. 62, 5 December 2011, p. 76. In Human Rights in Latin America: The Case of Women and People of African Descent Robert Owoo <http://www.e-ir.info/2016/07/19/human-rights-in-latin-america-the-case-of-women-and-people-of-african-descent>.

programs designed to encourage low-income and marginalized students to enroll in public and private universities.

In 2001, *Racial Admission Quotas* were introduced in 70 public universities. In the state of Rio de Janeiro, 20% was set aside for Afro-Brazilians who needed to pass the entrance exams. Also reserved was a further 25% for 'social quotas' for those students whose parents' income is less than twice the minimum wage. Through its *ProUniv Program*, the Brazilian government also encourages private universities to offer scholarships to low-income students with a share reserved for Afro-descendants (especially women) and indigenous students, in exchange for tax breaks. The share allotted to each minority group is proportionate to its representation in the population of each state.

On the issue of the 'Race Quotas' in 2012, the Supreme Court Tribunal of Brazil unanimously ruled that these quotas in public universities were constitutional. The Race Quotas were hotly debated and challenged the Brazilian ideal of 'racial democracy'. These affirmative laws were aimed at combating discrimination and education for the historically marginalized Afro-Brazilian population (Telles and Paixao, 2013). It was an attempt to broaden opportunities for minorities in Brazil.

In the case between Acao de DEM party vs. Cotas da UNB e no Brasil (Action of Brazilian Democratic Party vs. Quotas of the University of Brasilia) which reserved 20% of its enrolment spots for Afro-Brazilian, mixed races, and indigenous students, the Tribunal passed its judgment.⁶ The Tribunal of the Supreme Court stated that the quotas are the best methods to remedy the racial inequalities that were confronted after the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888 (Brazil was the last country in the Western hemisphere to abolish slavery). The racial quotas are the best transitory option to close the inequality gap in the realm of higher education. The Tribunal stated that the gap is a critical issue as a large section of the Afro-Brazilians continue to live in Favelas and earn a fraction of salaries enjoyed by the prominent Caucasian class.⁷

⁶The Democratic Party claimed that this policy of the Universidade de Brasilia unconstitutional under Article 5 of the Brazilian constitution which protects equality of all citizens regardless of race.

⁷The Tribunal claimed that the Brazilian policy is in accordance with Article 1 (a) and (b) which calls for implementing a national policy that promotes more equality in educational opportunities. Article 1 Section 4 on the *Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination* states race will not be the primary factor in determining access to higher education, but rather a factor taken into consideration, which complies with Article 13 Section 2 (c) of the *International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. The Brazilian policy enables the universities to serve the most vulnerable groups without discrimination.

On 29 August 2012, President Dilma Rousseff signed the *Lei de Cotas* (Law of social quotas) which instructed the federal universities in 4 years to ensure that half of the incoming class came from public schools. The spots reserved for the marginalized students will be in accordance with the percentage of the minority population in the state where each public university is located. Only 2.2% of the 70% of the Afro-Brazilians living below the poverty line access higher education. The lower echelons of the socio-economic sectors of the country also receive poor education in public primary schools. Of late, Brazil boasts one of the largest increases in expenditure on education between 2000 and 2009 among the countries for which data are available. Even though Brazil's spending on education as a percentage of GDP is below the OECD average, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of GDP invested in education, particularly between 2000 and 2014. Brazil increased public spending on education from 10.5% of total public expenditure in 2000 to 14.5% in 2005, and 16.8% in 2009 — one of the steepest rates of growth among the 33 countries for which data are available. Brazil ranks fourth in this out of the 32 countries for which data on public spending on education is available, and it is fairly above the OECD average of 13%. The next section will focus on female education, discrimination, and the visible success of the *Programma Bolsa Familia* (PBF) in approaching these multiple issues of gender, education, income, and equity.

Racial Identity, Women, and Education

Demographic census and annual household surveys are the only sources of national level information on the color composition of Brazil's population. According to estimates, the 1991 census reported that nearly half of the 147 million population was either 'pardo' or 'preto'. This large proportion of Afro-Brazilians (pardos — were not necessarily blacks but could be referred to the Mulattos and pretos) was the result of the approximately 3.6 million Africans that were brought to the Portuguese colony during the three and a half centuries of the slave trade.⁸

The racial terminology of the census is a defined system of skin color and ethnic identity: branco (white), pardo, preto (blacks), amarelo (yellow), and indigena (indigenous). The color terminology used by the Brazilian census leaves no doubt that the categories reflect social definitions of skin color rather than biological definitions of race. There is controversy regarding the validity of the census bureau's color classification scheme. The indigenous category was not used in the 1980

⁸Brazil was the last country in the Americas to end slavery, and the Portuguese were the largest importers of slaves, bringing to Brazil 38% of the approximate 9,500,000 Africans forcibly transported to the Americas.

census. Brazil, as a member of the UN, has repeatedly stated that it wanted to formally achieve the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015. Fundamental education in Brazil is divided in two stages, *Ensino Fundamental I* (years 1–5) and *Ensino Fundamental II* (years 6–9). Enrolment rates are high, and Brazil seems to be speedily catching up with the average for OECD countries (OECD 2008). Many children are enrolled in pre-primary school facilities, including day-care facilities. This increased in 2007 to 70% of the 4–5-year-olds, of which 97.2% were girls (Klaveren *et al.*, 2009).

The net enrolment in primary education in 2000–2007 of children aged 5-to-14 was 94% overall, with 95% for girls, bringing girls to boys parity to 102% (WHO, 2009:20). For the last few years, a gender division of secondary education enrolment was unavailable. Though recent statistics are lacking, dropout rates of girls from public schools seem considerable. The increasing adolescent fertility rates are high, especially among the poorest sectors. One of the most cited negative consequences is low school attendance. It has been argued that the Brazilian educational system has no special programs for young women who become pregnant; therefore, if a pregnant student chooses not to abort, the most probable outcome is that she will quit, this likelihood being higher among the poorer classes.

In 2000, the total enrolment rates of girls in school varied from over 95% of the population between ages 10 and 14 to nearly 50% of the 18–19-year-olds. By contrast, the enrolment rate of young mothers was 18–22 % in all age groups. Controlled by other factors, a childless girl was eight times more likely to be enrolled at school than a young mother with at least one child (Klaveren *et al.*, 2009). The findings of Cardoso and Verner (2006) confirm that early parenthood has a strong impact driving teenagers out of school; they stress that extreme poverty is also lowering school attendance and that reducing the costs of school, such as transportation, could improve the record of school attendance.

In addition, students must pass the *vestibular*, a public open entrance examination; competition is fierce for places in public universities, since education in these universities is totally free of charge. Female participation in regular tertiary education continued to exceed male participation by far. In 2007, 68% of all students enrolled in tertiary education were women, bringing the women to men parity in tertiary-level enrolment to 206% (Klaveren *et al.*, 2009, n. 24). In the population aged 20–29, in 2006, 21% were still being educated. Among the population aged 30 and over, relatively many were — either full time or part time — enrolled in public and private institutions. This called for a serious introspection and suitable action on the part of the federal government in Brazil.

Despite the enormous reforms made in the education sector, women continue to remain marginalized and discriminated in Brazil, especially those who are of

Afro-descent or indigenous. The next section focuses on female education, discrimination, and the visible success of the social reform programs such as the PBF in approaching multiple issues of gender, education, income, and equity.

Female Education in Brazil: A Synoptic Overview

The Brazilian colonial economy, founded on large rural properties and slave labor, paid little attention to formal education for men and none whatsoever for women. Isolation, social stratification, and patriarchal family relations favored a power structure based on the limitless authority of landowners. According to Ribeiro (2000), the Iberian cultural tradition, transposed from Portugal to its Brazilian colony, considered women as inferior beings who had no need to learn to read and write. The educational work of the Jesuits significantly contributed to strengthening male predominance; its priests had a liking for dogmatic forms of thinking and preached the maximum authority of Church and state (Heime, 1975).

With the arrival of the Portuguese royal family in Brazil and Independence in 1822, Brazilian society began to have a more complex structure. International immigration and economic diversification increased the demand for education, which started being seen as an instrument for rising socially through the intermediary social strata (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009). In this new context, the country's leaders voiced their concern with female education for the very first time. The Empire's first legislators established that primary school education should be the responsibility of the state and open to girls, who were primarily schooled by female teachers. But due to a lack of qualified female teachers and lack of interest in the parents, education did not reach a significant percentage of female students (UNICEF, 1982).

In the first part of the 19th century, the first institutions aimed at educating women began to appear, although in a dual teaching picture, with clear gender specializations. Generally speaking, primary education, with its strong moral and social content aimed at strengthening the role of the woman as wife and mother, was meant only for females. Female high school education was largely restricted to teacher training, or in other words, preparing female teachers for the primary school courses. Women were still excluded from higher levels of education during the 19th century. The first school was set up in Niterói, in 1835, followed by another in Bahia, in 1836. Until the final years of the empire, normal schools were few in number and almost insignificant in terms of student enrolment (Hahner, 1981).

If females found it difficult to have access to elementary education, the situation was more dramatic when it came to higher education, which was completely and unmitigatedly male dominated. Women were excluded from the first courses in medicine, engineering, and law that sprang up in the country. The imperial decree

that gave women the right to enroll in a university course dates back to 1881. However, it was difficult to overcome these barriers because high school studies were essentially male-oriented, in addition to being expensive, and normal courses did not qualify women for entry to universities. It is important to note that during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century female exclusion from high school courses made it unfeasible for women to enter university. So, duality and gender segmentation were present in the Brazilian educational system since the beginning, with women having lower literacy rates and restricted access to higher levels of education (Romanelli, 2001).

The Brazilian Constitution of 1891 sanctioned the decentralization of education into a dualist scheme: the federal government was responsible for creating and controlling higher and secondary school educational institutions and the states were responsible for setting up schools and monitoring and controlling elementary education, as well as high-school-level professional education. It included normal schools for girls and technical schools for boys (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009, n. 34). While the educational system expanded quantitatively at this time, there was little by way of qualitative change.

The literacy rate of the Brazilian population grew during the Old Republic (1889–1930), despite the continuing high levels of illiteracy. Educational exclusion was obviously always greater for Afro-Brazilians (Beltrão and Novellino, 2002). The enrolment rates of Brazilian women in secondary and higher education increased at the beginning of the 20th century, but by much less so than those of men. For instance, between 1907 and 1912 in the Federal District, female presence in high school courses corresponded to less than a quarter of all students and in university courses it did not reach 1.5% (see Table 1). It is worth remembering that Rio de Janeiro had one of the best rates of education in the country (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009, n. 34).

The reasons why the level of Brazilian investment in education was low owes its origins in the primary products export-driven economic model that had been

Table 1: Number of people enrolled in high schools and universities in the Federal District — 1907–1912.

| Year | High School Level | | | University Level | | |
|------|-------------------|-------|---------|------------------|-------|---------|
| | Men | Women | % Women | Men | Women | % Women |
| 1907 | 3,721 | 1,221 | 24.7 | 2,455 | 32 | 1.3 |
| 1909 | 4,596 | 1,460 | 24.1 | 3,323 | 39 | 1.2 |
| 1912 | 7,165 | 2,145 | 23.0 | 3,630 | 53 | 1.4 |

Source: Statistics of the 20th century, IBGE (2003).

based on slavery. While the population remained in the countryside, with its archaic means of production, schools exercised no important role in qualifying human resources, being merely an agent for educating people on how to enjoy their leisure time or for preparing for self-employed professional careers, in the case of men, or for being primary school teachers or housewives, in the case of women (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009).

By redirecting Brazilian development toward the domestic market and to the urban, industrial sector, the Revolution of 1930 led to the first public policies for the masses, especially for those who lived in urban areas. The new demands made by industrialization and urban services had an influence on the content and expansion of education. But, as the expansion of capitalism was not homogenous all over Brazil, most of the expansion demanding for schools occurred in regions where capitalist relations were more advanced (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009).

During the period of the so-called Populist Pact (1945–1964), despite popular pressure for the democratization of education, the ‘aristocratic’ character of schools was maintained with the agreement of the ruling elite, making the expansion of schools occur in a manner that was unplanned and inadequately financed. It is important to point out that only in 1961, with the *Guidelines and Bases of Brazilian Education Law (LDB)* (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009), was the equivalence of all high school courses guaranteed, thus opening up the possibility for women who were doing teacher training to sit for university entrance exams. So, it was from the 1960s that Brazilian women had a bigger possibility of attending university, and it was only in the 1970s that the reversal of the gender gap in university education began.

As industrialization and urbanization in the country began to intensify, the educational system grew both horizontally and vertically. The military governments that came to power after 1964 drew their inspiration from the North American model. They took measures to meet the growing demand for places and professional qualifications, which was also in accordance with their international commitments. The alliance between military and techno-bureaucracy made it possible for large growth in the number of postgraduate courses. The objectives were to produce competent teachers for the universities themselves, stimulate development of scientific research, and ensure the formation of intellectuals who were qualified to respond to the needs of national development (Cunha, 2000). The expansion of education in Brazil continued with the process of redemocratization in the country, with installation of the ‘New Republic’ in 1985. In the 1990s, public policies were developed that were aimed at maintaining children in school (*School Scholarship Scheme*) and making an effort at providing universal basic education (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009, n. 34).

In the higher education sector, there was major growth in private universities, and the number of students enrolled in them greatly exceeded the number in public

universities. This general expansion of places in Brazilian education particularly favored women. In the second half of the 20th century, women managed to reverse the gender gap in education at all levels. They knew how to take advantage of the opportunities created by the social transformations that were occurring in the country (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009, n. 34). For instance, in 2007 53.3% of newly enrolled university students were women and 55% or more of first-year students had been women for the last 15 years. Therefore, all the levels of education sector were dominated by women who were in majority at every level in Brazil, and thus the average rate of schooling among Brazilian women became more than 1 year higher than that of men. However, women still earned 30% less than men for the same work, and even in the Brazilian congress they occupied less than 10% of the seats.⁹

The absence of gender equity had extended to education itself. School curricula, textbooks, and teaching methods reinforced stereotypes that devalued the role of women and confined them to the home and to low-status jobs and careers. It also projected 'hard' science and technology education at the universities to be a male domain. The non-governmental Human Development Network of Brazil pointed out that despite the superior education achievements made by women, it had no impact on their treatment on the workforce, where they continued to face major disadvantages when it came to employment conditions, negotiations, and promotions (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009, n. 34).

The Organization of American States (OAS) on its 'Brazil Report' in the framework of the Non-Sexist and Anti-Discrimination Education Campaign by the *Acao Educativa* Organization in collaboration with ECOS — Communication and Sexuality part of the reference Centre for the victims of violence of the *Sedes Sapientiae Institute of Sao Paulo* (CNRVV) coordinated by CLADEM (LAC Community for the Defence of Women's Rights) — are attempting to deal with challenges of social gender relations in guaranteeing human rights in education. They are critical of the Brazilian state's reports which speak of gender equity (between men and women) in education. These mostly emphasize the increasing literacy and better performance of women in education. The OAS Report puts forth the persistent inequalities among the Brazilian women. The progress in indicators of access and performance is marked by inequality among women according to income, race, ethnicity, and residence (rural/urban), especially Afro-Brazilian and indigenous women. These women also face unequal access to quality education and livelihood (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009, n. 34).

But above all, the reversal in the gender gap has been a triumph that resulted from a historical effort by the women's movement as part of a more general struggle

⁹Currently, they occupy about 10.38% of the seats.

for equal rights between the sexes that involved countless social players. This did not only happen in Brazil, but was part of a worldwide change whereby the role of women in society was being redefined (Therborn, 2004). The introduction of the various social programs in education, employment, health, and housing by the government produced various levels of success. PBF is considered to be one of the most successful social initiatives undertaken by the successive governments of Cardoso, Lula, and Dilma.

Conditional Cash Transfers and Women's 'Empowerment': *Programma Bolsa Familia*

The presidencies of Henrique Cardoso and Ignacio Lula and their administrations along with that of Dilma Rousseff had embraced a more integrated approach by bundling disparate programs and targeting benefits to families in extreme poverty. Conditional cash transfers represented a modest share of overall government expenditure and reinforced the trend of incremental expenditure rather than substantial reallocation of public benefits. It began with the innovative program of *Bolsa Escola* in Brazil. Aiming to enhance educational attainment and alleviate poverty at the same time, the *Bolsa Escola* (School Income Subsidy) was introduced and was arguably one of the best programs. The *Bolsa Escola* gave a small income subsidy to needy families, provided that they kept their children aged 7–14 in school. The program's design addressed the opportunity costs of education, discouraged child labor, and created a demand for education on the part of the parents. The Lula government subsequently folded the federal *Bolsa Escola* together with other poverty alleviation programs to form the *Bolsa Familia*, which is based on a single registry of poor families (Hunter and Sugiyama, 2009, n. 2, p. 46). Advocating the PBF, Wendy Hunter and Sugiyama point out, the Brazilian democracy has succeeded in adding new programs to the social agenda that provide minimal social protection. "These programmes further basic education and health among marginal populations as long as they are kept within reasonable financial limits and do not upset important stakeholders. A key factor in the Bolsa's political appeal is that it does not challenge enshrined social protections to the upper and middle classes" (Hunter and Sugiyama, 2009, n. 2, p. 46).

The Brazilian government's strategy to positively impact on the lives of so many women through initiative such as *Bolsa Familia*, Brazil without Extreme Poverty, the National Documentation Program, My House, My Life, Brasil Carinoso, Light for All, Social Assistance Network, Pro-Gender and Racial Equality in Business Program, Continuous Loan Benefits, and through policies were geared toward population aging and care.

The Brazilian representative for UN women, Nadine Gasman, expressed that the publication by the government of Brazil of "More equality for Brazilian Women: Pathways for Social and Economic Transformation" presented the Brazilian governments' responses to women's rights. She further added that although Brazil was a country with structural gender, racial, and ethnic inequalities, the positive experience of the Brazilian public administration needed to be amplified. These could be achieved by similar responses through the affirmation the rights of women, those of African descent, and the indigenous populations. According to the 2010 census, women constituted 51 % of the Brazilian population (Beltrao and Diniz Alves, 2009, n. 34).

However, critical questions have been raised about the nature and methodology adopted for the conditional cash transfers. For instance, questions are raised as to whether the conditional cash transfers are an effective way to address poverty and build human capital in the long term, or if they allow governments to avoid making difficult decisions to restructure education and health in ways that would have a more fundamental and enduring impact (Hunter and Sugiyama, 2009, n. 2, p. 39). Other critics point out to the political dimensions that are in play here. Critics state that by handing over cash to such poor families, political parties like the PT (Workers' Party) are building a strong political support base which will benefit the political party in the long run. Examples are forwarded of this, as support is continuously outpouring for the former president Lula who is in prison on charges of corruption. The poor in the cities and slums continue to support PT despite Lula's jail term.

The PBF, currently reaches approximately 13.8 million households, corresponding to 25 % of the poorest population of Brazil. Its primary goals remain efforts at fighting hunger and poverty; strengthening access to the public service network, especially education, health, and social assistance; promoting inter-sectoral integration and public policy synergy; and an anchorage-sustained empowerment of beneficiary families. The Ministry of Social and Agrarian Development (Ministerio do desenvolvimento social e agrario-MDSA), the governing body for the PBF at the federal level, uses three broad activities to try to achieve these goals: direct cash transfer, conditionalities in the areas of health and education, and coordination with other public policies that increase socio-economic opportunities for targeted families.

In any case, federal efforts have been made to target public policies at PBF beneficiaries. In the context of the 'Brazil without extreme poverty' plan (Brasil sem Miséria-BSM) launched in 2011 and coordinated by the former Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (Ministerio do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate a Fome — MDS), various social programs began to prioritize

assistance for these families. For example, The National Programme for Access to Technical Education and Employment (Pronatech), established in October 2011 was coordinated with the BSM, and openings in professional training courses targeted young people and adults under the PBF — with guidance from teachers and the adaptation of course material to promote learning among low-income populations. In this manner, called Pronatech BSM, 600,000 PBF beneficiaries enrolled in the courses, of which 66% were women. In case of extreme poverty, in 1992 the percentage of families of African descent in extreme poverty was 30%, approximately 15% in 2002, and reduced to 1.3% in 2014, which points to an important development in the reduction of inequalities for this social group.

The Pronatech has broadened the opportunities for social inclusion, professional development, and incursion to former labor markets. Between 2011 and 2014, the program's audience involved women, those of African descent, and youth for the most part. Of the population formally enrolled in education, 53% of the women were of African descent and 45% were between 18 and 29 years of age. As far as the Single Registry goes by 2014, 88% of all families registered in the countries social programs were run by female heads, 73% were families of African descent and run by women. In the context of housing, women represent about 80% of all contacts signed in the *My House, My Life* program (UN women).¹⁰

The design of the PBF determines that the cash be transferred preferably to women, which is the case for 12,677,749 (or 92%) of the targeted families. Although, this is not explicitly geared toward addressing the issue of gender roles, it produces a gender bias in the program. Thus, researchers have often sought to address whether (and how) the PBF influences gender relations. A closer examination reveals that 10 years after BF, Brazil more than halved its extreme poverty — 9.7% to 4.3% of its population. Income inequality has also fallen: BF reaches 14 million households — 50 million people or about one-fourths of the population — and is widely seen as a success story. Qualitative studies have shown that regular cash transfers from the program have helped promote the dignity and autonomy of the poor. And, importantly, women account for 90% of the beneficiaries.

The modalities include a single registry called the 'Cadastro Unico' which covers 40% of the Brazilian population (the most vulnerable part) and has, since 2011, emerged as the axis of public policies focused on people living in poverty, used by more than 20 federal programs (Bartholo, 2016). The Cadastro Unico was the essential tool that allowed PBF to achieve these successes. It provided the basis of targeting PBF benefits, but is linked to numerous other social programs and services. It not only serves as the backbone for effective administration of the

¹⁰See <http://lac.unwomen.org/en/noticias-y-eventos/articulos/2016/05/mujeres-brazil>.

BF but also as a tool for coordinating social policy and facilitating rapid scale-up of additional efforts such as the *Brasil Carinhoso* program. PBF has also helped build the base for the ambitious programs such as *Brasil sem Miséria* and the *Busca Ativa* effort, include those who had been left out of these programs in the past (Wetzel and Economico, 2013).

Primarily to the woman of the house, 'the state tends to believe women are more reliable than men' emphasized Sergio Faust, ex-Director, Instituto Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Bartholo, 2016, n. 55). By giving women a guaranteed paycheck, however meagre, the Brazilian government aims to help them break free of bad marriages or take charge of household decisions. 'Money empowers women' to more likely be involved in decision-making and grants them higher self-esteem. Less women feel like they are owned. The number of households headed by women is increasing, but Brazil is one of the lowest ranked countries on global female empowerment scales. In *Bolsa Familia*, more women make decisions regarding their children's schooling and their own welfare. However, the broader question is: Is the PBF truly resolving poverty or fostering a culture of dependency? The success of the program in Brazil has led to its replication in Mexico and Colombia.

Although the PBF and many other CCT programs do not explicitly focus on influencing gender relations, feminist criticism is often indicated that such programs tend to reinforce social roles traditionally played by the sexes — as the focus is on women as the primary person responsible for mediation between the program and the family, thus always stressing on their material responsibilities. This is claimed to result mainly from the definition of women as the grant holders, the conditionality requirement, and the programs' inability to expand women's individual choices (Molyneux, 2006; Bartholo, 2016, n. 55). In the context of the conditionalities, the feminist criticism tends to be based on the interpretation that when such conditions are met in the areas of health and education, it would lead to more time spent by women in caregiving activities, reinforcing, once again, the link between female identity and mothering (Molyneux, 2006; Bartholo, 2016, n. 55).

Second, all compliance with the conditionalities is checked through the public system in each area, for example, public health and education, where officials in each municipality verify compliance and then record and send the data to the national level. Furthermore, there is no penalty for justified failure to comply, such as illness or lack of available transportation to get to school. Finally, the family will only be removed from the PBF after repeatedly failing to comply with the conditionalities, in a process that requires the municipalities' public social assistance to follow-up with the family (Molyneux, 2006; Bartholo, 2016, n. 55).

Therefore, as designed, the PBF does not exclusively set out to increase the amount of time women dedicate to their family as a result of the conditionalities, and there is no nationally representative data to identify to what extent this actually occurs. However, considering the effects of the PBF in reducing malnutrition and infant mortality, an alternative hypothesis is that women perceive the program as allowing them to devote less time to child care due to a possible decrease in children's susceptibility to diseases. Additionally, such programs are concerned with keeping younger women in school, but not adult women. In particular, it is claimed that these programs provide no support for women to choose to dedicate time to more empowering productive work (Molyneux, 2006; Bartholo, 2016, n. 55).

The PBF cannot evade the criticism that it uses women as mediators between the state and the family, but it seems reductionist to interpret it simply as a materialistic program that does not offer to choices to adult women. The structural improvement of the choices available to poorest women involves access to the PBF but is not limited to it. It requires the understanding that gender equality is a long-term process of change that depends on changing public policies in various areas. Moreover, perhaps the best that PBF can offer to improve women's living conditions and choices is its social information platform, which includes identification data about the socio-economic characteristics of almost half of the country's population. Any other responsibility attributed to the PBF to expand women's choices seems to be beyond the scope of its goals and mandate (Bartholo, 2016, n. 55, p. 4).

By Way of a Conclusion

PBF has substantially reduced the severity of the recipients' poverty but brought comparably few Brazilians out of poverty completely. This is not surprising given the small amounts of money being transferred, but it represented a significant accomplishment on the path toward a Brazil that guarantees basic human needs. *Bolsa Familia* is cited widely as an exemplary social policy that illustrates Brazil's commitment to social inclusion and expansion of citizenship rights (de la Briere and Rawlings, 2006). At the same time, conditional cash transfers exemplify the claim that the Brazilian democracy has succeeded in adding new programs to the social agenda that provide minimal social protection and that further basic education and health among marginal populations as long as they are kept within reasonable financial limits and do not upset important stakeholders. A key factor in the Bolsa's political appeal is that it does not challenge enshrined social protections to the middle and upper classes. Although Brazil's post-authoritarian governments have devoted new attention and resources to the social area, they have done little to

narrow the stark differences in people's effective access to public entitlements and social programs. One implication is that poorer groups with little political influence may be left without a strong political voice to defend the services or tracks that they alone occupy, while their better-off counterparts will have the means to defend their own spear of entitlements. For Brazil's democracy, overcoming this historical division is an essential step toward providing meaningful citizenship to all.

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