Studying the state through the lens of Bolsa Família: Policy preservation under adverse circumstances in Brazil

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Kimberly Bolch
Wolfson College

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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s and early 2000s, countries across Latin America embarked on a new era of social policy. Turning away from a model of "truncated" welfare states where social protection was tied to formal employment, governments began to expand the reach of social safety nets to new groups. Conditional cash transfers programs (CCTs) targeted to low-income households were a hallmark of this new approach and have since proliferated rapidly across the region and the world. In many countries, CCTs represented the first time that certain marginalized groups were direct beneficiaries of programmatic state-led social protection efforts. In this context, cash transfer programs represented not only a technical policy solution for poverty reduction, but also sought to push towards a deeper reimagining of state's relationship with poor citizens. However, several decades on, the institutional environment in Latin America has changed dramatically. In recent years, it has been shaped by rising right-wing countermovements, shifting economic winds, and overlapping global crises. While there is an extensive body of research studying cash transfer programs during the earlier period of welfare state expansion, more contemporary research is needed to understand the political economy of how these policies have evolved in the face of adverse circumstances and to unpack their implications for the dynamic and contingent relationship between states and their citizens.

This thesis uses the paradigmatic case of the Bolsa Família program as a prism for studying the Brazilian state and explores the political economy of social policy in moments of transition. Drawing on original qualitative research, including interviews with strategically placed bureaucrats involved in the program's design and implementation over time, it traces the historical trajectory of the program and considers how the state's relationship with poor citizens is made, remade, and unmade during various periods of welfare state expansion and retrenchment. Specifically, it explores the evolution of this relationship across three different dimensions of the state (considering the state as law, the state as a set of bureaucracies, and the state as a focus of collective identity) over three stylized periods of time ("The Expansion," "The Backlash," and "The Crisis"). Respectively, these periods refer to the introduction and scale up of the program under the administrations of Cardoso, Lula, and Dilma, the economic and political pressures on the program under the administrations of Temer and Bolsonaro, and the renewed debate over cash transfers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It argues that the Expansion can be read as a period of inclusion without equity, the Backlash as a period of backlash without backsliding, and the Crisis as a period of opportunity without change.

Taken together, these findings reveal a surprising pattern of policy preservation under adverse circumstances, driven in large part by the continuity of the state itself. While Bolsa Família was never legally codified as a "right," it has proven surprisingly durable over time. The analysis in this thesis suggests that this is not only due to the difficult politics involved in taking benefits away from voters, but also in large part due to the continuity of technocratic actors (and their broader epistemic community) over time that acted as "protective constituency" for the program. However, these findings also underscore the fundamental limitations of this outcome. Without the parallel preservation of the broader intersectoral network of public services and social benefits in which the program is embedded, Bolsa Família risks becoming simply a transfer of cash rather than a mechanism to link the Brazilian state with poor citizens and advance more universal goals of social protection and public service provision.

While this thesis focuses on the singular case of Bolsa Família in Brazil, its findings point to broader lessons on the links between targeted social assistance, state transformation, and long-term social policy trajectories in unequal societies. In contexts of high inequality, it is important to remember that policies to expand inclusion may likely prompt a reactionary politics of resistance. Lessons from the case of Bolsa Família reveals the importance of policy design that can balance dynamic flexibility with long-term commitment, policy implementation that is robustly integrated across sectors, and policy framing that can bridge the social divide between target and non-target populations.

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LIST OF KEY ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Auxílio Brasil
AE	Auxílio Emergencial
BFP	Bolsa Família Program
BPC	Continuous Cash Benefit Program
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer program
CEF	Federal Savings Bank (Caixa)
CMAS	Municipal Council for Social Assistance
CRAS	Social Assistance Reference Center
GEAPS	Belo Horizonte's Municipal Primary Healthcare Management Unit
GTREC	Belo Horizonte's Central Management Unit for Income Transfer Programs and the Cadastro Único
MDS	Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Eradication
PAIF	Program for Integrated Support to Families
SEDESE	Minas Gerais's State Secretariat for Labor and Social Development
SEE	Minas Gerais's State Secretariat for Education
SENARC	National Secretariat of Citizen's Income
SMASAC	Belo Horizonte's Municipal Secretariat for Social Assistance, Food Security, and Citizenship
SUAS	Unified Social Assistance System

CURRENCY AND EQUIVALENT UNITS

Exchange Rate Effective as of September 1, 2022

British Pound (GBP) = 1 | Brazilian Real (BRL) = 5.92

INTRODUCTION

Public policies are a central mechanism through which the state's relationship with citizens is forged. In particular, targeted policies that directly link states with target populations refract broader questions about how states see and serve different groups. In this sense, social protection policies offer a unique lens for studying the evolution of the state's relationship with poor and vulnerable populations over time. In the context of Latin America, social protection has broadly undergone two major "moments" of transformation: a "first moment" in the 1930s with the creation of a corporatist welfare state that provided social insurance to workers employed in the formal labor market and a "second moment" in the 1990s with the expansion of non-contributory social assistance to previously excluded groups. In this new era of social policy, the previously truncated welfare state expanded to include "outsiders"—groups such as the rural, informal, and unemployed workers and their dependents (Garay 2016). Cash transfer (CTs) and conditional cash transfer (CCTs)[1] programs became a hallmark policy instrument of this new approach to social protection and have been on the rise since the early 2000s. Scholars have argued that the massive rise of cash transfer programs—the so-called Quiet Revolution—is in fact "the really big 'development' story of the last twenty years" (Barrientos and Hulme 2009; Ferguson 2015, 2).

In Latin America, this new era of social policy was part of a broader process of political and social transformation that has come to be known as "the inclusionary turn"—described by Kapiszewski, Levitsky, and Yashar (2021, 3) as "the combination of state efforts to include previously excluded popular sectors (by enhancing recognition, increasing access to political power, and augmenting

[1] CTs and CCTs are a type of social assistance which takes the form of "direct, regular and predictable non-contributory payments that raise and smooth incomes with the objective of reducing poverty and vulnerability" (DFID 2011, 2). In CCTs, the payment of benefits is tied to compliance with a set of conditionalities, such as children's school attendance or vaccination requirements.

resource flows)…" In this context, cash transfer programs represented not only a technical policy solution for poverty reduction, but sought to push towards a deeper reimagining of state's relationship with poor citizens—distinctly informed by a "rights-based approach" (Barrientos et al 2008; Molyneux 2006). Given that many of these programs were intentionally designed to extend the state's reach to previously unserved populations, these new social assistance programs had important implications for the state's relationship with the poor in regard to their status as "citizens." In some cases, these programs were even explicitly framed within a language of promoting "citizenship" or situated within broader policy debates on "citizen's income" (see, for example, Lo Vuolo 2013 in the context of Latin America). From this perspective, these programs were not only about income but also fundamentally about incorporation—about who is and is not entitled to the state and its protection. As Filgueira (2015, 47) contends, "one way of looking at [the vigorous transformation in Latin America's social protection policies] is that an effort is being made, via different pathways and with a variety of instruments, to construct a model of social citizenship for the first time in the region's history since the important substitution stage."

However, as Kapiszewski, Levitsky, and Yashar (2021, 3) have cautioned, "movement toward inclusion is never unidirectional; it always activates resistance and reaction." Indeed, several decades on, the institutional environment in Latin America has changed dramatically. In recent years, it has been shaped by rising right-wing countermovements, shifting economic winds, and overlapping global crises. While there is an extensive body of research studying cash transfer programs during the earlier period of welfare state expansion, more contemporary research is needed to understand the political economy of how these policies have evolved in the face of adverse circumstances and to unpack their implications for the dynamic and contingent relationship between states and their citizens.

Research questions and contributions

This thesis uses the paradigmatic case of the *Bolsa Família* (Family Grant) program as a prism for studying the Brazilian state and explores the political economy of social policy in moments of transition. Created in 2003, Bolsa Família is a national CCT targeted to "poor" and "extremely poor" families in Brazil, with monthly cash benefits conditional on compliance with basic education and health requirements. In its current form (having recently been reformulated as Auxílio Brasil), the program benefits approximately 20 million families (around one quarter of Brazil's population). As one of the oldest and largest CCT programs in the world, it has been studied widely by researchers and has been recognized globally by policymakers. However, contemporary social, political, and economic shifts in Brazil raise questions about the sustainability of the program over time. Drawing on original qualitative research, including interviews with strategically placed state actors involved in the program's design and implementation over time, I trace the historical trajectory of the program to unpack the shifting politics of program change and continuity. I consider how the state's relationship with poor populations is made, remade, and unmade during various moments of welfare state expansion and retrenchment. My approach brings both a multidimensional and a dynamic perspective to understanding the nuanced ways in which this relationship is changing over time—specifically exploring the implications of Bolsa Família for three different dimensions of citizenship over three different periods of time in the program's institutional trajectory. In this way, it seeks to contribute both conceptually and empirically to the existing research in this area.

Conceptually, I bring in a multidimensional view of citizenship. As explained in greater depth in Chapter 2, I approach citizenship from a "top-down" perspective of state-society relations, exploring how states "make" citizens through the everyday implications of how policies are designed, implemented, and framed—exploring not only who is included but in which ways and with which

principles. I use O'Donnell (2010)'s multidimensional view of the state to disentangle different facets of this relationship. Starting from his identification of three dimensions of the state, I consider three corresponding forms of citizenship: I look at how the "state as law" shapes *formal citizenship*, how the "state as a set of bureaucracies" shapes *substantive citizenship*, and how the "state as a focus of collective identity" shapes *cohesive citizenship*. In contrast, many existing studies about CCTs and citizenship primarily analyze a more generalized and singular notion of citizenship—an approach which risks lumping together very different issues that sometimes exist in contradiction with one another and can obscure some of the underlying tensions or complementarities that really matter in advancing toward more universal goals.

Empirically, I bring in contemporary data to consider how recent events may shed new light on what we already know about Bolsa Família and citizenship. While Bolsa Família has been studied extensively, much of this research was conducted prior to the impeachment of President Dilma in 2016—a period of welfare state building under the uninterrupted governance of a single political party. Notably, recent events in Brazil such as the rise of right-wing countermovements and the COVID-19 crisis provide a new context for revisiting what was learned about Bolsa Família during the earlier years of its implementation under the Worker's Party (*Partido de Trabalhadores*, PT) government. My analysis explores the changing nature of state-society relations across three key periods in the program's institutional trajectory: "The Expansion," (referring to the introduction and scale up of the program under the administrations of Cardoso, Lula, and Dilma), "The Backlash" (referring to the new pressures on the program under the administrations of Temer and Bolsonaro in the context of rising right-wing countermovements and a more restrictive fiscal agenda), and "The Crisis" (referring to the new debate on cash transfers emerging in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting consensus on the scope of social protection).

Note that this project is an extension of the research that I conducted for my MPhil thesis "Cash transfers and the construction of citizenship: A qualitative study of the Bolsa Família Program in Belo Horizonte, Brazil." As my fieldwork for that project ended in 2018, just prior to the election of Bolsonaro, this version extends that project over time—exploring the implications of the Backlash period in much greater depth and considering new implications in the context of the more recent COVID-19 crisis. Please also note that this project was significantly adapted from its original research design due to the almost immediate disruption of in-person fieldwork in March 2020 following the onset of COVID-19. The original research design sought to extend the questions explored in my MPhil thesis beyond the social assistance sector—to also explore the changing nature of state-society relations in other state sectors associated with Bolsa Família (i.e. education, health, and banking). However, given the constraints to conducting new fieldwork imposed by the pandemic, this thesis retained its focus on the social assistance sector and instead extended its question over time—an approach which allowed me to leverage previous fieldwork contacts as well as to utilize a wider variety of remotely available data sources.

The argument in brief

Tracing the three dimensions of citizenship (formal, substantive, and cohesive) over the three periods of time (the Expansion, the Backlash, and the Crisis) results in a three x three matrix of analysis. Each of these nine areas is treated in depth in this thesis's empirical chapters (Chapter 4-6) and summarized in table 7.1 in the Conclusion (Chapter 7). Taken together, however, these findings reveal a surprising pattern of policy preservation under adverse circumstances, driven in large part by the continuity of the state itself.

In contrast to historical corporatist models of the welfare state, Bolsa Família marked a clear turning point in terms of incorporation for poor populations. As the hallmark program of a new era of social protection that sought for the first time to include "outsiders," Bolsa Família was fundamental in restructuring the relationship between the state and a large sub-set of "the poor" toward a more rights-based engagement than in the past. Critical to its success in effectively seeing and serving these new populations, was the creation of a new kind of state capacity. During this time, the government invested in recruiting a highly technocratic and pro-social corps of bureaucrats to deliver the program at the federal level alongside decentralized mechanisms of cooperation with states and municipalities as well as administrative instruments linked across sectors (such as the Cadastro Único single registry and the health and education conditionality monitoring systems). Beyond the program itself—the program's embeddedness within a broader intersectoral network of public services (education, health, banking) and benefits (social assistance) was central in shaping the way that the broader Brazilian state saw and served the target population of Bolsa Família. However, despite the many advances made during the Expansion period, this progress was in many ways fragile and incomplete (I argue that it was a period of "inclusion without equity").

On paper, the fact that Bolsa Família was never constitutionalized as a "right" left it vulnerable to retrenchment in the face of changing politics in Brazil. This fostered a high degree of uncertainty about the future of CCTs without the PT. As a symbol of the Worker's Party government, rising "anti-PT" sentiments in Brazil in the mid 2010s spilled over into anti-Bolsa Familia sentiment. However, despite the strong adverse political and economic pressures during the administrations of Temer and Bolsonaro, the program's expected fragility did not in fact materialize. The program itself proved surprisingly durable (I argue that it was a period of "backlash without backsliding"). The analysis in this thesis suggests that this is not only due to the difficult politics involved in taking benefits away

from voters, but also in large part due to the continuity of technocratic actors (and their broader epistemic community in think tanks, universities, and international institutions) over time. Despite the reorganization of various bureaucratic agencies and the reformulation of the program in the post-PT governments, many of the civil servants responsible for delivering Bolsa Família remained the same. Using internal mechanisms of resistance, this group fought to protect the program against various attempts at hollowing out. In this way, the program's bureaucracy served as its own "protective constituency." However, while these dynamics interacted to limit the degree to which the program itself was rolled back—this continuity did not extend to the broader intersectoral network within with the program was embedded. With calls for greater fiscal austerity, many of the public services and social benefits to which the program is intricately linked did not benefit from the same degree of protection and faced various degrees of dismantlement. This carried critical implications for the broader state-society links mediated by Bolsa Família. Moreover, in an increasingly polarized Brazil, an enduring "class consciousness" of being a bolsista (or not being a bolsista) served to reinforce the social division between groups that emerged during the previous period rather than to promote a broader-based politics of solidarity in the face of new challenges.

In the wake of the overlapping crises of COVID-19, Bolsa Família found itself again staring down an uncertain future. In a context of increasingly scarce fiscal space, would the pre-pandemic retrenchment pressures initiated under the Bolsonaro government intensify or would the experience of the temporary expansive and generous Auxílio Emergencial program (alongside the global call to "build back better") open a new window of opportunity? The findings from this thesis reveal that, again, the program remained surprisingly stable (I argue that the Crisis period reflects a time of "opportunity without change"). While it underwent an extended political and legislative process of reformulation—emerging in late 2021 under the name of Auxílio Brasil—it ultimately did not depart dramatically from

its original form. In this context, the tensions between "state" and "government" reemerged, with limited trust and dialogue between the two. On one front, "the state" sought to protect and preserve the technical integrity of the program—including the quality of registration data and its links to the intersectoral network of benefits and services. On the other front, "the government" sought to gain politically from temporarily increasing the monetary value of benefits and the number of beneficiaries, while simultaneously closing the window on more substantive reforms (to both the program and its broader network of services and benefits) through narratives of austerity and fiscal responsibility. Importantly, this period also raised new questions about the state and its ability to see and serve poor populations in the face of rapid technological change. As COVID-19 accelerated the digital transformation of cash transfer programs, this raised concerns about the potential digital replacement of various analog state functions in the context Bolsa Família/Auxílio Brasil. Face-to-face interaction between the state and bolsistas in the context of registration and conditionality monitoring was a critical entry point for bringing vulnerable populations under the broader umbrella of state services and benefits. The pandemic revealed the importance of ensuring that digital technologies work with, and not against, the "social technologies" that are embedded in these programs.

In sum, looking at the Brazilian state through the lens Bolsa Família reveals the powerful role of "the state as a set of bureaucracies" in determining an outcome of policy perseveration in the face of changing politics—even when the role of "the state as law" is relatively weak. However, it also reveals the limitations of that model, as the preservation of the CCT program itself is far less meaningful if the broader intersectoral network in which it is embedded is not also preserved. These findings reinforce the importance of studying the evolution of CCTs from a longer-term perspective. While these policies emerged from the new democratic politics that characterized the late 1980s and 1990s in Brazil, they have also gone on to shape a new set of politics in the contemporary period—with

implications for how they will evolve in the next period. In a context such as Brazil, where vast inequality persists, it is important to remember that this dynamic cycle of politics-policy-politics-policy is likely to swing back and forth: with periods of inclusion prompting periods of backlash. This is consistent with the lesson that Roberts (2021, 535) leaves the reader with in his recent reflection on the legacy of the inclusionary turn in Latin America:

> A key lesson learned from Collier and Collier (1991) is that processes of mass incorporation in contexts of egregious inequalities are always politically contingent, and hardly linear in nature. Readers attuned to that lesson recognize that the jury is still out on the political trajectory and the institutional and policy legacies of Latin America's new inclusionary turn.

While this thesis focuses on the specific case of Bolsa Família in Brazil, its results hope to shed light more broadly on the links between targeted social assistance, state transformation, and long-term social policy trajectories in unequal societies.

A note on language

Before moving on, I want to clarify my use of two terms key terms when speaking about Bolsa Família in this thesis. First, when speaking about the families who receive Bolsa Família benefits, I use the term *bolsista* (grantee) where possible. This follows the recommendation set forth by Rego and Pinzani (2012) in the preface to the second edition of their book *Voices of Bolsa Família*, based on the logic that the term "beneficiary" risks reinforcing the notion of social assistance as something that is given/gifted:

> The term "beneficiary" should be replaced with that of *bolsista.* Anyone who receives a grant (for study, research, or training) can be referred to as a *bolsista* and not a beneficiary. The idea is that a grant remunerates one for a certain activity (studies, research, training) and is not merely a gift. The same takes place with the Bolsa Família: the activity which is remunerated is that of supporting a family under difficult conditions, taking special care of the education and well-being of the children and future Brazilian citizens (these are, in fact, set up as the only two conditions imposed upon the grantees). We believe that if the competent governmental organizations were to adopt the term "*bolsista*," this would constitute a first, symbolic change that would, however, be particularly useful. Recently, some official documents have begun using the term "program participants" which we find to be a good alternative – much preferable to "beneficiaries." (Rego and Pinzani 2012, xiv)

Second, when speaking generically about the program in this thesis, I use the term Bolsa Família. While it has recently been replaced by Auxílio Brasil, for most of its history the program has been known as Bolsa Família. Thus, I use the term Auxílio Brasil only to refer to the specific replacement program introduced in November 2021.

Thesis roadmap

My thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapters 1-3 open the thesis, providing greater context on the study's background, conceptual framework, and research methods. Chapters 4-6 comprise the main body of thesis, presenting the results of the empirical analysis. These are longer chapters and each one brings us chronologically through time, covering the Expansion, the Backlash, and the Crisis periods. Each of these chapters opens with a descriptive section providing background context on the time period that is followed by three analytical sections that respectively discuss the implications for formal, substantive, and cohesive citizenship. Chapter 7 concludes. A more detailed summary of each chapter follows below.

Chapter One: *Background* provides background on the rise of CCTs with an emphasis on Latin America. It situates this within the broader political context of the post-neoliberal state, the third wave of democracy, and a new global paradigm of "human development." It highlights the potential of these programs for reshaping state-society relations and discusses why Bolsa Família is a compelling case study to explore these issues.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework explains my approach for analyzing the links between CCTs and citizenship from a multidimensional and dynamic perspective. It situates this approach within the

broader literature on social citizenship and reflects on how the targeted nature of CCTs can play a role in preventing or promoting pathways toward more universal ideals. It brings together literature from political sociology and anthropology to consider a multidimensional view of citizenship, and it brings in literature on policy feedback effects to consider how this interacts with processes of change and state transformation.

Chapter Three: Research Methods provides a brief overview of the Bolsa Família program and describes the methodological approach I take to study it. Specifically, it explains the program's evolution over the time during the periods of interest to this study, the way the program works in practice, and the institutional architecture behind the program. It then describes the two rounds of fieldwork I undertook to interview strategically placed state actors involved in the program (including the constraints imposed by COVID-19) as well as the complementary sources of data relied on and reflects on potential ethical issues and empirical limitations involved in this approach.

Chapters Four: The Expansion focuses on the creation and scale up of Bolsa Família under the administration of Cardoso (the programs that would become Bolsa Família) and the two-term administrations of Lula and Dilma. The chapter begins by contextualizing the emergence of the program within Brazil's shifting approach to social policy and poverty reduction. In the context of *formal citizenship*, it explores the framing of Bolsa Família within the context of a "new generation of rights" grounded in the 1988 Constitution and highlights the legal consolidation of the program over time (and its limitations). In the context of *substantive citizenship*, it explores how the implementation of the program helped to build both infrastructural and personnel capacity within the social assistance sector and expand the state's reach to vulnerable communities across Brazil's vast territory. It also acknowledges the implications of this process for the education and health sectors (suggesting that

beyond the delivery of cash, Bolsa Família played a key role in prompting the delivery of an integrated state action for these populations) but notes the persistent gap between expanding access to benefits and services and improving their generosity and quality. In the context of *cohesive citizenship*, it explores how the targeting of the program toward poor families acted as a double-edged sword for social inclusion, ensuring that limited state resources went to those who need them the most while also creating artificial divisions between "the poor" and the rest of society which were negatively capitalized on in both public and political discourse (and even reinforced by frontline state actors). Overall, I argue that the Expansion period represents a major advance in building a state for the poor population, where none had previously existed—with the caveat that in many ways this was the creation of a parallel state rather than the incorporation of the poor into a more universal system. In this way, I contend that the Expansion period is a story of policy enactment and entrenchment, but one that prioritized an outcome of inclusion over equity in the short-term.

Chapter Five: The Backlash re-examines the question of Bolsa Família and citizenship from the perspective of the "shock" of the right-wing backlash that took hold in Brazil leading up to and following the impeachment of Dilma in 2016. This chapter builds on the previous chapter to explore how the foundations of citizenship formed during the Expansion period help us to understand Bolsa Família's evolution in this new political moment under the administrations of Temer and Bolsonaro. The chapter begins by highlighting how the new politics of austerity of these governments did not directly lead to a rollback in Bolsa Família *per se*, but they did usher in a new era of uncertainty for social policy as a whole (undermining the program's essential links with the delivery of education, health, and social assistance services) and shifted the discursive framing of the program. In the context of *formal citizenship*, it explores how the program's extensive legal foundation in combination with the high political costs associated with its removal worked to protect the program on paper during this

time. It also highlights, however, how the lack of successful institutionalization of the program as a legal right left many vulnerable families living in fear that the program could be abruptly ended under new political leadership. In the context of *substantive citizenship*, it explores how a strategy of intensified audits of registry data created additional access barriers and reinforced a narrative of fraud and a distrust of bolsistas. It also shows, however, how bureaucratic forces of resistance at both the macro- and micro- levels combined to defend the integrity of the program and the rights of bolsistas in practice. In the context of *cohesive citizenship*, it explores the role of deepening moral, class, and identity divisions and shows how the early stigmatizing social imaginary of Bolsa Família was further calcified during this period in the context of economic recession and rising political polarization. Overall, I conclude that the Backlash period reflects a case of policy durability: a story of backlash without backsliding. While the program did not make greater gains on its road toward universalism during this period, its lack of retrenchment can be understood as a result of the policy resilience developed during the Expansion period. However, importantly, there are clear differences in the degree to which this is true across different types of citizenship—with the foundational fissure that developed in the realm of cohesive citizenship during the Expansion period continuing to crack under the weight of added pressures during the Backlash period.

Chapter Six: The Crisis explores how the global health crisis (and resulting economic and social crises) of the COVID-19 pandemic sheds new light on this analysis. As COVID-19 spread across the globe, governments scrambled to deliver rapid social protection responses to poor and vulnerable segments of society that required income support if they were to comply with stay-at-home public health mandates. This chapter begins by describing how this situation unfolded in the context of Brazil and the associated policy changes related to cash transfers that took place during this time—including the short-term emergency program Auxílio Emergencial and the longer-term transition from Bolsa

Família to Auxílio Brasil. In the context of *formal citizenship*, it explores the reinvigorated legal and political debates on universal basic income that emerged during this period but reveals how the growing support for a more expansive cash transfer policy agenda was not enough to successfully enact legislative changes to move CCTs in a more rights-based direction. In the context of *substantive citizenship*, it explores how pandemic-related bureaucratic changes (such as the suspension of operations and services related to registration and conditionality monitoring, the introduction of new digital tools, and growing influence from the Ministry of Economy) resulted in a process of "state-distancing" whereby the ability of state actors to effectively reach, orient, and support bolsistas in practice was slowly eroded. In the context of *cohesive citizenship*, it explores the way that the new narratives about economic vulnerability prompted by the pandemic reshaped the social imaginary of Brazil as well as the social imaginary of the welfare state. It argues that while the pandemic increased the visibility of different groups (including the poor and the informal), it was not enough to overcome historical social divides and build new cross-class coalitions for change. Overall, I argue that while the pandemic gathered global attention for its potential to serve as a "critical juncture," it has not yet prompted this type of paradigmatic shift in the context of cash transfers in Brazil. While many "small c" changes took place during this time, we did not see the kind of "big C" Changes that would have been necessary to overcome existing roadblocks and turn down on a new "fork in the road" toward greater incorporation for poor citizens.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion closes by summarizing the key findings from the analysis conducted in the preceding empirical chapters. It reflects on the explanatory factors behind the observed pattern of policy preservation under adverse circumstances in contemporary Brazil. Based on these findings, it draws three broader lessons about policy design with an emphasis on longer-term trajectories and discusses related directions for future research—emphasizing, in particular, the need for policy design

that is dynamic in nature, integrated across sectors, and that bridges divides across social groups. It closes with a reflection on the current political moment in Brazil and potential the road ahead.

CHAPTER 1 | BACKGROUND: CASH TRANSFERS AND STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS IN CONTEXT

"Social policies should not be compared to mere acts of public charity. They are rather instruments for promoting individual autonomy and creating a sense of community: in one word, they are instruments of citizenship."

-Walquiria Leão Rego and Alessandro Pinzani,
Voices of Bolsa Família: Autonomy, Money, and Citizenship (2012, 87)

The reader of this thesis may be wary of reading yet another study on cash transfer programs—in particular, the already heavily studied Bolsa Família. This chapter seeks to convince the reader that cash transfer programs are in fact a particularly relevant type of policy for studying the links between states and poor citizens in Latin America and that Bolsa Família is a particularly relevant example to look at. Of course, this question could be applied to many other types of policies and programs and to many other countries. This thesis does not seek to argue that cash transfers are the only mechanism through which state-citizen relations are forged nor that Brazil is the only relevant context to explore these issues. Not at all. Rather, it posits that cash transfers are an archetypal policy to explore questions related to trajectories of incorporation through social assistance during the inclusionary turn in Latin America, as these programs proliferated around the region and were held up by governments as a hallmark pillar of their new approach to social policy. It is important to remember, however, that cash transfer programs co-exist with a much broader web of social assistance policies. State-citizen relations are simultaneously constructed through these policies alongside countless other types such as education, health, housing, policing, and infrastructure—to name only a few.

This chapter thus provides background context to situate the applied analysis undertaken in this thesis within the broader context of "a new era of social policy" premised on a state-led incorporation of poor citizens—in which governments across the developing world have embarked over the past few decades. The chapter is divided into two sections. Section 1.1 provides a brief overview of the

paradigmatic changes in development thinking that took place in the late 1980s and its links to new social policy approaches that began in the late 1990s—with an emphasis on the rise of cash transfer programs in Latin America. Section 1.2 provides a rationale for the selection of the Bolsa Família program in Brazil as a particularly compelling case study to explore the dynamic links between cash transfers and citizenship and discusses how this study contributes to the existing academic literature on this topic.

1.1 Situating the study: The rise of cash transfers within a new paradigm of development

Sea change: The shifting tides of "development" and a new era of social policy

"Development" is an objective that is widely pursued by countries around the world. However, what exactly "development" means—and the most effective way to pursue it—is a historically-contingent and context-specific question, fraught with the politics of knowledge and the legacies of power (Cooper and Packard 1997). Since its emergence as a general organizing framework in the 1940s, "development" has been synonymous with issues as diverse as economic growth, industrialization, modernization, poverty reduction, basic needs, freedom, and environmental protection (Ingham 1993). Moreover, within both academic and policy circles, there has been an ongoing tug of war over whether the state or the market should play the leading role in delivering said "development."

While these debates remain openly contested, a critical shift began to take hold in the late 1980s. After a period of policy dominated by structural adjustment programs, countries across the developing world found themselves disappointed with the results. Not only did this market-based approach to "getting the prices right" fail to bring the expected income and productivity growth to many nations, but it also led to increasingly untenable social and human costs. UNICEF's 1987 report *Adjustment*

with a Human Face called international attention to the failure of structural adjustment programs to protect the poor and vulnerable (Cornia et al 1987). Particularly within Africa and Latin America, countries found themselves plagued by stubbornly high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment (Birdsall et al 2011). Moreover, many of these same nations had recently transitioned into democratic polities—and thus were also facing rising pressures from frustrated constituencies. The third wave of democratization, which swept across developing nations in the late 1980s, enfranchised many historically excluded groups. In some contexts, the newly enfranchised poor represented a large share of the electorate. In Latin America, for example, over 48% of the population was living in poverty in 1990 (Barrientos et al 2008). As Huber and Stephens (2012, 12) note, the onset of democracy in Latin America "made it possible for social movements, civil society organizations, and parties of the left to form, grow, and slowly gain influence on policy to shape it in a more egalitarian direction."

At the same time, a major conceptual shift was taking place within international institutions and the field of development economics. A new emphasis was being placed on the importance of poverty reduction, human development, and the expansion of capabilities as essential to (and constitutive of) the pursuit of "development." In 1990, the United Nations launched its first annual Human Development Report, arguing that in fact "*people* [emphasis added] are the real wealth of a nation." (United Nations 1990, 9). In 1999, Amartya Sen authored his seminal work *Development as Freedom*, in which he argues for the need to look beyond a focus on income and commodities and instead focus on the capabilities that people have to live a life that they have reason to value (Sen 1999). In 2001, the World Bank released its *2000/01 World Development Report on Attacking Poverty*, bringing questions of agency and empowerment to the spotlight (World Bank 2000). In the early 2000s, these issues began

to enter the international policy paradigm through the establishment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and later, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With democratic pressures mounting from below and a new development paradigm emerging from above, many countries sought to adapt their policy frameworks and development strategies. In order to address the "social debt" accumulated during the period of structural adjustment and to deliver broad-based human development, states would need to extend social benefits and rights to larger segments of their population—in particular, historically excluded groups such as the poor, women, ethnic minorities, children, and indigenous communities. In Latin America, this new project of governance—in which the state reclaimed its role as a central actor in promoting development—has been referred to as the "post-neoliberal state." As described by Grugel and Riggirozzi (2012, 3-4), the post-neoliberal state was "based on a view that states have a moral responsibility to respect and deliver the inalienable (that is, not market-dependent) rights of their citizens… alongside growth"—and, at its core, it is "best understood as a call for a 'new form of social contract between the state and people.'" Consequently, the new social policies that emerged in this context can be viewed as an attempt to build a new relationship between the state and the poor in a push toward greater incorporation.

"A truly Latin American product": The rise of cash transfer programs in the region

Cash transfer programs became emblematic of this type of policy approach, given their rapid rise and extensive global coverage. While practically non-exist in the early 1990s, these programs are now present in over 130 countries and reach over 1 billion people globally (World Bank 2015, DFID 2011). While CCTs have become a global phenomenon, they are arguably "a truly Latin American product" (Cecchini and Atuesta 2017). The first sub-national CCT programs were pioneered at the municipal-

level in Brazil in 1995 and the first national CCT program was introduced in Mexico in 1997. According to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on non-contributory social protection programs, CCT programs currently operate in 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and reach over 30 million households—or one fifth of the region's population (Cecchini and Atuesta 2017). In her book on the topic, Ana De La O (2015) refers to widespread take-up of CCTs in the region as the "quiet transformation."

A distinct feature of these new social policies was the way that they situated beneficiaries with respect to the state. The introduction of CCTs (among other social welfare programs) in Latin America marked a critical departure from historical approaches to social policy in the region—which tended to focus on social insurance and employment protection for workers in the formal sector (Barrientos et al 2008). Brazilian political scientist Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos has argued that this type of truncated welfare state resulted in a form of "regulated citizenship" based on a system of occupational stratification that left all of those in non-recognized professions relegated to a status of "pre-citizens." (Santos 1979, 75). As social policy expanded to include "outsiders" (Garay 2016), in many countries, this was the first time that certain marginalized groups were direct beneficiaries of social protection efforts. As Molyneux (2006, 4) noted, "for those living in and on the margins of poverty—that is, up to half the population in half of the countries of the [Latin America] in the 1990s—[prior to the introduction of cash transfers,] the principal safety net was emergency relief (food aid, primary health), family and kinship support, supplemented by the voluntary sector, comprising non-governmental organizations (NGOs), church-based relief and charitable organizations." Indeed, social benefits directed toward the poor in Latin America were historically implemented within a paradigm of paternalistic philanthropy—what is commonly referred to in the region as *assistencialismo*—rather than a paradigm of programmatic policy. Within the *assistencialista* paradigm, beneficiaries were viewed as

the "passive recipients of charity" (Molyneux 2006). In contrast, within this new paradigm of social policy, beneficiaries were framed as "empowered active citizens" (Ibid). This perspective is reflected in the way many Latin American CCT programs were explicitly framed using the language of "rights," "citizenship," "social inclusion," and/or "co-responsibilities." This new era of social policy, materialized in part by the rise of cash transfers, was part of a broader "inclusionary turn" in the region.

Now several decades later, we are able to look back and begin to evaluate just how inclusionary this turn has been. As Kapiszewski, Levitsky, and Yashar (2021, 3) cautioned in their recent edited volume on the topic, "the social and political gains made during the inclusionary turn should not be overstated...First, ground-level advances in popular sector recognition, access, and resources have been slower and less consequential than legal innovations and parchment-level changes might suggest. Moreover…Inclusionary advances in some areas may coexist with exclusionary movements in other areas." A similar conclusion was reached in Balán and Montambeault's (2020) retrospective on the legacies of the left turn in relation to the promise of inclusive citizenship. Taking a longer-term perspective provides unique insight on this issue, as it allows us to interrogate both the depth and the sustainability of change. In particular, to explore how the reforms introduced during the inclusionary turn have interacted with critical factors such as changing political leadership (for example, a shift in many countries from the "pink tide" of left-wing governments to a "blue-tide" of right-wing governments) and changing economic environments (for example, patterns of limited and volatile growth following the end of the commodities boom and more recent shocks introduced by the COVID-19 crisis). Building on this broader line of inquiry, this thesis zooms in to explore these dynamics in depth by focusing on a single program in a single Latin American country: the Bolsa Família program in Brazil.

1.2 An applied case study: The Bolsa Família program in Brazil

On October 20, 2003, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva launched the Bolsa Família program at a dedicated event in the Palácio do Planalto. In his public remarks, he explicitly described the program as a part of an effort to build a bridge between those who had "citizenship" and those who did not:

> We, who are among those who have citizenship, know that if Brazil socially includes this large part of the secularly excluded population, our country will improve and, I have no doubt, improve a lot. It is necessary to build a bridge between these two worlds. And the name of that bridge is opportunity. The entire nation will benefit from this. Those people who survive below the poverty line, almost 50 million, have the right to a dignified life. They have to receive some immediate support that allows them to fight today, believing in a better tomorrow…. Millions of Brazilian families, who, until today, were excluded from the minimum rights of citizenship, are now being protected so that they can look inward and find their own sense of self-emancipation. So that they can look at their children and see a better future. So that they can think and feel that Brazil is a country to which they belong. A country for all Brazilians. (Lula da Silva 2003)

The government's explicit emphasis on the links between Bolsa Família and citizenship has remained steady over time—even under changing political leadership. For example, under the administration of Jair Bolsonaro, the ministry in charge of the program (the Ministry of Social Development) was rebranded as the Ministry of Citizenship and Bolsa Família's replacement program (Auxílio Brasil) was launched under the banner of Ministry's official hashtag #IssoÉCidadania (#ThisIsCitizenship).

While the potential links between cash transfer programs and citizenship are applicable to many programs around the world, this study focuses on the Bolsa Família program in Brazil. I argue that this program offers a particularly compelling case to study these dynamics for six key reasons. First, the program was explicitly introduced within the language of rights and citizenship in the context of combating Brazil's historical legacy of exclusion (an issue that will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 4). Second, it is one of the oldest cash transfer programs in existence (having been in operation since 2003), and thus offers a "longer term" perspective to explore change over time. Third, Brazil has a relatively developed state with clear pocket of bureaucratic effectiveness, allowing for a more advanced exploration of the question of citizenship than in some other Latin American countries

with CCT programs. Fourth, the program is a "theoretically prominent" case as it has been studied extensively by scholars and is looked to as a model CCT program by policymakers around the world (Gerring 2007, 150). Fifth, recent changes in the program related Brazil's political and economic context allow for an opportunity to study contemporary dynamics of interest such as conservative backlash and the COVID-19 crisis. Sixth, the case selection is a "pragmatic" one, as my previous experience living, studying, and working in Brazil combined with my proficiency in Portuguese enabled me to conduct more context-specific research and to engage directly with key informants (Gerring 2007, 149).

An extensive research agenda: Evaluating Bolsa Família

In choosing to study Bolsa Família, I find myself in very good—or at least very sizable—company. The global rise in the adoption of cash transfer programs was paralleled by a similarly impressive rise in efforts to study them. This has materialized, in particular, in an extensive evaluation literature looking at the impacts of these programs on a variety of short-term economic and social outcomes (see Bastagli et al. 2016 for a global review of this type of evidence). Bolsa Família is certainly no exception to this trend. It has been rigorously evaluated by Brazil's social development ministry, international organizations and think tanks, and independent academic researchers from across the world. As of late 2021, it was estimated that in Brazil alone there have been over 19,600 academic studies produced on Bolsa Família—based on a search of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development's "Lattes Platform" (a national online depository for individual and institutional research studies) (Carrança 2021a).

These analyses have found a vast array of positive impacts on multiple economic and social outcomes (see Hunter and Sugiyama 2017 for a recent summary overview of program impacts). For example,

Bolsa Família has been found to have positive impacts on poverty and inequality reduction, education, health, public security, gender empowerment, and economic growth in Brazil. While far from an exhaustive summary of the program's impacts, a few key findings are highlighted here. Estimates suggest that between 2004-2017, Bolsa Família has been responsible for about 25% of the annual reduction in *extreme poverty* and about 15% of percent of the annual reduction in *poverty*; and between 2001-2015, it has been responsible for about 10% of the reduction in *inequality*, as measured by the Gini index (Ferreira de Souza et al. 2019). It has had positive impacts on *education*, including increased school attendance, lower drop-out rates, and lower age-grade distortion rates—particularly among girls and older children (de Brauw et al. 2015; Cireno, Silva, and Proença 2013). It has had positive direct effects on *health* outcomes, including improved food security and child nutrition, increased use of prenatal care by mothers, reduced maternal mortality, reduced infant mortality, and increased child vaccination rates (F. V. Soares, Ribas, and Osório 2010; Rasella et al. 2013; Ramos et al. 2021; Rasella et al. 2021; Cotta and Machado 2013). Bolsa Família has also had positive indirect effects on health outcomes such as the reduction of leprosy, tuberculous, and suicide rates (Freitas de Andrade et al. 2018; Oliosi et al. 2019; Nery et al. 2017; Alves et al 2018). It has had positive impacts on *public security,* including the reduction of crime in school neighborhoods as well as a general decrease in homicide rates and hospitalizations due to violence (Chioda et al 2016; Machado et al. 2018). It has had positive impacts on *gender empowerment*, including reductions in teenage pregnancy, reductions in domestic violence, increases in women's decision-making power over household expenditures and contraception use, and increases in women's perceptions of their social recognition (Olson, Clark, and Reynolds 2019; Perova, Reynolds, and Müller 2012; Brauw et al. 2014; Suarez and Libardoni 2008).[2]

[2]It is important to note, however, that there remains an extensive debate in terms of gender empowerment and CCTs. Following, Molyneux's (2006) pioneering work on the subject, several scholars have argued that making mothers the primary family member responsible for the benefit within the household risks reinforcing traditional gender roles and adding to women's domestic burdens. In the context of Bolsa Família, several qualitative researchers have begun exploring how these issues play out, including Georges and Garcia dos Santos (2016), Marins (2017), and Sugiyama and Hunter (2020).

Not only has Bolsa Família had positive effects at the micro-level, but it has also had positive effects on the *macroeconomic environment*. For example, the program is estimated to have a "multiplier effect" of 1.78—meaning that for each R$ 1.00 spent on Bolsa Família, R$ 1.78 returns to the economy (Campello and Neri 2013).

Beyond the program's short-term social and economic impacts, researchers have also explored some of the program's political impacts. In the context of Bolsa Família, this literature has tended to focus on political issues such as clientelism and electoral rewards, exploring the impacts of the program on outcomes such as *voting patterns*. For example, taking advantage of multiple rounds of election data and exploiting matching-techniques for causal identification, Zucco (2013) finds that Bolsa Família led to an electoral boost of incumbent candidates but did not lead to a broader realignment of partisanship (see Hunter and Power 2007 and Zucco 2008 for earlier analyses). A lack of clientelistic implementation is consistent with other findings based on perceptions data from bolsistas (Sugiyama and Hunter 2013; Hunter and Sugiyama 2014). While these questions are important at the macro-level, we know much less about how politics play out at the micro level—in the day-to-day interactions between the state and the poor. This is true not only in Brazil, but in the literature on cash transfers more broadly. For example, evidence from a recent global systematic review of 201 cash transfer evaluations found that exactly zero studies looked at the role of program governance—despite explicit acknowledgment that these types of factors are important to "strengthen programme effectiveness and accountability for vulnerable groups and populations, and in turn state-citizen relations" (ODI 2013 in Bastagli et al. 2016, 34).

An evolving discussion: Bolsa Família and citizenship

Scholars have recently begun to propose alternative evaluation frameworks for cash transfer programs, which seek to incorporate an institutional lens more directly, bringing factors such as program governance and state-citizen relations to the forefront. Devereux et al (2013, 14), for example, argue for the incorporation of these factors on the grounds that "basic design and implementation choices, such as targeting criteria, delivery mechanisms and grievance procedures, can in themselves affect programme outcomes and impacts, not least in the extent to which these design choices and implementation features are empowering or disempowering of programme participants." They also argue for the relevance of qualitative methods in answering these types of questions. Most cash transfer evaluations to date have been conducted using large-*N* quantitative experimental or quasi-experimental methods. While these methods have enabled scholars and policymakers to gather very rigorous measurements of impact, they can fall short in offering explanations about less quantifiable outcome variables as well as in understanding the underlying mechanisms behind processes of change.

In the context of Bolsa Família, there is a growing body of work that engages substantively with the program's institutional environment. Fenwick (2015) and Niedzwiecki (2018), for example, contribute to the discussion on the politics of Bolsa Família implementation at the sub-national level by bringing in questions regarding the territorial distribution of state capacity, decentralization, and institutional incentives for delivering program benefits. Both authors build their arguments in comparison to the delivery of similar social programs in Argentina. On the explicit question of the links between Bolsa Família and "citizenship," Hunter and Sugiyama have made notable empirical contributions. They have explored the implications of the program for the expansion of identity documentation—arguing that these documents are "a foundation of citizenship" (Hunter and Sugiyama 2017, 143). Building on work by Wong and Turra (2007), they explored the role of the Bolsa Família in catalyzing both demand for identity documentation (from families seeking to apply for benefits) as well as the supply of

documentation (from state actions taken to reduce barriers) (Hunter and Sugiyama 2018). They have also explored questions of citizenship by analyzing bolsista perceptions of social inclusion and agency. Through surveys, focus groups, and interviews conducted in three municipalities in the northeast of Brazil, Hunter and Sugiyama (2014) find that in general bolsistas tend to be "proud" to be a part of the program, to find the program to be "understandable and fair in its design" as well as "bureaucratically navigable," and to broadly view the program as a "right" (as opposed to a "favor"). Rego and Pinzani (2012) have also made an important contribution to the discussion of Bolsa Família and citizenship. In their study *Voices of Bolsa Família*, which includes interviews with bolsistas in various remote municipalities across Brazil, they highlight some of the tensions that emerge in the context of citizenship—for example, while it has played an important role in making women feel seen and recognized by the state, there is also a common perception of the program as a "favor" given by the government (specifically associated with President Lula) rather than a "right"—in contrast with the findings from Hunter and Sugiyama (2014).

Note that this is by no means an exhaustive overview of the studies on Bolsa Família and citizenship, but rather a broad introduction to the types of issues that are being studied by scholars in this area as a means to situate the study that I conduct here within the broader academic discourse on this topic. Additional relevant studies are discussed throughout my empirical analysis conducted in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 as they relate to more specific analytical points. As discussed in the previous chapter, this thesis seeks to contribute to this emerging research agenda both conceptually and empirically. Conceptually, it seeks to contribute by applying a multidimensional view of citizenship—allowing for a more nuanced exploration of the divergences and synergies between different aspects of this large and often intractable concept (my proposed conceptual framework for doing this is discussed in the following chapter). Empirically, it seeks to contribute by providing an up-to-date and longer-term

perspective on the topic—allowing for an opportunity to explore how contemporary dynamics such as the right-wing backlash and the COVID-19 crisis in Brazil shed new light on what we know about the links between Bolsa Família and citizenship (as much of the research on this topic was conducted prior to 2016, during the earlier years of its implementation under the Worker's Party government).

1.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided background context to situate this dissertation's question within the historical evolution of development thinking and development policy in Latin America—arguing that cash transfers are a particularly interesting case study for exploring the changing relationship between the welfare state and citizens. It sought to contextualize the emergence of CCT programs within the new paradigm of global development thinking that emerged in the late 1980s and the "new era of social policy" that gained traction in Latin America in the 1990s. As a hallmark program of this new approach to policymaking, CCTs were a visible manifestation of the broader inclusionary turn in the region, premised on a promise of expanding incorporation beyond market-based entitlement schemes. Zooming in to the Bolsa Família program in Brazil, this chapter explained why this particular CCT offers a unique lens to understand trajectories of citizenship based on its historical origins, program longevity, state context, theoretical prominence, contemporary relevance, and pragmatic implications. This chapter closed by providing a brief overview of the existing scholarship on Bolsa Família in this area and signaling its intention to contribute both conceptually and empirically to this evolving academic discussion. The following chapter digs more deeply into the conceptual contributions that this approach brings in taking a multidimensional and a dynamic view of citizenship.

CHAPTER 2 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL AND DYNAMIC APPROACH

"The design of social protection programs, the discourse that surrounds them, and how street-level bureaucrats interact with those enrolled in them influence greatly how low-income individuals view themselves as well as their government."

Wendy Hunter and Natasha Borges Sugiyama, Assessing the Bolsa Familia: Successes, Shortcomings, and Unknowns (2017, 147)

As Chapter 1 showed, the expansion of CCTs in Latin America represented more than a technical solution for poverty reduction and human development. Beyond the transfer of income, these programs brought with them broader promises of incorporation for citizens historically excluded from state services and benefits. This chapter proposes a conceptual framework for analyzing the links between cash transfer programs and citizenship in this context. I unpack this relationship from the perspective of the welfare state—asking who it includes, in which ways, and with which principles. It builds on the premise that CCTs shape citizenship through the everyday practices which structure and give meaning to how welfare states see and serve target populations. Following Alik-Lagrange et al (2021, 156–57), it looks at the so-called "reconstitutive effects" of social protection programming—exploring how different aspects of these policies can "reconfigure both states and citizens, independently and in relation to one another"—shaping how they "see themselves within a broader political project."

In this this thesis, I define "citizenship" from the anthropological approach of "political subject formation" (Lazar 2016). This takes place through both "bottom-up" and "top-down" processes, following Ong's (1996, 737) view of citizenship as both a "process of self-making and being-made." In this thesis, I take a "top-down" perspective, focusing on how states "make" citizens and extend different offers of citizenship through the everyday implications of how their policies are designed, implemented, and framed. In this way, I hope to complement the existing body of literature on Bolsa

Família and citizenship which often takes a more "bottom-up" perspective. In contrast to this literature that (very importantly) brings bolsista perspectives to the forefront, this project focuses on exploring a more state-centric perspective (by engaging with strategically situated state actors across both space and time).

This chapter digs more deeply into the concept of citizenship that I employ as an analytical lens in this thesis—untangling different aspects of this much bigger concept. In my view, "citizenship" belongs to the club of large abstract concepts referred to by Robert Dahl (1957, 1056) as "giant globs of oily ambiguity," alongside his proposed members of "State," "Sovereignty," and "Power." Its extensive range of meanings and applications is reflected in scholars' myriad choices of adjectives to qualify different "types" of citizenship based on both their descriptive nature (i.e. insurgent citizenship, regulated citizenship, or low-intensity citizenship[3]) and their thematic relevance (i.e. hydraulic citizenship, biological citizenship, or cultural citizenship[4]). By limiting my framing of citizenship to the domain of social assistance policy and by breaking it down into three separate dimensions, I hope to clarify my specific approach to engaging with this particular glob of ambiguity. Moreover, I hope to contribute to the existing scholarship on Bolsa Família and citizenship by unpacking the ways in which the program may enhance citizenship in some dimensions while simultaneously undermining it in others. Due to its expansive nature, a singular notion of citizenship risks obscuring the important ways in which different aspects of state-citizen relations may either contradict or complement one another.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section 2.1. explores citizenship as a universal ideal, and highlights both the potential and pitfalls of targeted approaches in supporting transitions toward this

[3]Respectively used by Holston (2008), Santos (1979), and O'Donnell (1993).
[4]Respectively used by Anand (2017) in his treatment of water infrastructure, Petryna (2002), in her treatment of environmental contamination, and Ong (1996) in her treatment of immigration.

ideal. Section 2.2 expands on the concept of citizenship from a multidimensional perspective, disentangling how different dimensions of the state can promote different forms of citizenship. Section 2.3 brings in a dynamic perspective, considering how citizenship as a contingent concept can be made, remade, or unmade in the context of expanding or retreating welfare states.

2.1 Getting to universal: The pitfalls and potential of targeted approaches

Universal citizenship vs targeted CCTs?

The notion of "citizenship" lies at the heart of debates about the social contract. At its core, the notion is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between "the state" and "society," and the rights and duties owed to/claimed by one another. Depending on the type of rights and duties, however, their materialization may look very different—and thus it is analytically useful to clarify the "domain" of citizenship in question. In his famous 1949 essay on "Citizenship and Social Class," British sociologist T.H. Marshall delineates three domains of citizenship (civil, political, and social)—and identifies an associated sets of rights and corresponding institutions for achieving those rights. Given this study's focus on social assistance policy, this study is primarily concerned with this last domain—social citizenship—with the corresponding institution being the welfare state. In this context, social protection and fiscal systems are key instruments to materialize the social contract between states and citizens, and the principles of entitlement that underlie them (for example, whether access to benefits is determined based on occupational privilege or citizenship rights) are fundamental features which determine who is incorporated into that contract. Beyond this, other features of program design, implementation, and narrative framing also shape the nature and extent of that incorporation.

In the context of CCTs targeted to the poor, there is a specific tension with the common framing of citizenship as a "universal ideal." For example, in that same influential 1949 essay, Marshall defines

citizenship as "a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community," and argues that "all those who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (Marshall 1949, 28). Many scholars—in particular, feminist scholars—have subsequently critiqued this approach for its failure to take into account structural sources of marginalization which prevent the equal distribution of rights in reality. Indeed, as (Jayal 2013, 6) notes, the "empirical specificity of citizenship consistently undermines its normative claim of universality…reflecting the countless ways in which states relate to the members of the populations over which they govern." This is particularly relevant when considering targeted approaches, such as CCTs, which explicitly seek to incorporate marginalized populations. In targeting, CCTs fundamentally imply an approach in which different principles of incorporation are applied to different citizens ("differentiated citizenship"). While proponents of universal basic income approaches, for example, would argue that this fundamentally restricts their potential to promote citizenship (based on universal principles), I contend that it is not necessarily the case. Rather, it depends on how states frame and deliver those CCTs and how this overlaps with the rest of the social policy regime.

Differentiated citizenship and targeting within universalism

Following Iris Marion Young (1989), differentiated approaches can be a key strategy for the inclusion of minority groups. This would apply, for example, to Skocpol (1995, 253)'s definition of "targeting within universalism," in which targeted social approaches are able to make room "within certain universal policy frameworks for extra benefits and services that disproportionally help less privileged people without stigmatizing them." However, differentiated approaches can also lead to treatment that reinforces existing inequalities This would be the case, for example, if CCTs ended up consolidating residual systems of social protection that resulted in outcomes typified by "poor services

for poor people." This relates to the distinction discussed in the previous chapter between outcomes of "inclusion" versus "incorporation." In the case of the former, there may an extension of services or benefits to the poor—but broader patterns of investment may still be skewed toward more affluent or privileged groups. As Smith (2011, 240–41) notes, differentiated citizenship can either "help realize meaningful civic equality" or reinforce "systemic subordination, oppression, and exclusion." Following Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea (2016, 313), the important question then, is in which ways are CCTs promoting the former and in which ways are they promoting the latter.

Note that the concept of "universalism" employed in this thesis is aligned with the approach proposed by Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea (2016) in that it "builds on the maximalist goal but acknowledges that there may be different ways to secure the same benefits for all." In other words, it considers universal social protection goals of coverage, generosity, and equity, but allows room for targeted approaches to lift up more marginalized populations in reaching these goals. Moreover, following Pribble (2014), it considers universalism as a gradual process that moves along a spectrum, rather than as a binary universal/non-universal outcome. Notably, in my analysis I consider universalism in terms of both the provision of the income transfer itself (and the associated debate about its framing as a "first step" toward implementing Brazil's Citizen's Basic Income Law), but also more broadly in terms of the larger social policy regime within which the program is embedded.

Writing in 2013, Brazilian economist Lena Lavinas argued that Bolsa Família had to date failed as a means for paving the way toward universalism, citing its role in reinforcing residual models of social protection and extending processes of commodification. She argued that "the promise of an expression of citizenship previously unknown to Brazilians gave way to a timid voluntarist experiment with dubious sustainability, who characteristics clash with those of [Citizen's Income]" (Lavinas 2013,

43). While it is true that Bolsa Família has fallen short in reaching any universal destination (she refers to it as a "lost road")—it is also true that it has paved a road where none existed before (which Lavinas (2017, 176) acknowledges, noting that "for the first time, tens of millions of people rose out of a realm of invisibility and were granted an income on which to survive—albeit quite a modest sum, and one not established as a right"). By taking a multidimensional and dynamic view of the links between Bolsa Família and citizenship, this thesis seeks to explore the ways in which some of aspects of citizenship have been advanced while others have been undercut and to situate these changes within a context of a longer-term policy trajectory that spans across notable periods of transition.

2.2 A multidimensional perspective: Formal, substantive, and cohesive citizenship

In my analysis, I employ a multidimensional concept of citizenship. Recognizing that "the state" (another glob of oily ambiguity) is not a monolithic actor nor a necessarily cohesive entity, I look at how different dimensions of the state correspond to different dimensions of citizenship. Following the multidimensional approach to the state proposed by O'Donnell (2010), I explore the links between "the state as law" and the construction of *formal citizenship*, the state as "a set of bureaucracies" and the construction of *substantive citizenship*, and "the state as a focus of collective identity" and the construction of *cohesive citizenship* (Figure 2.1).[5] These dimensions are explained in greater depth below, with an emphasis on the key aspects that are relevant to CCTs. It is important to note that these different dimensions can overlap and reinforce one another, or they can be disjointed and undermine one another.

[5] Note that O'Donnell also considers a fourth dimension of the state: "the state as a filter." This analysis does not engage with this dimension, as it is arguably more relevant when considering international rather than domestically focused issues (as is the case here).

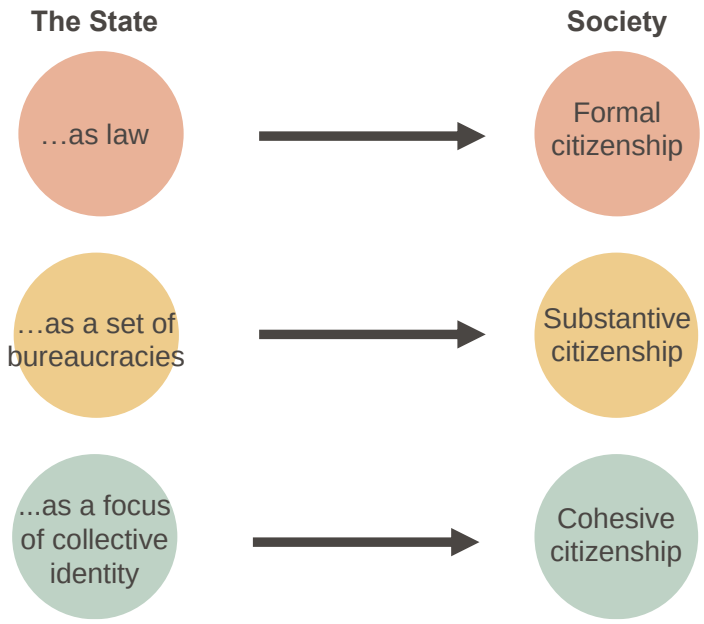


Figure 2.1 Multiple dimensions of the state, multiple dimensions of citizenship
Source: Author's illustration.

Formal citizenship

Formal citizenship refers to the granting of rights on paper. This dimension of citizenship is constructed via "the state as law" and can be considered in terms of how the "network of legally sanctioned and backed rules penetrate and co-determine manifold social relations, both in society and within state bureaucracies" (O'Donnell 2010, 53). The way the law structures the relationship between the state and its citizens—and specifically which citizens it includes and excludes—is the foundation of formal citizenship. In the context of this study, this is largely reflected in changes to the formal legal structures in Latin America to better incorporate historically excluded groups into social protection schemes. In particular, for CCTs this is linked to a discussion about the offer of social assistance benefits from a charity-based versus a rights-based framework and considers how this shifts the legal responsibilities of and duties owed by states to their citizens. It also considers how the rules governing CCT programs, the passage of related policies, and the institutionalization (or lack thereof)

of various associated rights interact in the long-term to shape the state's commitments to program recipients.

Substantive citizenship

Substantive citizenship refers to the realization of rights in practice. This dimension of citizenship is constructed via "the state as a set of bureaucracies" and can be considered in terms of the degree to which states as "complex organizations" actually fulfill their "legally-assigned responsibilities for the protection or attainment of some presumed aspect of the common good" (O'Donnell 2010, 53). As Nakano Glenn (2002) explains, substantive citizenship may differ from formal citizenship if citizens either lack the capacity to exercise their rights or if the enforcement/lack of enforcement of those rights is enacted differentially. The gap between formal and substantive citizenship is of particular concern in the context of Latin America—a region characterized as having "uneven democracies," in which "the continued socioeconomic marginalization of some of…groups made it difficult for them to…make their formal rights effective" and where state capacity is often "discontinuous" across the territory (Brinks and Botero 2014, 215; Ceriani and Lòpez-Calva 2017). Indeed, as Alik-Lagrange et al. (2021) note, the link between social protection and state-society relations gains new meanings in contexts of low or uneven state capacity. This is particularly relevant when thinking about CCTs, as these programs often require that states find and deliver benefits to people who live beyond the traditional "reach" of the state. This is a task which requires enormous investments in building "infrastructural power" to expand the "institutional terrain of the state" (Mann 1984; Soifer and Vom Hau 2008; Kruks-Wisner 2018), considering that the poor often live in more marginal areas in which the density of state presence has historically been weak or non-existent (Das and Poole 2004; O'Donnell 1993).

Cohesive citizenship

Cohesive citizenship refers to a sense of belonging to the social contract. This dimension of citizenship is constructed via "the state as a focus of collective identity" and can be considered in terms of the way that "the state promotes the generalized recognition of an 'us' that…should prevail over other, more differentiated identities and interests emerging from various social cleavages" (O'Donnell 2010, 54). This approach goes beyond the politics of redistribution to also fundamentally center the politics of recognition. As described by Margaret Somers (2008, 6), it is about "the right to recognition by others as a moral equal treated by the same standards and values and due the same level of respect and dignity as all other members." These issues are echoed in approaches to citizenship that bring in a cultural perspective (Rosaldo 1994; Ong 1996), those that center notions of "social standing" (Shklar 1991), as well as those that consider the role of social capital (Putnam 2000). In the context of CCTs, the way that programs are framed and delivered can carry consequences for the way that participants are perceived by both the state and by the broader society in which they live. Whether this promotes shame and stigma or respect and dignity, and whether it bridges or reinforces social divides between "the poor" and the "non-poor" is at the core of this issue.

2.3 A dynamic perspective: Understanding change and continuity

Citizenship is not a static concept, and much of what we can learn about it comes from understanding the myriad ways in which it is constantly being made, remade, or unmade. As Somers (2008, 35), argues, "citizenship is at heart a matrix of institutional relationships, technologies, political idioms, and rights-claiming practices that are always dynamic and contingent." Thus, in my framework I bring in a dynamic perspective to consider how these three different dimensions of citizenship change over time during different moments of welfare state expansion and retreat. Increasingly, recent events in Brazil such as a conservative backlash and the COVID-19 crisis give pause for thinking more deeply

about the notion of progress from a perspective of sustainability—considering not only to what extent these processes of inclusion have built a foundation that is potentially capable of reaching more universal goals in the long-term (should the right conditions arise) but also capable of weathering storms along the way. To this end, I consider the dynamic role of CCTs in promoting citizenship from a perspective of both directionality (the extent to which CCTs move citizenship in more or less universal directions) as well as durability (the extent to which CCTs promote resistance to change in one or either direction). In the context of this analysis, this requires considering the iterative links between CCT programs and different dimensions of citizenship over time, asking how past progress provides a fortified or weakened foundation upon which future progress can build.

Policy feedback effects

One way to understand how policies go on to shape different future potential pathways is the concept of "policy feedback effects" which looks at the ways in which "new policies create a new politics"—for example, by prompting changes in the existing fabric of institutions, actors, and ideas—which can then go on to shape the future of those policies in new ways (Schattschneider 1935; Pierson 1993). Of course, this is not the only approach to understanding the dynamics of policy change and continuity. However, it is a particular useful lens in this case as the question posed here is interested in the dynamic relationship between states and citizens as mediated by the evolution of social assistance policy. Its relevance is reflected in the fact that much of the literature on policy feedback effects actually arose in the context of analyzing the welfare state, and has since been used to understand the implications of various types of public policies for advancing outcomes of "democratic citizenship" (Mettler and Soss 2004). From a dynamic perspective, it can help us to understand how policies like CCTs work to create positive "self-reinforcing" and/or negative "self-undermining" dynamics in relation to the different dimensions of citizenship explored here (Jacobs and Weaver 2015). For the purposes of this

analysis, I bring together two traditions of the policy feedback effect literature: the "historical institutionalist" approach that focuses on the micro-foundations of policymaking and incremental processes of adaptation and the "punctuated equilibrium" approach that focuses on more macro-level forces and moments of short-term disruptions (see Béland, Campbell, and Weaver (2022) for a contemporary overview of the policy feedback literature and its various strands).

The historical institutionalist literature points broadly to five modes of gradual institutional change: *layering* (when new elements are added on top of old institutions), *displacement* (when old institutions are replaced by new institutions), *drift* (when the impact of old institutions changes due to new circumstances), *conversion* (when old institutions are redeployed to new purposes), and *exhaustion* (when old institutions breakdown or wither away) (Streeck and Thelen 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). In the context of CCTs, these various modes can help to think about changes in the welfare state with respect to its historically truncated model as well as its ability to adapt to new socioeconomic circumstances. A complementary way to look at institutional change comes from the punctuated equilibrium literature which focuses on more dramatic types of change that can result from exogenous shocks to the policy environment. The idea is that these shocks can act as "focusing" or "triggering" events that suddenly draw increased attention to certain policies/issues that can reshape both *policy images* (how that policy/issue is viewed in the public eye) and *policy venues* (where authoritative decisions regarding that policy/issue are made) (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). In the context of CCTs, this approach can help to think about how crises (such as an environmental disaster or a pandemic) that may require adaptations to existing CCT models to mitigate heightened short-term economic vulnerability can also play a role in shifting longer-term policy trajectories.

Policy feedback mechanisms

In the context of CCTs and the three dimensions of citizenship discussed above, a few types of policy feedback mechanisms are particularly relevant to this analysis. First, in the context of *formal citizenship,* two key relevant mechanisms are the effect of policies on interest group formation (Skocpol 1992; Pierson 1994; 1993) and "ideational effects" (Lynch 2006). As CCT programs target the poor, a disperse group with relatively limited political power, they face challenges in building a strong enough constituency to back legislative advances or to protect against legislative backslides—thus requiring the formation of broader political or social coalitions. In this context, the role of ideas also plays an important role as it can mobilize support for different orientations in the approach to social protection and poverty reduction (for example, moving toward a more rights-based approach or pursuing a universal citizen's income agenda).

Second, in the context of *substantive citizenship*, two key relevant mechanisms are the role of policy feedback effects on state capacity (Skocpol 1992) and on public administration (Moynihan and Soss 2014). As CCT programs often target populations beyond the reach of existing social protection networks and systems, they may prompt the creation of new bureaucratic capabilities (such as the capacity to find and deliver benefits to the poor in both analog and digital ways) alongside the creation of new bureaucratic logics (such as administrative categories like "poor" and "extremely poor" and the related administrative processes required to prove belonging to such categories). Moreover, as CCTs often require an organizational structure that does already exist, these programs may prompt new state agencies to be created (alongside existing organizational structures) or new state actors to be empowered (across multiple levels of governance)—which in turn may foster the creation of new bureaucratic lobbies that support the expansion, maintenance, or dismantling of the policy itself (see, for example, Derthick 1979).

Finally, in the context of *cohesive citizenship*, a key relevant mechanism is the role of "interpretive effects" or "citizenship messages," which signal to program participants how they are viewed in the eyes of the state—which can go on to shape both how they view themselves as well as how others view them (Pierson 1993; A. L. Campbell 2012). This is linked to Schneider and Ingram's (1993) concept of the "the social construction of target groups," whereby policies can shape social attitudes through the messages embedded in them about their specific target populations—which, in the context of CCTs, would mean poor populations. These messages can be either positive (promoting, for example, feelings of value or belonging[6]) or negative (promoting, for example, feelings of shame or stigma[7])—an issue which, in the context of CCTs, interacts directly with strong preexisting social, moral, and ideological attitudes about the welfare state and welfare recipients, with the salience or visibility of the program in the public discourse, and with underlying distributional tensions in society.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter developed a conceptual framework for analyzing the notion of "citizenship" in the context of targeted cash transfers from a top-down and state-centric perspective. Bringing together O'Donnell's view of the state with various anthropological and sociological writings on citizenship, it proposed a multidimensional framework for analysis—delineating formal, substantive, and cohesive citizenship as key dimensions of interest. Additionally, drawing on the literature on policy feedback effects, it also proposed a dynamic approach for exploring how policies and politics jointly evolve over time—considering both incremental and punctuated types of change. In this way, the chapter set out a framework for exploring the potential of targeted CCTs to move toward more universal goals over time (directionality) as well as their potential to withstand various pressures for retrenchment

[6] See, for example, research by Hjortskov et al (2018) and Sykes et al (2015).
[7] See, for example, research by Soss (1999) and Watson (2015).

(durability). This framework will be applied in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 as the analytical lens for this dissertation's empirical analysis, which traces the trajectory of the Bolsa Família program over three key periods in its in its institutional history (the Expansion, the Backlash, and the Crisis). The following chapter (Chapter 3) explains the research methods used to collect and analyze the data that underlie that analysis.

CHAPTER 3 | RESEARCH METHODS: STUDYING THE STATE THROUGH THE LENS OF BOLSA FAMÍLIA

"Thinking about how states are…substantiated in people's lives, and about the sociopolitical and everyday consequences of these constructions, involves moving beyond macro-level institutional analyses of 'the state' to [look] at social and bureaucratic practices and encounters…it requires conducting institutional ethnographies of specific state bureaucracies, inquiring into the micro-politics and daily practices of such institutions, and seeking to understand their relation to the public (elite or subaltern) that they serve."

- Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, The anthropology of the state: A reader (2006, 27)

As explained in Chapter 1, this thesis uses the Bolsa Família program in Brazil as an applied case study to explore the changing relationship between the welfare state and poor populations—following the conceptual approach set forth in the Chapter 2. Before delving into the empirical analysis conducted in the subsequent chapters, this chapter seeks to provide the reader with a greater understanding of the Bolsa Família program itself and the methods that I employ in this thesis to study it. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into two sections. Section 3.1 explains how the Bolsa Família program has evolved over time, how it works in practice, and who are the key state actors involved in its implementation. Section 3.2 describes this study's approach to data collection and analysis, reflects on ethical considerations, and offers caveats on issues such as generalizability and potential sources of bias.

3.1 From A to Z: The Bolsa Família program in brief

As explained in Chapter 1, there are many types of policies that have clear implications for citizenship. However, given the particular context in which conditional cash transfers emerged and took off in Latin America (marked by changing development paradigms and new approaches to social policy), they offer a unique lens case for exploring the shifting dynamics of state-citizen relations during the region's "inclusionary turn." Not only were CCTs an "archetypal" form of social policy during this period, but the Bolsa Família program in Brazil has become the region's "model" CCT program. As

previously argued, not only is Bolsa Família one of the oldest and largest programs in the region (and in the world), but it was instituted explicitly in a context of advancing goals of "citizenship" and its expansion was accompanied by sweeping investments in the welfare state's institutional architecture. In addition, given the program's global prominence, it has become an example for many countries around the world who have instituted similar programs (arguably making the lessons learned from this case more broadly relevant). Finally, in the past decade, Brazil has undergone several major moments of transition, in the wake of changing political leadership and the COVID-19 crisis. This makes Bolsa Família a uniquely interesting example to explore the dynamic links between CCTs and citizenship in the context of the contemporary period.

From Cardoso to COVID-19: Program evolution over time

Studying the program's dynamic trajectory requires first contextualizing its evolution over time. While officially instituted in 2003, the origins of Bolsa Família date back to the mid 1990s. Under the administration of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, non-contributory cash transfer programs gained prominence as an approach to tackling poverty and to building human capital. In 2003, under the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the existing set of several fragmented federal cash transfer programs were consolidated into the new Bolsa Família program. Since its creation, Bolsa Família has evolved significantly through different program adaptations and revisions over time. The first years of the program (2003-2010) were broadly a period of program consolidation—with an emphasis on developing the infrastructure and instruments necessary for its effective implementation. Notably, after President Dilma Rousseff was elected in 2010, MDS launched the *Brasil Sem Miséra* (Brazil Without Extreme Poverty) strategy which allowed for additional reforms to the program. In particular, it expanded the reach of the Bolsa Família though an "active searching" effort (*busca ativa*)

to find and register the extreme poor and to complement the Bolsa Família cash benefits with other sources of integrated support such as improved access to services and inclusion in the labor market.

Following the impeachment of Dilma and the ascension of President Michel Temer to the executive office during 2016-2018, the program remained relatively stable—although it faced an increased level of federal oversight in an effort to crack down on "fraud" within the program and new pressures stemming from the administration's agenda of fiscal austerity in a context of worsening economic conditions and rising right-wing countermovements. A similar pattern of pressure and resistance continued during 2019, in the first year of President Jair Bolsonaro's administration. However, following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the associated need for increased income support to vulnerable households, the government launched a complementary income support program ("Auxílio Emergencial") that temporarily replaced Bolsa Família benefits for many bolsista households at a higher benefit amount (as well as extended these benefits to many non-bolsista households). Following the end of the program in October 2021, the government replaced the Bolsa Família program with the Auxílio Brasil program (a broadly similar program, but with some important adjustments that are detailed in Chapter 6).

As of August 2022, Auxílio Brasil reached 20.2 million families across Brazil (approximately one quarter of the nation's population)—a massive expansion from the original 3.6 million families enrolled in Bolsa Família when program began in 2003. Figure 3.1 shows the evolution of program coverage over time, against a backdrop of changing administrations and changing policy circumstances. The figure delineates the three stylized time periods chosen for analysis in this thesis: the Expansion, the Backlash, and the Crisis. Note that the Expansion broadly covers the twenty-year period from the mid 1990s to the mid 2010s, when the program was conceived, introduced, and scaled up under the administrations of Cardoso, Lula, and Dilma. The Backlash broadly covers the five-year

period from the mid 2010s to 2020, when the program faced increased fiscal and social pressures under the more conservative and right-wing administrations of Temer and Bolsonaro. The Crisis broadly covers the two-year period from 2020 to 2022 (ending as of August 2022, when this thesis was written), when the program garnered new political attention, framing, and urgency in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Note that the first section of each of the subsequent chapters provides more detailed and extensive background on the program's evolution during each of these time periods.

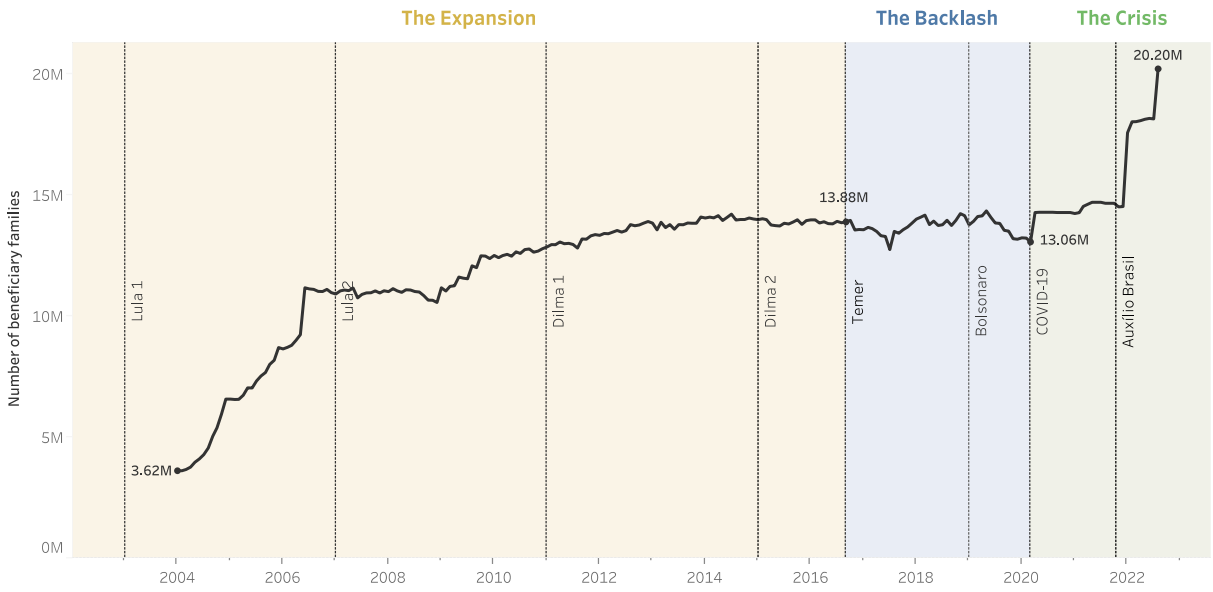


Figure 3.1 The Expansion, The Backlash, and The Crisis: Coverage of the Bolsa Família Program (January 2004 - October 2021) & Auxílio Brasil Program (November 2021-August 2022) (monthly data)
Source: Data from Ministry of Citizenship, Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management, VIS Data 3.

From Cadastro Único to cash payment: Program processes in practice

Before analyzing how the program has structured state-society relations over time, it is important to understand the different mechanisms that mitigate this relationship through everyday program implementation processes. This sub-section provides a very brief overview of the program in practical

terms—specifically outlining the processes for program registration, participant selection, conditionality monitoring, and benefit payment. While there have been multiple adjustments to the program over the years, this section describes its basic structure which has remained relatively constant. Specific changes (or lack of changes) are explored in greater detail in the subsequent empirical chapters.

*Registration in the Cadastro Único***.** In order to secure access to Bolsa Família benefits, families first need to register in the Cadastro Único. The Cadastro Único is a centralized single registry database for federal social assistance programs (granting access to about 20 programs) and is the gateway to the Bolsa Família program. The Cadastro Único relies on self-declared information about family income and household characteristics. While the Cadastro Único is operated by the Caixa Econômica Federal (Brazil's national public bank, also known as Caixa or CEF for its acronym in Portuguese), registration into the database takes place at the municipal level. This occurs in local enrollment sites, which are often located in social assistance welfare centers. While all family members within the household need to be registered in the database, one person is designated as the primary family member responsible for the account (the *Responsável Famíliar*, RF). The RF must be at least 16 years old and "preferably a woman" (based on data from 2017, over 90% of designated RFs are women (Bartholo et al 2019)). The RF is required to update their family's Cadastro Único registration at least once every two years—or sooner in the event that the family's information changes (i.e. changes in family composition, address, financial situation, school registration, etc.). The government conducts ongoing checks to verify the accuracy of families' self-reported data in the Cadastro Único by comparing it with data contained in other federal administrative records (such as social security data, salary data from private companies, death registries, and tax data) as well as by having municipal workers conduct home visits (required for at least 20% of Cadastro Único registrations).

Selection into Bolsa Família. The Ministry of Social Development selects families into the program through a computerized system that uses Cadastro Único data to calculate their monthly per capita income and determine whether it falls below the established thresholds for "poverty" and "extreme poverty." The eligibility thresholds (as well as the benefit amounts) are not indexed to inflation, but rather are adjusted periodically as seen fit—with the amounts most recently adjusted in November 2021 (with the creation of Auxílio Brasil) to a poverty threshold of R$ 210 and an extreme poverty threshold of R$ 105.[8] The household is then typically notified of their acceptance into the program via letter and receive their Bolsa Família card in the mail (though there are alternative options for those who are unable to receive mail, such as people living in a situation of homelessness). There is also a mobile application for the program through which bolsistas can enter their social identification number (NIS) and receive information on their benefit status, benefit amount, and upcoming payment schedule.

Conditionality monitoring. In order to continue receiving the monthly benefit, families need to comply with basic education and health conditionalities, as detailed in Table 3.1. The monitoring of these conditionalities is undertaken by local social workers in collaboration with local schools and health clinics. The first time a family fails to comply with the conditionalities, they receive a notification on the bottom of their payment receipt informing them of the situation (with no consequences for their benefit). The second time a family fails to comply, their benefit is blocked for 30 days. The third and fourth time a family fails to comply, their benefit is suspended for 60 days. It is not until the fifth time that a family has their benefit canceled.

[8] According to the exchange rate as of August 30, 2022 this is roughly equivalent to a monthly per capita income of less than £35.68 (poverty) or less than £17.84 (extreme poverty).

Table 3.1 Conditionality requirements of the Bolsa Família Program

Children's health	Children under 7 years old must have up-to-date vaccinations. All children must attend health check-ups to be weighed, measured, and examined (in compliance with the calendar from the Ministry of Health).
Children's education	Children ages 6-17 must be enrolled in school. Children ages 6-15 must attend school at least 85% of the time and adolescents ages 16-17 must attend school at least 75% of the time. The government must be informed if children change schools.
Pregnant and lactating mothers' health	Pregnant and lactating mothers must attend pre-natal and post-natal check-ups (in compliance with the calendar from the Ministry of Health) and participate in educational activities on breast feeding and healthy nutrition.

Source: Author based on official documents from MDS.

*Payment of benefits***.** Bolsa Família payments are made on a monthly basis—the day of which depends on the last digit of the individual's social identification number. A payment calendar is released annually by MDS to notify bolsistas of these dates. The payments can be withdrawn using the Bolsa Família card at Caixa bank offices, through local banking correspondents, or in *lotéricas* (local lottery houses that provide Caixa services). In general, the amount of money that a family receives varies depending on the family's per capita income and their household composition. For example, families who fall below the extreme poverty line are eligible for a basic benefit amount, and families who fall below either the poverty line or the extreme poverty line are eligible for different types of variable benefits depending on the number and age of their children or the presence of pregnant or lactating women within the household. This results in a large "menu" of possible benefit combinations, adding up to different total benefit amounts. However, recently the government has introduced a "top-up" system to complement benefit amounts that fall below an established floor—while the government originally set a minimum amount of R$ 400 per family, this has now been temporarily raised to R$ 600 (an issue discussed at greater length in Chapter 6).

From MDS to CRAS: Program governance across multiple levels

Studying "the state" behind the Bolsa Família program requires first understanding the different state actors and institutions involved in delivering the program and locating them within Brazil's broader system of federalist governance. While Bolsa Família is designed and managed at the federal level, it's implementation and execution take place at the sub-national level in partnership with state, municipal, and local-level actors. Note that as a result of this structure, an important dualism emerges between "Brasília" and the various sub-national entities involved in the program. As the analysis in the coming chapters will highlight, at different moments in time this tension interacts with structural conditions to promote different dynamics such as resistance, progress, or resilience. This section takes the reader on a short whistlestop tour of the program's multi-level governance model.

Federal-level. At the federal level, the institution responsible for the program is the Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Eradication (MDS). Note that the ministry's name was changed to the Ministry of Citizenship in January 2019. Therefore, in this thesis I refer to it as MDS prior to this time and as the Ministry of Citizenship after this time. Historically, given the high-profile nature of the program, the minister of this institution has been directly involved in the program from the perspective of lending the necessary political support to drive forward relevant program changes. Within this Ministry, the National Secretariat for Citizen's Income (SENARC) is the primary technical team responsible for the program at the federal level—overseeing its management in different areas such as program operations, benefits, and conditionalities. SENARC also manages the federal level cooperation with other federal program partners such as the Ministries of Education and Health and with Caixa. Also housed within this Ministry is the Secretariat for Evaluation and Information Management (SAGI) which has historically worked closely with the SENARC team in terms of program research and evaluation.

State-level. At the state-level, the government's primary responsibility is to provide coordination and capacity-building support to those municipalities located within their state. This typically materializes through the work of a state coordinator working within the relevant state secretariat for social development. While the municipalities are the ones responsible for actually implementing the program, the state works to support this implementation indirectly through activities such as conducting training on Bolsa Família and Cadastro Único management as well as promoting inter-sectoral cooperation with the education and health sectors and coordinating with Caixa. Note that the state plays a larger role in supporting smaller municipalities—as the nation's major cities have their own direct relationship with the federal government in terms of training and technical support, given the much larger scale of their operations.

Municipal-level. At the municipal-level, the government is responsible for actually implementing the program on the ground, following the federally devised guidelines. It is through this decentralized structure that the program has been able to reach all of Brazil's 5,570 municipalities—even from the very beginning when there was limited infrastructure in place. At the municipal level, the government is responsible for managing program and Cadastro Único operations, for enrolling families in the Cadastro Único, for monitoring conditionalities in collaboration with municipal education and health networks, and for conducting outreach to bolsista families in collaboration with the municipal social assistance network. This typically materializes through the work of a unit housed within the social assistance secretariat of the municipal government—though in some cases it is managed as a separate unit outside of the social assistance secretariat. It is important to note that given the extreme heterogeneity in the characteristics of Brazil's 5,570 municipalities (such as differences in geography, population, income, size, institutional architecture, etc.), the implementation dynamics of the program can vary dramatically depending on the local context. As described by one informant:

> The difference between Brazilian municipalities is very stark. If you go to rural areas, there are major challenges in terms things like mobility to reach target populations or internet connectivity. If you to a metropolis, the primary challenge is to how to deal with the huge volume of the demand—given the sheer size of the population and the limited resources in the sector. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Local-level. In larger municipalities such as major cities, there is a distinction between the municipal-level actors (responsible for managing program operations across the entire municipality) and the local-level actors (responsible for executing the program in specific areas within the municipality). In many municipalities, it is the Social Assistance Refence Centers (CRAS) who serve as the primary local-level actor—managing family enrollment, conditionality monitoring, and outreach. Thus, it is the program coordinators, Cadastro Único interviewers, psychologists, and social workers in these centers who are the primary "faces of the state" with whom bolsistas and potential bolsistas interact ("street-level bureaucrats" in the language of Lipsky (1980)). Importantly, CRAS centers are not Bolsa Família-specific. Rather, they exist as part of the broader social assistance network, offering an overarching service called the Program for Integrated Support to Families (*Serviço de Proteção e Atendimento Integral à Família*, PAIF). As one CRAS worker explained it:

> PAIF is the primary role of CRAS centers and is the basic social protection that the social assistance system offers within a territory. It is a service, even though the name starts with "Program." It is necessary that all CRAS centers offer PAIF. PAIF takes place through social work with families—that is to say, the support services from our social assistance workers and psychologists—and if necessary, to direct them to other services or help them secure certain benefits. This includes access to benefits such as Bolsa Família. (Interview CRAS 2018)

Note that the distinction between municipal- and local-level actors is more relevant for larger municipalities, as in smaller municipalities these actors may be the same (or may even be a single individual actor).

3.2 A qualitative approach: Tracing changes in state-society relations over time

As the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter alludes to, studying how the state "makes" citizens requires looking more deeply at the "micro-politics and daily practices" of a specific state bureaucracy

and "seeking to understand their relation to the public…that they serve" (Sharma and Gupta 2006, 27). Following this logic, the analytical approach undertaken in this thesis zeroes in on the Bolsa Família bureaucracy and takes a dynamic look at how its relationship with the public it serves (poor populations) manifests across the different dimensions of the citizenship set out in the previous chapter (and how this relationship has changed over time as it interacts with different endogenous and exogenous factors). Accordingly, this project relies on the use of qualitative research methods, as they are best suited for gaining insights into changes in relationships and processes (Denzin and Lincoln 2013). Unlike the quantitative approach taken in much of the existing cash transfer evaluation literature, this project is not interested in measuring *how much* Bolsa Família has contributed to impacting an outcome (in this case, citizenship), but rather in tracing *how* it has contributed to shaping that outcome. Thus the approach taken here is aligned with the guidance proposed by Mettler and Soss (2004, 65) which suggests that "interpretive analyses based on historical and field research" should be added to existing positivist strategies when studying policy feedback effects—as

> this work might complement [existing] strategies…by tracing the processes of interaction and meaning making that account for causal regularities observed in positivist analyses…[or by illuminating] entirely different aspects of policy feedback, such as the interplay of policy designs, policy discourses, and understandings of citizenship; the ways cultural values and discourses shape the interpretation of program experiences; the ways policy classifications reinforce or subvert race and gender formations or other social groupings; and so on.

Note, as previously mentioned in the introduction, this project is an extension of the research that I conducted for my MPhil thesis. As my fieldwork for that project ended in 2018, just prior to the election of Bolsonaro, this version extends that project over time—exploring the implications of the Backlash period in much greater depth and considering new implications in the context of the more recent COVID-19 crisis.

Data collection and analysis

This study primarily draws on data from 42 formal semi-structured interviews (complemented by additional informal interviews, both individual and group-based) that I conducted with strategically placed state actors across the program's institutional hierarchy. This includes both former and current state actors involved in the program's design and implementation. While I interviewed some informants only once, I interviewed other informants multiple times either to follow up on points raised in previous discussions or to revisit former conversations in the light of new circumstances (for example, following the election of Bolsonaro or the onset of the COVID-19 crisis). These interviews were conducted during two rounds of fieldwork. I completed the first round of fieldwork for my MPhil research during July 2018 - September 2018 and I completed the second round of fieldwork for the DPhil extension of that research during February 2020 - January 2022. Note that this second round of fieldwork was far more limited in scope as it was disrupted by the pandemic in mid-March 2020 and required ongoing adaptations.[9] Following just three weeks of in-person fieldwork, I had to pause my data collection for my own safety and the safety of my participants. After returning to Oxford, I continued to conduct interviews remotely as feasible. However, feasibility was vastly limited by the reality that research activities at some levels of government were suspended for an extended period of time due to the state of emergency as well as the reality that many of my informants were

[9] Please note that the research approach pursued in this thesis very much reflects a "Plan B" devised in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As discussed briefly in the Introduction, this project's original research premise focused on expanding my MPhil project by taking a more cross-sectoral approach rather than a cross-temporal one. In its original form, I sought to explore the ways in which Bolsa Família fostered the creation of more inclusive forms of state capacity within integrated sectors such as education, health, and public banking—with a focus on how targeting can be used as an instrument for universalism (as well as the limitations and constraints in doing so). However, in the wake of the pandemic—with the support and guidance of my advisor, alongside a high degree of uncertainty for when the pandemic would end—I decided to adapt my research plan. Understanding that building relationships with informants in new sectors would be very difficult remotely (particularly given the need to respect informants' time given their role in responding to the pandemic on the ground), I decided to continue focusing on the social assistance sector where I had already built a network of contacts and would be able to draw more extensively on the data collected during my MPhil fieldwork and complement it as needed with select remote interviews, alongside a multitude of other data sources such as government documents, legislation, official statements, social media, and news articles. Given that the changes to the program in the context of the Bolsonaro administration and the COVID-19 crisis were in fact highly relevant to the substantive question that I looked at in my MPhil, I decided to extend its focus across time, asking how these contemporary "shocks" reshaped the dynamics I had previously explored.

busy coordinating and delivering emergency pandemic income support policies during this time (and thus I felt it would be unethical to ask for their time to participate in this study until the period of emergency had subsided).

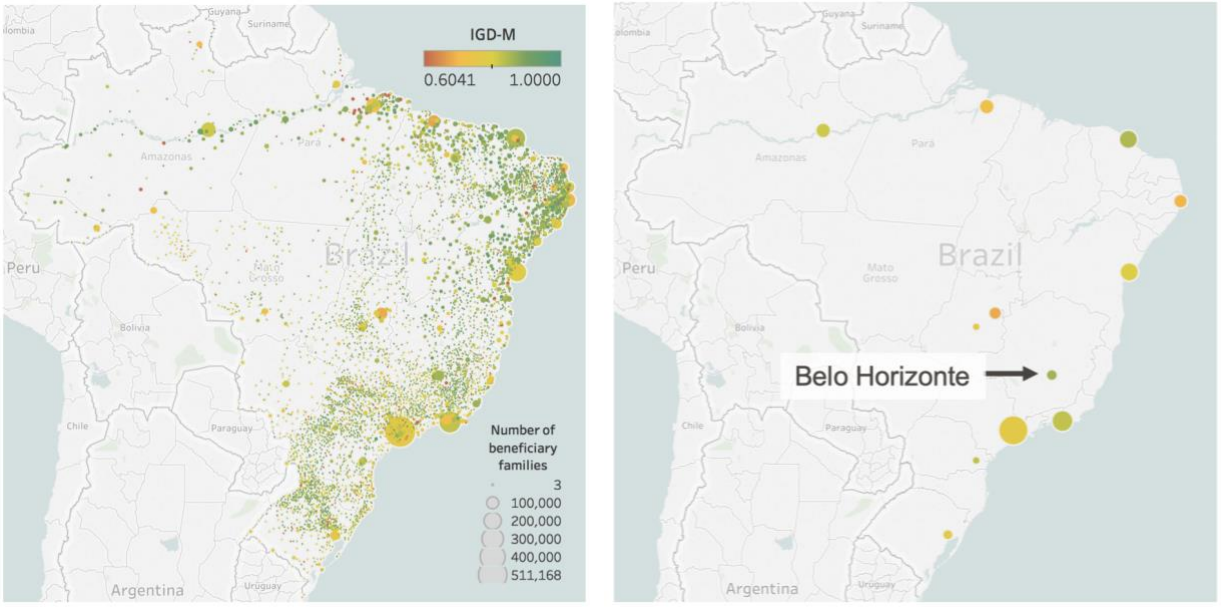
During my fieldwork, I interviewed state actors across four institutional levels (federal, state, municipal, and local), reflecting Bolsa Família's multi-level governance structure discussed above. I conducted fieldwork in Brasília to gain insights at the federal level, in Minas Gerais to gain insights at the state-level, and in Belo Horizonte to gain insights at the municipal and local levels. Of course, this means that the empirical results are limited to the contexts in which I was able to gather data. However, as there are 26 states and 5,570 municipalities in Brazil, it was not practically feasible within the constraints of this study to comprehensively explore sub-national dynamics. The rationale for selecting the specific state, municipal, and local sites that I did is explained below.

At the *state-level*, Minas Gerais is a compelling site as it has often been described as a "Brazil within Brazil" due to the high degree of heterogeneity in living standards that characterize its 853 municipalities with a clear north/south divide—a pattern which reflects the nation's larger pattern of spatial inequality (Elbers, Lanjouw, and Leite 2008). As state-level program actors are responsible for coordinating with all the municipalities within their state, speaking with the state-level coordinators in Minas Gerais provides an opportunity to gain insights into program dynamics across a broad range of municipal settings. At the *municipal-level*, Belo Horizonte is a compelling site as it offers an opportunity to explore how these dynamics materialize in a major city (while the incidence of poverty tends to be higher in rural areas, the greatest absolute number of the poor are increasingly concentrated in the large urban centers of Brazil) and in a "successful" implementation setting (based on data from the Municipal Decentralized Management Index (*Indice de Gestão Descentralizada do Município*, IGD-M) at

the time of the first round of fieldwork, Belo Horizonte was among the top metropolitan performers in terms of program implementation) (see Figure 3.2). As described by one state-level actor:

> The metropoles are an entirely different world from the small municipalities [in Minas Gerais]. They have a different level of institutionalization. In particular, Belo Horizonte is a model for social assistance policies. In the metropoles things work very well. They don't need as much technical support or guidance from the state. But the smaller municipalities need our help a lot, even to answer very small questions—basic things about the program. For example, who do I need to register? This still happens today, even after twenty years of the program. (Interview SEDESE 2020)

In this way, Belo Horizonte can be thought of as an "upper bound" or a "best case scenario" metropolitan case study.



a. All 5,570 municipalities b. 12 Metropoles

Figure 3.2 The Bolsa Família Program: Quality of program implementation (color) and number of program recipients (size) by municipality
Source: Data from MDS 2018.

At the *local-level*, the implementation of Bolsa Família within Belo Horizonte is executed by two types of social assistance centers: Regional centers and CRAS centers. While regional centers provide services at the level of the city's major administrative regions, CRAS centers provide services at the level of a local territory (with a coverage area of approximately 5,000 families). There are 9 regional centers (1 in each administrative region) and 34 CRAS centers (located in "high vulnerability"

territories, 5 of which offered Cadastro Único services at the time of the study) in Belo Horizonte. Each of these regions and territories has a very different profile—though bolsistas are scattered across all of them (Figure 3.3). From a social assistance perspective, the regions on the outskirts of the city are primarily characterized by densely populated poor and working-class neighborhoods which are intermixed with a large number of vilas and *favelas* (informal marginalized neighborhoods typically built on steep hills) and urban land "occupations" (squatter settlements typically characterized by precarious housing and a lack of public services including roads, electricity, etc.). The more central regions of the city are primarily characterized by upper-middle class neighborhoods intermixed with *aglomerados* (large complexes of *vilas* and *favelas*), a high concentration of people living in situations of homelessness, and a high volume of drug users (Interview GTREC 2018). The specific CRAS and Regional centers included in this study were chosen in collaboration with the municipal government and offer compelling insights as they cover a broad range of "lived territories"[10] across the city (see Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5 for a map of the centers).

[10] The notion of a "lived territory" (*território de vivência)* comes from Dirce Koga (2015) (building on the writings of Brazilian geographer Milton Santos) and emphasizes the fundamental tensions between territoriality, citizenship, and the management of social assistance policy in Brazilian cities marked by vast socio-cultural diversity and social inequality.

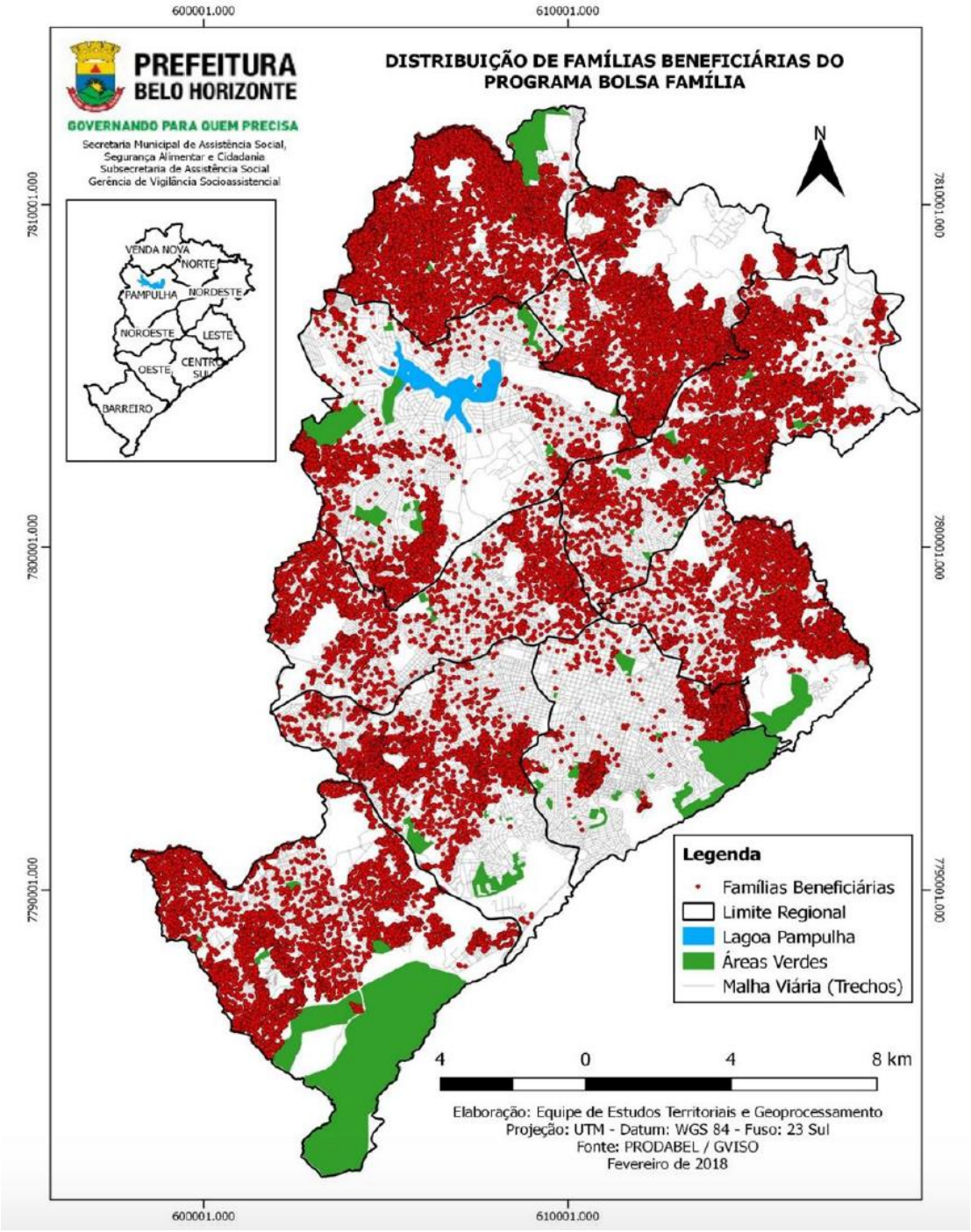


Figure 3.3 Map of Bolsa Família recipient families in Belo Horizonte
Source: Map 5 from Prefeitura Municipal de Belo Horizonte (2018).
Note: Beneficiary families denoted by red dots.



Figure 3.4 Map of Regional centers in Belo Horizonte
Source: Map base adapted from Prefeitura Municipal de Belo Horizonte (2018). Author's photo.
Note: All 9 regional centers and their corresponding administrative regions are shown on the map. The 1 regional center included in the study is denoted with a star and its coverage area in grey shading. The 8 regional centers not included in the study are denoted by yellow dots.

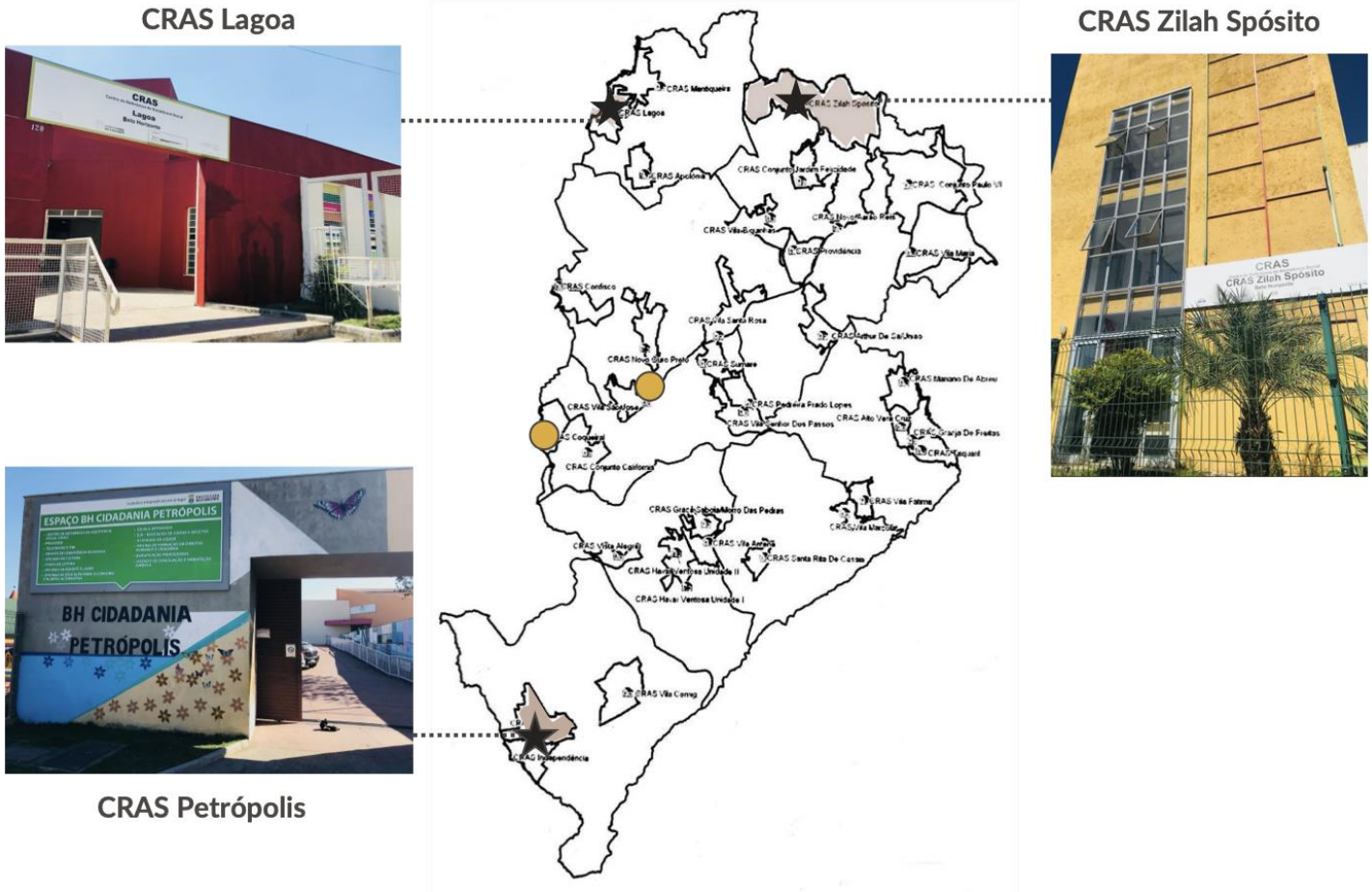


Figure 3.5 Map of CRAS centers in Belo Horizonte
Source: Map base adapted from Prefeitura Municipal de Belo Horizonte (2018). Author's photos.
Note: All 34 CRAS centers and their coverage areas are shown on the map. The 5 centers currently offering Cadastro Único services are denoted as follows: the 3 centers included in the study are denoted by stars and their coverage areas in grey shading; the 2 centers not included in the study are denoted by yellow dots.

While the majority of interviews were with actors within the social assistance sector (see Table 3.2 for an overview), they were complemented by interviews and conversations with relevant actors in other sectors associated with the program (i.e. Education, Health, Caixa) as well as relevant political actors and civil society actors involved in associated debates on income support policies. Primary key informants were identified based on their current or historical role in relation to the Bolsa Família program. I identified relevant participants either directly (given their public role in the program) or indirectly via mutual connections (often given their shared work history in the program). In many cases, this took place through a "snowball sampling" approach in which one informant would connect me to another informant. For the first round of fieldwork, additional interviews were pursued until I reached a degree of "saturation" within institutional levels—meaning that at a given institutional level (federal, state, municipal, or local) either all relevant implementation actors were interviewed or a sufficient number of informants were interviewed such that "no new themes were emerging" (Saunders et al. 2018). For the second round of fieldwork, additional interviews were pursued as feasible and where necessary to fill data gaps. See the "List of Interviews" at the end of this thesis for a full list of informants, divided by institutional level.

Table 3.2 Key informants from the social assistance sector by institutional level

Federal level: Brazil	• *Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Eradication (MDS)* Key informants include multiple former Ministers of Social Development and other high-level bureaucrats involved in the design, administration, and evaluation of the program • *National Secretariat for Citizen's Income (SENARC) within MDS* Key informants include former and current bureaucrats including chief coordinators of benefits, conditionalities, Cadastro Único, and auditing operations
State level: Minas Gerais	• *State Secretariat for Labor and Social Development (SEDESE)* Key informants include former and current bureaucrats who oversee the state's support to municipalities for the implementation Bolsa Família and Cadastro Único

Municipal level: Belo Horizonte	• *Municipal Secretariat for Social Assistance, Food Security, and Citizenship (SMASAC)* Key informants include the municipal Secretary for Social Assistance • *Central Management for Income Transfer Programs and the Cadastro Único (GTREC) within SMASAC* Key informants include former and current bureaucrats responsible for the municipal management of Bolsa Família benefits operations, social assistance monitoring, and Cadastro Único operations • *Municipal Council for Social Assistance (CMAS)* Key informants include technical policy analysts working on issues related to Bolsa Família
Local level: Administrative regions and neighborhoods	• *Regional welfare centers* Key informants include former and current Regional social assistance directors and Cadastro Único managers • *Social Assistance Welfare Centers (CRAS)* Key informants include former and current CRAS coordinators, social assistance workers, and Cadastro Único managers

While I prepared a schedule of interview questions for each meeting, I began all interviews in an open-ended manner to allow participants to describe their experiences in their own words—without the imposed constraints of pre-conceived questions (Spradley 1979). This allowed discussion on topics that the informant felt were the most important and/or those for which they felt they had the most expertise. In general, interviewees covered topics such as the day-to-day operations of Bolsa Família within their relevant institution, integration of the program with other state services and benefits, ongoing challenges they face, and the motivations behind specific program design or implementation decisions. Moreover, as many informants have been working with the program for an extended period of time (in most cases, at least ten years), they discussed how the program has changed over time within their relevant context. Finally, all informants discussed what changes they would like to see made in the program as well as their predictions or concerns regarding how they expect the program will likely change in the future. Note that I conducted all interviews in Portuguese, recorded them using a password-protected voice recorder, transcribed them into Portuguese, and translated the relevant quotations into English for use in this thesis.

In addition to recording the interviews, I took detailed notes during all interviews and site visits in a field journal. To the extent feasible, I digitally transcribed the interviews and fieldnotes, coded the

content thematically, and then built an Excel database with the coded excerpts. The process of coding included multiple levels of tagging including (i) temporal (distinguishing which of the three time periods of analysis the data pertained to); (ii) conceptual (distinguishing which of the three categories of citizenship the data pertained to) and (iii) thematic (identifying the central issues that surfaced from the data). In this way, I followed a "hybrid approach" of inductive and deductive thematic analysis, in which both the theoretical framework and the raw-data iteratively shaped each other to identify emerging patterns and key themes (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). Note that the analysis for the Expansion and the Backlash periods draws primarily on the semi-structured interviews (with other data sources playing a more complementary role), whereas the analysis for the Crisis period draws primarily on other data sources (with interviews playing a more complementary role—given the more limited scope to systematically collect interviews during this period). Other data sources used throughout the analysis include informal conversations with key actors, participant observation at key sites of program implementation such as CRAS and Regional centers, government documents such as internal guidance materials or promotional materials targeted to families, various types of legal statutes related to the program such as laws and other regulatory norms, newspaper and television archives of media reports, social media posts such as tweets from high-level actors or Facebook discussions among bolsistas in Bolsa Família user groups, and public government databases. These data sources were used both to complement and to triangulate the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews.

Ethical considerations

Prior to beginning fieldwork, I received ethics approval from the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee (reference number for the first round of fieldwork: CUREC 1A/ODID C1a 18-040; reference number for the second round of fieldwork: CUREC 1A/ODID

C1a 20-001). Within the municipality of Belo Horizonte, local research clearance was also applied for and granted by the municipal Sub-Secretariat for Social Assistance for the first round of first fieldwork. In the context of this thesis, approaching the work ethically required taking seriously both practical and theoretical concerns as explained below. On a practical level, while I did not anticipate any direct risks or harm to participants in this study, I still took appropriate precautions surrounding issues of safety, consent, burdens, and confidentiality:

In regard to *safety*, I worked to ensure that those participating in my research study felt safe in the interview setting by carefully selecting neutral interview locations. In person interviews with current bureaucrats took place within their respective administrative offices (SENARC, SEDESE, SMASAC, GTREC, CMAS, Regional, or CRAS) and those with former bureaucrats took place in their current place of work (political offices, think tanks, and universities). Remote interviews took place via videoconference or phone call.

In terms of *consent*, prior to each interview, I explained the objectives of the study to the informant and gained explicit consent for their participation either orally (in the case of remote interviews) or in written form (in the case of in person interviews). I reminded them that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time if they no longer wished to participate for any reason.

In regard to *burdens*, I tried to ensure that the length and timing of interviews was respectful of the fact that participants' time is very valuable and may otherwise be needed for other responsibilities. Each interview typically lasted around one hour (with variability between thirty minutes and two hours). Ultimately, the length of each interview was dictated by the participant's schedule and their interest in

continuing the conversation. In multiple cases, informants explicitly stated that they were happy to give their time to participate, as they viewed contributing to research as part of their "duty" as state actors. However, as previously mentioned this grew more complicated in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, as many of my potential informants were at the forefront of delivering emergency income support programs and thus otherwise occupied with far more pressing duties. For this reason, interviews during the Crisis period are more limited and those that did occur took place closer to the end of 2021 (following the end of the emergency income support program).

Finally, in regard to *confidentiality*, I protected the privacy of individual informants by replacing individual names with the acronyms of their administrative units (with the exception and consent of a few higher-level political actors). The use of anonymization is particularly important in Brazil's contemporary context where some bureaucrats have faced retaliation for "doing their job" in cases where that that implied opposition to the administration's political aims (University of Oxford Brazilian Studies Conference 2021, Panel 2).

On a more theoretical level, researching a community that is not my own presents ethical issues in terms of how participants' voices are listened to, recorded, and represented. My previous time living and researching in Brazil helped me to navigate some of these challenges including language barriers and local customs/expectations. However, as an external researcher asking government employees to speak about their work, I was conscious that it could potentially create an uncomfortable power dynamic for those involved—particularly given that some of my fieldwork took place during a moment of heightened political polarization and uncertainty. As Bolsa Família remains a very controversial program among a sizable share of the public, I took great care in approaching all of my interactions with the utmost respect for the role that different actors play in delivering this program

and with empathy for the types of challenges that my informants were facing on a daily basis. Moreover, I made sure to gather all the necessary approval documents and go through any relevant local government research authorization processes to make sure that informants knew that their participation (if they decided to participate) was sanctioned by their institution.

Finally, while my approach in this thesis intentionally takes a top-down perspective of citizenship (focusing on the state's relationship with bolsistas), it is important to note the absence of a complementary bottom-up perspective (focusing on bolsistas' relationship with the state). While in my original research design, I had considering integrating both state and bolsista perspectives, I decided to revise this strategy following an initial set of interviews with some bolsistas during my first round of fieldwork. While the bolsistas I spoke with consented to participate—I noted an underlying hesitation. Despite being introduced through mutual acquaintances, there seemed to be a lingering concern that I could be "from the government" and might use the information that they shared with me in order to cut their benefits. As one bolsista noted, I did indeed bear a suspicious resemblance to the social workers who had previously visited her home—asking questions and carrying my notebook and pen. Many families depend on this transfer for their daily survival, and the cost of wrongly trusting a stranger is high. As discussed in greater length in Chapter 4, this type of fear was also noted in the words of several local state actors when reflecting on their interaction with bolsistas during home visits. Unfortunately, I did not have sufficient time to build a deeper degree of trust with this community during my first round of fieldwork (due to the time constraints involved in the MPhil timeline) and was unable to try again during my second round of field work (due to COVID-19 constraints). In this context, I decided that it would be unethical to put bolsistas in this position and thus subsequently chose to pursue only institutional interviews with government workers, who would likely feel less pressure to speak with me and who would likely feel more comfortable speaking openly.

In order to incorporate a complementary bottom-up perspective where relevant in the analysis, I draw on existing literature as well as on other data sources such as media interviews or social media discussions that center bolsista voices and experiences.

Generalizability and bias

It is important to note that the aim of this study is not to generate results that are considered "generalizable." The approach taken here does not seek to paint a representative picture of Bolsa Família across Brazil (or even within Belo Horizonte), but rather to provide a deeper look into how the mechanisms and processes of interest materialize within the specific settings chosen. However, while the results cannot be considered generalizable in a statistical sense, this does not mean that the study's analytical insights are irrelevant to other settings. In qualitative case studies, the concept of generalizability is arguably "best thought of as a matter of the 'fit' between the situation studied and others to which one might be interested in applying the concepts and conclusions of that study" (Schofield 2009, 20). Thus, depending on the similarity of the new context, certain analytical insights drawn from this study may indeed be "transferrable" to a degree. Reflections on the types of broader lessons we can take from this study (alongside their limitations) will be revisited in the thesis's concluding Chapter 7.

In order to better understand what we can and cannot learn from this analysis, it is important to also reflect on potential sources bias in the data that I collected. Many of the informants that I interviewed are highly educated bureaucrats with normative views about the program—recruited specifically for their expertise and pro-social motivation in this area. Of course, this shapes their perspectives and perceptions on the program in unavoidable ways. I took measures to limit potential bias by interviewing actors from both early in the program as well as late in the program, actors who are

currently in government as well as those who no longer work there, political actors as well as technocrats, and actors across institutional levels (federal, state, municipal, local). The largest discrepancies between testimonials tended to be between local actors and federal actors (reflecting the previously mentioned "dualism" between "Brasilia" and elsewhere). When these discrepancies occurred, I directly addressed them with interviewees by bringing up the other informant's viewpoint in order to solicit their reaction and underlying reasoning. The final results reflect a critical analysis of all the data collected—including both interviews and other data sources used for triangulation (including my own observations, secondary literature, and other sources of data such as media reports).

It is also important to note the political timing of this study and how it may have influenced the nature of the data that I collected. During the first round of fieldwork undertaken for this project, Brazil was preparing for its highly polarized 2018 presidential election. While a large contingency of the country continued to support the leftist Worker's Party (*Partido de Trabalhadores*, PT), there was also a growing "anti-PT" sentiment. This followed in the wake of the controversial impeachment of former president Dilma (PT) and arrest of former president Lula (PT). Given the strong associations of the PT with Bolsa Família, the anti-PT sentiment often spilled over into anti-Bolsa Família sentiment. While the election results were not known at the time of the interviews, questions about the political stability of the program across changes in government were looming large in the minds of many key informants. During the second round of fieldwork undertaken for this project, the government was undergoing a period of transition during which Bolsa Família was being replaced by Auxílio Brasil. Auxílio Brasil had already begun, but the details of the legislation were still being debated by Congress. Thus, this was another period of uncertainty in which the future of the program was at stake in a very public way. While this may have influenced the choice of words that people used or their willingness to participate (in many cases, it appeared that a perception of the program as being "under threat" actually

induced more people to wish to participate)—I have no reason to believe that it systematically biased the content of their statements as the interviews were highly technical in nature and often focused on historical changes and structural challenges.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the institutional structure behind the Bolsa Família program alongside a description of the qualitative approach that I take to study it. The results of this qualitative data analysis are discussed in the following three chapters which trace the evolution of the different dimensions of citizenship proposed in the conceptual framework chapter (formal, substantive, and cohesive) over the three major time periods of interests (the Expansion, the Backlash and the Crisis). These empirical chapters summarize the key insights derived from the data related to changing relationship of the welfare state with poor populations—highlighting a myriad of voices across time and across levels of government. They discuss the fundamental challenge of addressing a legacy of historical exclusion through the monthly provision of cash benefits and interrogate the ways in which the program has (and has not) restructured the politics of belonging in Brazil.

CHAPTER 4 | THE EXPANSION

"The most important thing about Bolsa Família is not the transfer of money. It is the way the state organized itself to bring services to a population that did not have access to these services before."

-Interview SENARC 2018

This is the first of a series of three chapters that present extended empirical snapshots tracing the trajectory of Bolsa Família and citizenship over time. As the first in the chronological trilogy, this chapter focuses on roughly the first two decades of the program's history. This was an expansionary period, in which Bolsa Família (alongside other major social programs and policies) was introduced and scaled up. This took place within a broader context of welfare state building introduced in the wake of Brazil's 1988 return to democratic politics. In contrast to an earlier moment of welfare state building during the late 1930s and 1940s in which social protection benefits were extended to workers in the formal sector, this new moment of expansion saw a much broader-based incorporation of poor families and individuals. Moreover, this new approach was distinctly informed by a rights-based perspective, reflecting an important conceptual break from historical approaches in which benefits were viewed from a charity-based perspective and often distributed within patronage-based networks. Ultimately, as Hunter (2014) has argued, this shift in social policy orientation carries with it important implications for how the Brazilian state "makes citizens," given the shift in the underlying principles upon which both the rhetoric and reality of citizens' incorporation was premised.

Applying the disaggregated view of citizenship proposed in the Conceptual Framework chapter, this chapter traces how the foundations of formal, substantive, and cohesive citizenship were formed in the context of Bolsa Família during this expansionary period. It covers a period of approximately two decades beginning in the mid 1990s (when municipal governments began experimenting with non-contributory cash transfer programs) and ending in in the mid 2010s (prior to onset of the social and

political backlash that is focus of the next chapter). Note that the latter part of this period (following the formal creation of Bolsa Família) corresponds to the period shaded in grey in Figure 4.1. During the Expansion period, under the administrations of Presidents Cardoso, Lula, and Dilma, cash transfer programs took off in the country. Municipal-level experiments were transformed into national-level policies that ultimately reached approximately one-quarter of the Brazilian population. This chapter delves into Bolsa Família's evolving design and implementation during this time to explore how the parallel processes of program expansion and welfare state building combined to establish a new basis for the relationship between the state and the poor. It engages with the extensive bodies of literature studying Bolsa Família and the broader inclusionary turn in democratic politics in Latin America during this period and provides an analytical point of departure for the more contemporary shifts in state-society relations explored in the subsequent Backlash and Crisis chapters.

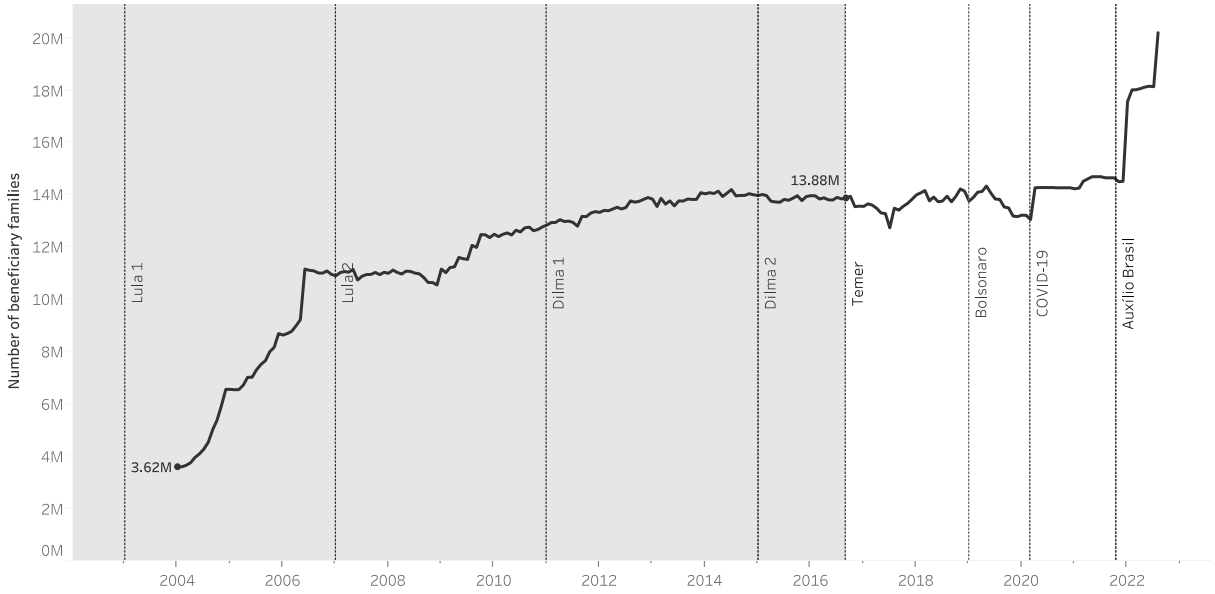


Figure 4.1 "The Expansion" period in context: Coverage of the Bolsa Família Program (January 2004 - October 2021) & Auxílio Brasil Program (November 2021-August 2022) (monthly data)
Source: Data from Ministry of Citizenship, Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management, VIS Data 3.
Note: The Expansion period (January 2004 – September 2016) is shaded in grey

Section 4.1 provides background for the rest of the chapter, discussing the early experimentation with cash transfers under the administration of Cardoso (the programs that would become Bolsa Família), the creation and consolidation of Bolsa Família under the two-term administration of Lula, and the refinement of the program under the first administration of Dilma. It contextualizes the emergence of the program within Brazil's shifting approach to social policy and poverty reduction and shows how sustained political and bureaucratic investment in the program over time transformed it into the more robust and integrated state policy that it became.

Section 4.2 looks at the implications of this in the context of *formal citizenship* (corresponding to "the state as law")—exploring the legal framing and consolidation of the program during this period. It argues that the rights-based rhetoric and the rules-based architecture underpinning the Bolsa Família program critically distinguished it from historical approaches to social assistance. However, despite the program's high degree of state institutionalization, its fragile political footing and inherited social legacies ultimately limited the program's potential to achieve some of its loftier rights-based aspirations.

Section 4.3 looks at implications in the context of *substantive citizenship* (corresponding to "the state as a set of bureaucracies")—exploring the feedback effects of the program on the state itself. It argues that the need to implement Bolsa Família required that the state also invest in building a new type of bureaucratic capacity to reach poor and marginalized communities—what I refer to as "inclusive state capacity." It discusses the importance of this new type of state-building for both the social assistance sector as well as other sectors linked to Bolsa Família through its conditionalities (such as education and health) but notes how processes of pro-poor universalization during this time focused primarily on expanding access rather than increasing benefit generosity or improving service quality.

Section 4.4 looks at implications in the context of *cohesive citizenship* (corresponding to "the state as a focus of collective identity")—exploring the broader implications of the program for bridging the social distance between poor and non-poor populations. It argues that the targeting of the program to poor families and individuals acted as a double-edged sword for their social inclusion. While the program was highly successful in identifying and transferring resources to millions of the lowest-income families in Brazil, it operated within an administrative and social logic which reinforced the identity of bolsistas as "poor families" rather than "equal citizens."

Section 4.5 concludes—arguing that the Expansion period can be understood as a period of inclusion without equity. It reflects a major advance in expanding the reach of the welfare state to places where it had previously been absent and in bringing benefits and services to populations that had previously been unserved or underserved. However, in many ways this was the creation of a parallel state for the poor rather than the incorporation of the poor into a more universal system. While a new foundation for citizenship was built during this period, it was a foundation that was ultimately characterized by underlying cracks and unresolved discontinuities. While the program was rights-based, it was never guaranteed as a right; while it expanded access, it was not matched by generosity or quality; while it promoted inclusion, it failed to secure belonging. These types of fault lines in the state's offer of incorporation to citizens left it particularly vulnerable to retrenchment pressures, such as those that will be explored in the subsequent chapter.

4.1 The creation and scale up of Bolsa Família: Cardoso, Lula, and Dilma

The emergence of Bolsa Família: From municipal experiment to national program

While Bolsa Família was officially instituted in 2003, its origins date back to the late 1980s and early 1990s when ideas about non-contributory cash transfers were beginning to gain traction in Brazil.

While this idea was becoming popular among policymakers and academics as a tool to combat poverty, there remained strong debates over what these kinds of programs should look like and who they should target. As identified by Tomazini (2019), there were three dominant conceptual approaches to cash transfers at the time: unconditional income (based on the premise that there is a need to repay the nation's "social debt" by sharing its wealth), human capital (based on the premise that poverty is perpetuated across generations by limited investment in education), and food security (based on the premise that hunger and food insecurity represent "the hotspots" of poverty). Senator Eduardo Suplicy was a particularly prominent voice in the policy arena advocating for the creation of a national cash transfer program based on the unconditional income approach—eventually introducing a bill in 1991 (Projeto de Lei 80) to create a Guaranteed Minimum Income Program in the form of an unconditional negative income tax (while it was unsuccessful, it would lay the groundwork for the more ambitious Citizen's Basic Income law that he would introduce ten years later). While the federal debate over cash transfers remained ongoing, local governments began experimenting with these programs in their own municipalities. Notably, municipal governments in Campinas (São Paulo) and Brasília (Distrito Federal) introduced the first two programs in 1995: *Renda Mínima* (Minimum Income) in Campinas and *Bolsa Escola* (School Grant) in Brasília. Following their example, hundreds of municipalities and several states across Brazil began to introduce similar cash transfer programs throughout the late 1990s (many of which received co-financing from the federal government through Cardoso's 1997 *Programa de Garantia de Renda Mínima*).

Building on the success of these sub-national programs, Cardoso launched the first national CCT program in 2001 under the same name as the local program operating in Brasília (*Bolsa Escola*). The federal Bolsa Escola program was administered by the Ministry of Education and transferred cash directly to poor families with school age-dependents, conditional upon children's school attendance.

By 2003, it was estimated to have reached about 5 million families across nearly all of Brazil's municipalities. This marked an important shift in the Cardoso administration's approach to poverty reduction, which in its previous form under the *Comunidade Solidária* Program had been largely "limited to the delivery of compensatory measures, such as the distribution of food baskets in regions affected by severe shocks, and the coordination of relatively sparse social initiatives conducted by local governments, civil society, and the private sector" (Camargo and Ferreira 2000 in Paiva et al. 2015). Cardoso then introduced two additional complementary cash transfer programs designed to combat infant mortality and malnutrition among poor households: the *Bolsa Alimentação* (Food Grant) program in 2001 (administered by the Ministry of Health) and the *Auxílio Gas* (Gas Aid) program in 2002 (administered by the Ministry of Mines and Energy). In 2001, Cardoso also issued an executive order creating the first version of the Cadastro Único (administered by the Secretary of State for Social Assistance), the single registry system that would evolve into the primary point of entry for multiple social assistance benefits in the years to come.

After Lula took office in 2003, he replaced Cardoso's *Comunidade Solidária* Program with a new umbrella approach to combatting poverty and food insecurity: the *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger) Program.[11] Under this banner, he created an additional cash transfer program—the *Cartão Alimentação* (Food Card) in 2003 (administered by the Ministry of Food Security). This meant that there were now four non-contributory cash transfer programs in operation (*Bolsa Escola*, *Bolsa Alimentação*, *Auxílio-Gas*, and *Cartão Alimentação*) administered by four different ministries. Additionally, despite the existence of the

[11]This program has broadly been recognized as a failure. For example, in a mid-term review of Lula's first administration, Hunter and Power (2005, 131-132), claim that the administration's social policy "has thus far been unremarkable, if not disappointing," describing the Fome Zero program as one "plagued by bureaucratic inefficiency, local corruption, administrative inexperience, and resource constraints."

Cadastro Único at this time and the fact that many of the programs' beneficiaries were often the same families, each of these programs was implemented using a different administrative system. In order to address the high level of fragmentation and inefficiency involved in this constellation of parallel CTs and CCTs, the government decided to consolidate them into a single CCT (Bolsa Família) and to consolidate the various enrollment registries into a single system (the Cadastro Único). The initial proposal for Bolsa Família was developed by a small technical working group formed in June 2003. This group was empowered by the Presidency and was primarily composed of social policy bureaucrats and scholars, many of whom would go on to lead this agenda forward in the coming years within the soon-to-be created Ministry of Social Development. Based on the proposal of this group, the Bolsa Família program as such was introduced into Congress as a presidential decree (Medida Provisória 132) in October 2003 and then formalized into law (Lei 10,836) in January 2004. In tandem with the creation of Bolsa Família, Lula established the Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Eradication (*Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome*, MDS), which would serve as the program's institutional home via its National Secretariat for Citizen's Income (*Secretaria Nacional de Renda de Cidadania*, SENARC).

Moreover, on the day before Congress passed the law establishing Bolsa Família, it passed another law (Lei 10,835) establishing the universal right of all Brazilians to a "basic citizen's income." This law was introduced by Senator Eduardo Suplicy, in his second attempt to put universal basic income on the national legislative agenda. While Article 1 of the law establishes the universal right of "all Brazilians residing in the country and foreigners residing in Brazil for at least 5 (five) years, regardless of their socioeconomic status" to an annual monetary benefit, Article 2 clarifies that this universal coverage "should be achieved in stages, at the discretion of the Executive Power, prioritizing the neediest part of the population" (Lei 10,835 2004, Article 1-2). In this way, Bolsa Família has often

been viewed as a "first step" towards achieving a more universal basic income. However, as the Minister of Social Development at the time explained, the targeted rather than universal nature of Bolsa Família was a very intentional and important part of the program's objective:

> While Eduardo Suplicy defended the right a basic minimum income for all citizens, we [MDS under Lula's administration] defended the right to a minimum citizen's income for the poor. We live in a country with intense social inequality—a country with a "social debt" accumulated over more than 500 years—linked to issues such as slavery, land concentration, and the indigenous struggle. While we need to have universal policies like education, health, and basic sanitation—but we also need to have targeted policies that are aimed at repaying this social debt. (Interview Patrus Ananias 2018)

While Bolsa Família (and its arguably broader aspirational horizon of a universal citizen's income) were now codified into law, the challenge remained of how to turn them into a reality. As the following sections describe, this would require extensive investments in building the legal and bureaucratic infrastructures necessarily to effectively implement it and to iteratively improve it over time.

The consolidation of Bolsa Família: From design to implementation

The passage of legislation establishing the Bolsa Família program was a major milestone marking a new era of non-contributory cash transfers. However, turning this law into an actual program that could effectively reach and serve its intended public would require extensive investments in refining the program's design and in building up the underlying state capacity necessary to implement it. Thus, from around 2004 to 2010, the program underwent a critical phase of consolidation. As one informant described to me:

> We needed to implement what was in the rules but had not yet been created. We needed to register the families, to ensure that the Cadastro Único at least functioned minimally, to create structures to work with the municipalities, to ensure that the conditionality monitoring worked, etc. These first years were not years of changes in the program, they were years of developing the major rules and systems that would allow the program to come to life. (Interview SENARC 2018).

The program evolved quickly during this time, constantly creating new operational standards and tools. The pace of change was so fast that World Bank counterparts supporting the program described it in one of their reports as follows:

> Our experience accompanying the BFP [Bola Família Program] since its inception has taught us the lesson that, usually, by the time we have documented the operations of the BFP, it has already jumped ahead and evolved further. The managers of the BFP have literally been "running a marathon at a sprinter's pace" since the program's inception. As partners to the program, we at the World Bank have often found ourselves "sweating" to keep up with their pace (Lindert et al. 2007, 8).

The bureaucratic corps of staff running this "marathon" was a critical part of the program's success during this phase of consolidation. As one informant emphasized:

> The media has always tried to ascribe fatherhood to Bolsa Família, saying that "*Fernando Henrique is the father of the program"* or "*Lula is the father of the program."* But underlying this entire discussion is the reality that it was a few hard-working women—who had better things to do with their time than discuss claims of motherhood—that fought to turn this program into a reality (Interview SENARC 2018).

During this period, SENARC became a very professionalized and technocratic organization staffed by civil servants. As described by Paiva et al (2019, 29), most of the members of the management team at this time came from "career paths created or recovered by the administrative reform of the mid-1990s…[and] their job was to provide expertise related to the public policy cycle (design/formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies)." However, not only were the staff in SENARC professional policy experts, but they were also highly dedicated individuals. In our discussions, many informants recounted the exhausting and all-consuming efforts of the period of program consolidation with an overtone of nostalgia and a sense of collective pride. Scholars have also highlighted the importance of the pro-social motivations driving the work of this group of "policy entrepreneurs"—in particular, motivations based on an ethic of "voluntarism" (Rennó 2017). Moreover, given the high-level of political commitment to Bolsa Família at both the Ministerial and Presidential levels during this time, SENARC experienced a certain degree of "bureaucratic

insulation"—allowing it to focus its attention on addressing technical issues rather than fighting political battles.

One of the major technical issues that needed to be addressed during the consolidation phase was the quality of the Cadastro Único registry. When the program began, it inherited the Cadastro Único database that had been in operation since 2001—and as described by almost every federal informant I spoke to, this database was "dirty," "terrible," and "full of problems." Since this was the database that was used to select people into the program, "the problems that were in the registry were imported into the program…We realized at the time, rightly, that we would need to clean the registry in order to clean the program" (Interview, SENARC 2018). Cleaning the registry would require both a political intervention to gain access to the database (which was controlled by Caixa at the time) as well a new working arrangement with the municipalities to make the changes (formalized through a joint-program management agreement). After SENARC finally received the database from Caixa, it worked to identify the problems in registry and offered a financial incentive to the municipalities for each registry entry that they cleaned. This process of cooperation and performance-based pay would later serve as the basis for the establishment of the Decentralized Management Index (IGD, for its name in Portuguese), an innovative public management tool in which municipalities would receive financial transfers from the federal government based on their performance in managing the Cadastro Único and Bolsa Família. Ultimately, this initial process of data cleaning took until around 2006. However, improvements to the registry did not end there. In the following years, the registry underwent a continual process of improvement including refining the questionnaire, updating its IT infrastructure, and creating new processes for data verification (such as cross-checks with other government databases). Today, the Cadastro Único is on its seventh "version" since the cleaned 2006 base.

The relationship with the municipalities and the improvement of the Cadastro Único were pivotal factors in enabling the government to scale-up the program during this time, which was a key objective of Lula's early administration. It grew at an exponential pace in the beginning—tripling from just 3.6 million families in January 2004 to around 11 million families by June 2006. Coverage stabilized around this number until mid 2009, after which point, it started to steadily expand again but at a much slower rate. During the first few years of rapid expansion, the program experienced many implementation challenges related to what Lindert and Vincensini (2010, 9) have referred to as the "scaling-up dilemma": the problem of scaling-up benefits quickly to respond to the existing "social, political and poverty challenges" without having built the right infrastructure to do so (such as "mature operating systems that are…fully functional"). Resolving this dilemma involved a process of learning about "what worked" from best practices in municipalities as well as from the results of research and evaluation studies, and iteratively adapting the program's normative scaffolding accordingly. As one informant explained, this was a rather unique approach for shaping Brazilian policy:

> We experimented with different things. If they worked, they were crystalized in regulation as best practices; if they didn't, we discarded them. For us [in Brazil], this a little strange because in our legal tradition, the state can only do what the law allows it to do (in contrast with citizens, who can do anything that the law does not prohibit them from doing). So normally in the context of public policy, you have to make the rules first and then implement them. But because we had already had a law that established Bolsa Família and an executive order that gave it a general operating structure, we were able to work in this iterative and experimental way to develop the program (Interview SENARC 2018).

Notably, the research and evaluation agenda was an explicit part of the state's strategy for strengthening and legitimating the program over time (Interview MDS 2018). The Information Management and Evaluation National Secretary (SAGI, for its name in Portuguese) within MDS invested in rigorous research studies and collaborated with universities and think tanks (such as IPEA) as well as partnered with international organizations (with a particularly large role played by the World Bank) who held expertise in the field of evaluation. In this way, Bolsa Família gained increasing

international attention as the object of various research and policy evaluation studies—eventually garnering a place on the global stage as a well-known and well-tested CCT program.

The program grew to be lauded in international circles as a "model of effective social policy" and its success catalyzed a constant stream of visits from other countries to learn about the program (World Bank 2005). When reflecting on his interaction with foreign counterparts, the former Minister of Social Development proudly noted that "in every country that I went to—in Africa, Europe, Latin America, Asia, everywhere—people knew two phrases in Portuguese: [imitating a foreign accent] *Bolsa Família* and *Fome Zero*. They would be talking in various other languages with translation, but they would always say Bolsa Família and Fome Zero in Portuguese. It became universal. It was beautiful" (Interview Patrus Ananias 2018). It became such a success, that one informant even reflected on how some people within MDS would joke about international organizations at this time acting as "solutions-traffickers"—"pirates" of the development world—taking MDS's homegrown solution from Brazil and bringing it to other countries (Interview MDS 2018). However, as this chapter will return to later, while Bolsa Família was applauded abroad, it remained highly controversial at home. It faced harsh and very public criticism from both the left and right sides of the political spectrum as well as from the mainstream media. Over time, however, it succeeded in gaining increasing legitimacy among the Brazilian public, garnering a majority approval rating by the mid 2010s (Paiva, Cotta, and Barrientos 2019 based on data from IBOPE 2014).

Building on Bolsa Família: From Fome Zero to Brasil Sem Miséria

Beginning in 2011, following the election of Dilma, Bolsa Família and the Cadastro Único entered a new phase of expansion. As described by Paiva et al (2019, 31), they "became the main instruments of a broad policy and political initiative to overcome extreme poverty in the country—the Brazil

Without Extreme Poverty Plan (*Brasil sem Miséria*—BSM)." The BSM was Dilma's new umbrella strategy for social development, seeking to build incrementally on the model of social inclusion developed under the Lula administration by promoting a more integrated and active role for the state. In terms of integration, the plan emphasized the need to tackle poverty from a multidimensional perspective and focused on bringing together three pillars: income support, access to public services, and productive inclusion in the labor market. In practice this meant the creation of new policy instruments (including income support programs such as payments for ecosystem services, programs to universalize access to services such as water and electricity, and labor market programs such as rural extension services and professional skills training) and well as the refinement and integration of many existing policy instruments (including, among others, Bolsa Família). In terms of state pro-activeness, the plan emphasized the need to reverse the directionality of state-citizen interactions in order to reach those who were still being left behind—following the premise that it was the most likely the most vulnerable populations who had the most limited access to the state. As described by Tereza Campello (Minister of Social Development from 2011-2016) at the June 2011 launch of new strategy, the intention of BSM was to "bring the state to the most vulnerable people wherever they are. Starting now, it will no longer be the poorest population that will have to chase after the state, but the other way around" (Governo do Brasil 2011). In order to oversee the implementation of this strategy, the government established a new Secretariat within MDS, the Extraordinary Secretariat for Overcoming Extreme Poverty (*Secretaria Extraordinária para Superação da Extrema Pobreza*, SESEP).

The Bolsa Família Program and the Cadastro Único were critical instruments for the success of BSM. In terms of Bolsa Família, not only was it a central policy of the income support pillar of BSM, it was also used strategically as a means for delivering more integrated and complementary programming to bolsistas. Overcoming poverty from a multidimensional perspective required providing more than

income support. In the context of BSM, bolsistas became a priority public for various other services and benefits that were expanded during this period—such as nursery schools, water and electricity provision, microcredit loans, and rural technical assistance. Moreover, the Cadastro Único was the primary instrument enabling the state to identify and target the specific needs of different poor families. The database served as a national poverty map with updated and detailed information at the household level, allowing it function as a tool for "precision targeting" and policy coordination—promoting access to over twenty different social benefits. As described by Campello and Mello (2015, 40):

> The different actions of Brazil without Extreme Poverty began from preliminary lists of names taken from the Single Registry, to define and assess who would be the target audience. An example of that was the case of the Water for All Program, which used the list of names of all families living in the rural areas of the Brazilian semi-arid zone, who did not have access to the public supply network and who fit the income profile of the Bolsa Família Program, to better focus the action in the field of water tank construction.

In comparison with Lula's umbrella strategy for social development (Fome Zero), BSM had a similar set of core objectives, but it was able to rely on a far more robust set of policy tools and governance arrangements to implement it (Paes-Sousa and Vaitsman 2014). As one informant reflected:

> Brasil Sem Miséria is the fruit of the failure of Fome Zero with the success of Bolsa Família. Meaning that the ideas that were in Brasil Sem Miséria were already in Fome Zero—but they did not have the instruments to implement them – they did not yet have the necessary political or management experience in the coordinated delivery of an integrated program—and so, [Fome Zero] failed. Bolsa Família produced this experience of program integration, through building mechanisms like the IGD and structures for how information would flow between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and MDS (Interview MDS 2018).

Beyond their role in supporting the broader strategy of BSM, Bolsa Família and the Cadastro Único also underwent a series of refinements during this time in order to more effectively support the ambitious goal of the BSM plan to overcome extreme poverty. As explained one informant explained to me, "when BSM arrived, we already had a program that was consolidated and a registry that was functioning, so this phase was more about refining the program's design" (Interview SENARC 2018).

In terms of the program's benefits, several important modifications were introduced to increase the benefit amounts received by the poorest families (such that no family would still be under the extreme poverty line after receiving the benefit) and those with more children and adolescents (taking into account that in 2010, around half of the population living in extreme poverty was under 19 years old). In addition to overall adjustments to the benefits for inflation, this materialized in the creation of a supplemental Benefit for Overcoming Extreme Poverty, an adjustment to the amount and number of variable benefits received by families with children and adolescents, and the creation of an additional variable benefit for pregnant and nursing mothers. In terms of the program's conditionalities, there was also a targeted investment in expanding the number of children being monitored in schools as well as changes to the non-compliance rules to reinforce a rights-based perspective (ensuring that families would first receive increased support from the state to address the underlying issues preventing them from accessing their rights to education and health, rather than the cancellation of their benefits).

Similarly, while the Cadastro Único had grown into an expansive and robust database over the previous decade, it was still missing many of the poorest and most marginalized families. To achieve the goals of BSM, an "active searching" (*busca ativa*) effort was made to find and register low-income families that lived in areas beyond the traditional reach of the state—for example, by sending mobile teams in vans into remote rural areas or on boats into remote riverside areas. The Cadastro Único itself was also revised in several important ways during this period. The 7th version of the Cadastro Único, which was launched and implemented during this time, had a specific focus on identifying and registering historically excluded groups—most notably "Specific and Traditional Population Groups" (a designation which includes over 15 different types of population groups that face unique vulnerabilities or prejudices such as indigenous peoples, *quilombolas*, Roma people, people living in a

situation of homelessness, people who collect recyclable garbage, etc) as well as people who did not have civil documentation (such as those without birth certificates or other forms of official identification). By the end of this period, the Cadastro Único and Bolsa Família had both expanded the number and type of poor families that they included. In the three-year period between June 2011 and June 2014, the number of families in the registry rose from 18.5 million 24.0 million (reflecting approximately 40% of Brazil's population), facilitating the expansion of Bolsa Família benefits to over 1 million additional families (bringing the total coverage of the program to around 14 million).

Summarizing the background context: Bolsa Família during the Expansion

In sum, we see that the late 1990s to the mid 2010s was a period of welfare state building in Brazil. This was a major "second moment" in the nation's approach to providing social protection, shifting away from a corporatist model where protection was primarily contributory and limited to those employed within the formal sector. From this perspective, non-contributory cash transfers targeted to poor families represented a fundamental shift in the nature of the social contract and demanded a new role for the state. Bolsa Família was a hallmark of this new approach and played a major role in structing (and restructuring) the state's imagination of what this new role should look like while simultaneously incentivizing the materialization of it. As the program grew and evolved, so too did the state's relationship with poor and marginalized populations. The following sections explore both the advances and challenges in establishing this new relationship as it relates to the three different dimensions of citizenship considered in this thesis (formal, substantive, and cohesive).

4.2 Formal citizenship: A new generation of rights

From the perspective of formal citizenship (considering "the state as law"), the Expansion period was a time of major restructuring of state-society relations on paper within the context of a new generation

of rights that characterized the nation's return democracy. In the context of Bolsa Família, this took place along two major axes: its rights-based rhetoric and its rules-based architecture. In terms of the former, the program was explicitly framed as a "rights-based" policy grounded in the 1988 Constitution and 1993 Organic Law of Social Assistance (*Lei Orgânica da Assistência Social*, LOAS) and was designed with a non-punitive model of conditionality that emphasized promoting bolsistas' access to the rights of education, health, and social assistance. In terms of the latter, the program invested in building an extensive web of rules that would guide program design and implementation, seeking to ensure a consistent and transparent standard of program operation and avoid the pitfalls of patronage and personalized politics that had plagued previous programs. Despite these important changes in the legal foundations of the program, there remained important limitations—as the rights-based rhetoric fell short of a delivering an actual rights-based guarantee and its rules-based architecture was not enough to fully combat historically ingrained perceptions of social benefits as a favor rather than as a right. The following sub-sections explore these issues in greater depth.

The turn away from assistencialismo: Grounding Bolsa Família within a rights-based perspective

Historically, social assistance for the poor in Brazil was implemented within a perspective of private "charity" or "goodwill" and was delivered in an ad hoc manner by various actors such as the First Lady[12], religious institutions, and philanthropic organizations. This approach broadly became known as *assistencialismo.* However, following the country's process of re-democratization after over 20 years of military rule, this approach began to change. While Bolsa Família was never actually enshrined as a "right" on paper, it was firmly grounded within a rights-based perspective, building both on major

[12]Notorious for embodying this type of approach was the Brazilian League of Assistance (*Legião Brasileira de Assistência*, LBA) founded in 1942 by Darcy Vargas, wife of President Getúlio Vargas.

legal advances and conceptual shifts that reimagined social assistance as a right of citizens and an obligation of the state.

Notably, the landmark 1988 Constitution ushered in a new generation of citizens' rights—earning its nickname as the "Citizen's Constitution" (*Constituicão Cidadã*). In particular, the document included a few key aspects that would shape the emergence and evolution of non-contributory cash transfers (including Bolsa Família) in the years to come. First, the document explicitly set forth "eradicating poverty and marginalization and reducing regional and social inequalities" as one of the four fundamental objectives of the nation—laying the groundwork for the commitment of the state to an agenda of poverty eradication (Constitution of Brazil 1988, Article 2). Second, it formally recognized "education, health, nutrition, labor, housing, leisure, security, social security, protection of motherhood and childhood and assistance to the destitute" as social rights (Constitution of Brazil 1988, Article 6) and included provisions for the universalization of certain related public services and benefits such as healthcare and social security. Third, it opened space for the expansion of the non-contributory social assistance agenda, by assuring that "social assistance will be provided to those who need it, regardless of their contribution to social security" (Constitution of Brazil 1988, Article 203). While the right to income was not specifically guaranteed in the document, it did include a provision in the section on social assistance that established the right to a monthly benefit of one minimum wage for elderly or disabled individuals in need—which would form the basis of the *Benefício de Prestação Continuada* (Continuous Cash Benefit Program, BPC) non-contributory cash transfer program launched in 1996 (the BPC is an unconditional cash transfer targeted to low-income elderly people and people with disabilities). Finally, the Constitution marked a third major "inflection point" in the decentralization of administrative authority in Brazil, increasing the power and autonomy of municipal and state governments (Medeiros 1994). This shift enabled new policy approaches such as the

municipal and state-level experimentation with CCTs in the 1990s as well as the multi-level governance structure that characterized the design of the Bolsa Família program.

Five years after the Constitution was created, the government ratified another pivotal legal document establishing the right to social assistance: the 1993 Organic Law of Social Assistance. From its first sentence, this document established firmly and clearly that social assistance is "the right of the citizen and the obligation of the State" (LOAS 1993, Article 1). Beyond this, it created an institutional framework for materializing this right that involved each level of government and ensured an active role for civil society. To this end, it established coordination mechanisms such as designated plans, financing arrangements, participatory social assistance councils, and national conferences. While the National Social Assistance Council established in LOAS approved a National Social Assistance Plan (*Plano Nacional de Assistência Social*, PNAS) in 1998, it was not until 2004 when it replaced the PNAS in a context of increased government support (following the election of Lula and creation of the MDS) that a model for operationalizing the rights-based goals set out in the Constitution and LOAS would begin to take shape through the creation of the Unified System of Social Assistance (SUAS). The Social Assistance Basic Operational Norm (NOB/SUAS) establishing SUAS was issued in 2005, giving structure to this vision—specifying for example the role of SUAS in providing both basic and specialized social assistance as well as in delivering both benefits and services. Informants working in the social assistance sector at the municipal level reflected on the importance of this change for shifting the sector toward a more rights-based approach at the time:

> We [as social assistance workers] saw this little glimmer of hope the moment that Patrus [Ananias] entered MDS and he and his technical team started to build SUAS. We thought, "*Gosh, we are finally going to leave this logic of assistencialismo behind and actually begin operating in the field of rights*." On July 15, 2005, with the establishment of SUAS there was a new model for managing social assistance. After this date, Brazilian municipalities adopted a new logic for how they organized and offered social assistance policy to citizens. SUAS inaugurated this new direction—this new way of understanding and giving shape to the constitutional right of social assistance (Interview GTREC 2018).

It is important to note, however, that while the right to social assistance and a state commitment to poverty reduction were gaining legal ground, the Lula administration was primarily focused on achieving this within a paradigm of food security. Combatting hunger had been a long-held priority of the Worker's Party and drew large support from civil society, mobilized by the work of scholars and activists such as Josué de Castro and Herbert ("Betinho") de Souza as well as a related emergent international agenda (Tomazini 2016). As Patrus Ananias (Minister of Social Development from 2004-2010), explained while reflecting on the administration's approach to policymaking during this period:

> Since the Constitutional process, the importance of working from the perspective of rights was always very clear to us....We have had a few generations of social rights in Brazil…but following the Constitution, there was new generation of rights related to food security: the right to adequate food, with regularity, and sufficient quantity and quality…If we wanted to construct citizenship, from our perspective the first integral step was ensuring access to food. We have an expression in Brazil that "no one can think on an empty stomach" (*de barriga vazia, ninguem pensa*), but the more radical truth is that no one can live on an empty stomach (*de barriga vazia, ninguem vive).* (Interview Patrus Ananias 2018).

This was reflected clearly in the administration's early approach to social development policy under the banner of the Fome Zero strategy. As the government abandoned Fome Zero and replaced its Food Grant cash transfer program (as well as the other three cash transfer programs that had been continued from Cardoso's administration) with the Bolsa Família program, the surrounding language of rights shifted. Rather than focusing on the promoting the right to food, the discourse of Bolsa Família focused on promoting access to the rights of education, health, and social assistance.

In the context of Bolsa Família, its rights-based rhetoric was institutionalized primarily by way of its conditionalities. Many CCT programs across the world follow a "punitive" logic (a "hard" approach to conditionalities), whereby families' benefits are revoked if the family fails to comply with conditionality requirements (understood as the obligation of the family). For example, in the case of Mexico's former Progresa/Oportunidades/Prospera program, noncompliance with conditionalities would lead to the loss of that month's benefits, with repeated violations leading to the loss of benefits

for the remainder of school year (Borges 2022). In contrast, Bolsa Família follows a "non-punitive" logic (a "soft" approach to conditionalities), whereby non-compliance with conditionalities is viewed as a signal that the family is facing additional barriers which prevent them from complying and requires additional support (understood as the obligation of the state)—and thus families receive a series of warnings, outreach support, and benefit delays before benefits are ever effectively canceled. Taking a "softer" approach to conditionality was a very intentional decision on the part of SENARC when designing the program, and its logic has remained a central part of the way that many state actors view the role of the conditionalities:

> An important aspect in the design of the program was the sensibility of the team to perceive the following: punishing a family for not complying with the conditionality would not work. First, you are not taking into account the type of circumstance that led to the lack of compliance. Second, you are making worse the situation of a vulnerable family…If you don't bother to find out why they did not comply with the conditionality, you completely exclude that family—and they return to a situation of complete vulnerability. From our perspective, it is not "*You didn't comply? Excluded.*" No, it is "*You didn't comply? We need to make sure you get included.*" (Interview SENARC 2018)

> We always knew that among the poor families that we serve, the families that do not comply with the conditionality requirements are more vulnerable than the ones that do. The way we see it is that there must be something going wrong for this family that we need to understand. This approach is one that is based on supporting them—on understanding what is preventing their children from going to school or getting vaccinated and trying to solve that issue rather than prevent them from receiving the cash transfer. (Interview SENARC 2018)

This approach was strengthened following reforms in 2012 in the context of BSM's emphasis on "active searching," when the cancellation rules of Bolsa Família were changed to ensure that "no family in the Program would have its benefit canceled before being attended to by the public power" (Paiva et al. 2015, 148). An important implication of this is how it distributes the responsibility for complying with the conditionalities between citizens and the state. As a former Minister of MDS described:

> Some people questioned the conditionalities saying that it was an imposition on the families. It may be an imposition, but it is also an obligation that we are putting on the state—to guarantee health and education for poor families...We are making it possible for poor families to make claims on the state to carry out these obligations. (Interview Patrus Ananias 2018)

This is perhaps expressed even more succinctly in the following claim put forth by MDS in a 2015 text reviewing the BSM plan, that "every family who leaves the Program because they did not manage to keep children and adolescents in school or did not meet the requirements of the health agenda reflects, above all, *a failure on behalf of the Brazilian State*" (Paiva et al 2015, 146, emphasis added).

Rules of engagement: Institutionalizing program design and implementation

In addition to the program's explicit grounding in a rights-based framework, it also had an explicit emphasis on building a rules-based architecture. To this end, the federal government invested heavily in developing the program's legal foundations throughout its early years. This was done using a broad range of rules and normative frameworks including laws (*leis*), executive orders (*decretos*), ministerial directives (*portarias*), presidential decrees (*medidas provisórias*), normative instructions, operational instructions, technical notes, and resolutions. In the view of the Minister of Social Development at the time, this constellation of rules resulted in the transformation of Bolsa Família from a program into a policy:

> As much as we call it the Bolsa Família "program," it has actually become a public policy. It was enacted by means of a law, after which we created other legal rules to strengthen and improve it. In my view, a "public policy" is a government action (while it includes the participation of society, it is the clear responsibility of the state and is funded by public resources) that is ensured through laws and various other legal norms...whereas a "program" is a governmental action that does not have this kind of legal basis. (Interview Patrus Ananias 2018)

This is an important distinction when considering the program from a longer-term perspective—both for its potential to break with historical patterns of clientelism in the distribution of social assistance benefits, as well as for its potential to last beyond a single electoral cycle. A robust legal foundation works to strengthen the potential durability and sustainability of the intervention, as it establishes mechanisms to ensure that it is not just linked to the government who is temporarily in power but more deeply to "the state." Several informants I spoke with explicitly mentioned their view that Bolsa

Família had been consolidated as a "state policy" rather than as a "government policy." This is important, given that the objective of a program like Bolsa Família is a long-term one, focused on breaking inter-generational cycles of poverty rather than providing temporary emergency relief.

In particular, the establishment of clear technocratic rules and procedures for selecting families into the program was critical for facilitating a shift away from the type of discretionary allocation of benefits linked to patronage politics that had long plagued social assistance programming in Brazil. In the beginning, the program continued to face a similar set of challenges due to the poor quality and limited coverage of the Cadastro Único registry, resulting in early legitimacy crises surrounding claims of "fraud." However, the development of increasingly sophisticated rules for bolsista selection alongside MDS's multi-year efforts to build a reliable Cadastro Único database with expansive coverage ultimately resulted in the program being able to operate through a transparent selection process that came to be perceived as highly impersonal—something that was done by "The System" rather than by a person. This was a notion that was reflected in the discourse of several informants, both for its benefits (in that it prevents clientelistic distribution) but also for its limitations (in that as impersonal allocation necessarily leaves personal judgment out of the equation, it may result in the exclusion or delayed inclusion of some families who face nuanced or urgent vulnerabilities that are not adequately captured by the parameters of the system):

> It is a process that is done by The System—it is no longer based on the idea that there will be a person behind the counter that evaluates whether or not you deserve to receive the benefit. It gets away from this logic. It is a system with parameters, with per capita thresholds which determine whether or not someone fits the profile—which decides whether or not someone has access to the benefit. (Interview CRAS 2018)

> There is always a clash with the municipalities over who gets included in the program, particularly when there is not enough space to include everyone who is eligible. They say to us "I can see that this family needs [Bolsa Família]," but you don't include them. But, you see, The System is totally parameterized. There are rules for everything in The System—even for how to decide in a situation when there is a "tie" between two families but only enough space for one. So, it's not the municipality's choice and it's not the Ministry's choice. It's all done by

> The System based on the information reported by the families; The System makes a calculation. (Interview SENARC 2018)

An important implication of this approach is that it serves to establish a direct link between families and the federal government in the selection of bolsistas and in the concession of payments—without the intermediary of local, municipal, or state government actors who could attempt misuse the distribution of benefits for personal political gain (see Fenwick (2015) for an extended analysis on how "avoiding governors" in the program's designs served to shape program outcomes more broadly). As one informant explained:

> Families have a sense that "*Not just anyone can just take this away from me*." People know, for example, that it is not the municipality that provides the benefit. The municipality does the registration, but the selection happens here [in SENARC]. There are still a few places where people try to make promises that "*Oh, I will give you Bolsa Família*." But families are able to recognize that that "*No, you can't give me Bolsa Família.*" The card comes to directly to their home—it doesn't pass through the municipal government for them to give to the families—to be able to say "*Here, I am giving you this benefit*." Money is very powerful. If you receive money from the someone's hand, it creates this imaginary debt. No, the money never passes through the municipality—it goes directly to the family's account. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Not only did the government work to institutionalize the program and its selection of bolsistas through an extensive set of rules and rules-based systems, but also through the socialization of those rules and systems. The government worked to ensure that program operators and mangers were familiar with the rules and understood their importance. For example, MDS published this kind of information on their website, disseminated it in communication bulletins to sub-national program managers ("Informe Bolsa Família"), and included it in various training and capacity building sessions. The value placed on program managers understanding the rules is reflected, for example, in the introduction to a 2015 MDS document collating the major legislative texts related to the program:

> The objective of this document is to make available to managers and technical staff…the legislation of the Single Registry and the PBF, for consultations, in-depth reading, and research, supporting them in the management and operationalization activities of the social programs under their responsibility…It is recommended that this support material be read and studied carefully. Its use is essential to support and guide management actions that seek

> to combat poverty and social inequalities, major challenges for Brazilian society. (MDS 2015, 7)

The achievement of this objective was reflected in my many conversations with program managers and technical staff across the institutional hierarchy. They continually emphasized the importance of various legislative frameworks and program guidelines (as well as those underlying SUAS) for shaping the way that they work—with many even referencing specific rules by their year, number, title, or main embodying concept. For example, as one local actor explained to me, after discussing the importance she placed on a particular management protocol (and showing me a readily available copy on her desktop computer):

> Our understanding [as managers of social assistance services and benefits] is founded on these principal documents. It is not possible for us to read every single document that comes out, but we have to know the concepts that are embedded in them. There are some principal documents—"mother documents"—that act as a "north star" for us. There is a basic menu of them which informs how we operate every day. (Interview Regional 2018)

In theory, this socialization of program rules worked to establish uniform criteria for program operation—which was critical not only for avoiding discretionary practices, but also for ensuring that the program could operate in a standardized way in over 5000 municipalities characterized by vastly different socioeconomic circumstances. Beyond this, it also created a potential means through which program implementors could be held accountable for delivering on those criteria. As one informant explained:

> A *portaria* is important to establish criteria for the manager; if a situation occurs, it tells them what to do or how to decide what to do. But it also it is an important element of transparency (as it tells society how the program works) and of accountability (because when something becomes a rule, people can ask "*Have you done X thing? It says here in the rules that you have to do X*"). (Interview SENARC 2018)

The limits of the law: The gap between rules and realities

Of course, the rules can go only so far in advancing change—particularly when the rules that were created had limitations themselves. In reality, while Bolsa Família was created within a rights-based perspective, it was never codified as a right in itself. As one informant put it:

> Bolsa Família is not a right. Education and health are rights. Bolsa Família is an additional means through which beneficiaries can seek to realize these rights. If it were to become underpinned by a right to a minimum income or a right to a citizen's income, that would be something else. But today, that is not case. Today, it is just a conditional cash transfer program which is limited by its budget, the existence of a waiting list, and undefined rules about increasing benefit amounts or eligibility thresholds. (Interview SENARC 2018)

As the following two chapters will explore, these were critical limitations which opened a series of vulnerabilities that fundamentally restricted the program's potential for offering a stronger guarantee of incorporation to poor citizens. While there could be different ways to codify Bolsa Família as a "right," ultimately the approach must ensure that program is secured as an entitlement of citizens (and thus the provision of targeted income support is not dependent on the political will of changing governments nor on discretionary budget allocations that allow for the creation of waiting lists or for the erosion of benefit values). In this regard, the case of Bolsa Família is clearly different, for example, from the BPC cash transfer program (Brazil's non-contributory pension scheme for low-income households), which is guaranteed in the Constitution as a right. There is it no waiting list for the BPC (all those who are eligible can receive benefits) and the value of the BPC's benefits and its eligibility threshold are both pegged to the minimum wage. Moreover, not only was Bolsa Família not secured as a legal right, but the *perception* of the program (and, more broadly, of the distribution of social assistance benefits) as a right has also remained limited.

While the rights-based rhetoric and rules-based architecture went a long way in advancing perceptions of the program as a right, they were ultimately unable to fully overcome the long inertia of historical perceptions of social assistance as a "favor" linked to patronage or as "charity" linked to goodwill. As one CRAS worker put it, "we continue to pay a high price for the historical legacy of our social assistance system" (Interview CRAS 2018). For example, while a 2014 survey of bolsistas found that 53% of respondents viewed the program as "an obligation of the state," 33% still viewed it as "a favor"—an impressive change considering the historical baseline, but still a long way from a universal

shift. (Hunter and Sugiyama 2014). In interviews with program staff, it seems that the logic of charity in particular has proven difficult to overcome. As one worker explained:

> Some people view the benefits as a right—not as charity, not as assistencialismo. But many others still do not—they see it as an act of goodwill or benevolence toward them. Sometimes when families arrive at the CRAS center they use this language of rights: "*I came here to claim my right!*" But often it is an empty discourse… There are still many situations in which people are "very grateful" to us for the benefits they receive. They do not view them with this notion of it as their right, as something that comprises their citizenship. We try to work on the notion of the benefits as a "right" with the families that we support. It is not a favor – we are not just "good people" who "feel bad" for them. This is not something that is "given" to them out of pity. (Interview CRAS 2018)

Importantly, this type of assistencialista-based mindset also remains common among many of the state actors involved in the implementation of the program—including within the social assistance sector, as well as integrated sectors such as education and health, and non-related state sectors that serve the same population. As one informant reflected:

> There are still a lot of people who confuse social assistance with goodwill or charity— even within the Social Assistance sector itself. In some of the meetings that I go to, I hear a lot of this charitable discourse, about how we are "so good." I get very upset. If within our own sector there is still this distorted idea—imagine outside of it. For example, when talking with the actors in charge of urban sanitation, sometimes they confuse people living in a situation of homelessness with garbage. There have been multiple times that I have left a meeting, returned to my office, closed the door, and cried—thinking to myself, "*My god, how will I ever be able to change this?*" (Interview Regional 2018).

While the program has been in operation for almost two decades—as one informant noted, this is a "not a lot of time if we are talking about building an understanding of it as a 'right'" (Interview Regional 2018). This is unsurprising when considering the long history of exclusion—and oftentimes violence—that many marginalized Brazilians have suffered at the hands of the state. The extremity of this painful history was poignantly captured by the description of a SENARC team's visit to a *quilombola* community (Afro-Brazilian community of slave descendants) in 2005—when Bolsa Família was just getting off the ground:

> The people in the *quilombola* community shed tears of gratitude when we arrived. Until that moment "the state" had only ever appeared in the *quilombo* to offer food donations (*cesta básica*)

> or to sterilize women by tying their tubes. Essentially, they came to either bring food or to ensure that the population could no longer proliferate. There was such an immense sense of gratitude to us in this moment–of thankfulness. The perspective of seeing this as their "right" will take a long time to change. Because social assistance in this country has historically been implemented from the perspective of charity for the poor—to the extent that it is still present today in the minds of the poor and of social assistance workers. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Simply legislating rights into being is not enough to change political consciousness. Legislation must be accompanied by complementary work in shifting norms and political attitudes. As one former minister of MDS reflected, "You think that by giving families Bolsa Família [and other programs] that this will emancipate them from the point of view of understanding their rights, of fighting for their rights—but it won't. This was a big strategic error in how we thought about the program. (Interview Tereza Campello 2018). This is an important issue in terms of the longevity of policies and their ability to whether future storms—such as the retrenchment pressures that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Summarizing the argument: Formal citizenship during the Expansion

In sum, we see that in the context of formal citizenship, the Expansion period was a critical moment for restructuring the relationship between the state and the poor toward a more rights-based engagement than in the past. This took place in the context of a broader "new generation of rights" that emerged in Brazil in the early 2000s. As a hallmark social assistance program targeted to poor families, Bolsa Família was an important materialization this new type of engagement. This was reflected in its discursive framing, its conceptual design, its legal foundation, and its operational rules. However, while the program had clear rights-based aspirations and its pursuit of these goals reflected an important break from the past, progress remained limited both on paper (as program benefits are not actually guaranteed as a right, leaving their long-term continuity vulnerable to political decision-making) and in perception (as many bolsistas still do not view program benefits as a right, undermining political action to ensure long-term continuity).

4.3 Substantive citizenship: Building a state for the poor

This section focuses on the implications of the Expansion period for substantive citizenship (considering "the state as a set of bureaucracies.") As Bolsa Família was explicitly designed to target a population that was not previously reached by the welfare state, it demanded the construction of new forms of state capacity. The process of targeting, selecting, monitoring, and delivering benefits to poor and extremely poor families required a different type of state capacity than that of just providing benefits to formal sector workers. Specifically, it required investing in what I refer to as "inclusive state capacity" (note that this term in used in a similar way in Wampler, Sugiyama, and Touchton (2020)). This means the capacity to reach and serve marginalized populations such as those living in remote areas or informal settlements, populations without formal documentation, or populations with limited access to existing services. The following sub-sections explore three key mechanisms through which inclusive state capacity was built during this period: 1) the accumulation of new types of human, physical, and social capital within the welfare state across multiple levels of bureaucracy; 2) the changing gaze of the welfare state in "visibilizing" the poor through the lens of the Cadastro Único registry and active searching strategies; and 3) the spillover effects of the program in incentivizing the pro-poor universalization of other state services (such as education, health, and social assistance) to bolsista communities.

A new kind of bureaucracy: Investing in the welfare state's human, physical, and social capital

In order to effectively deliver the Bolsa Família program, the government needed to build a bureaucracy capable of doing so. In this way, the Bolsa Família program sparked a transformation in the capacity of the welfare state—an important "feedback effect" of the policy. According to Pierson (1993), the transformation of state capacity is one of the primary channels through which policy

feedback effects take place. This is particularly relevant when the type of state capacity necessitated by a certain policy is distinct from its existing set of capacities. As Pierson (1993, 605) argues, "where general bureaucratic capacities are easily transferred from one domain to another, policy feedback is likely to be of little relevance," but where "new government actions require highly intrusive and complex actions for implementation and oversight," policy feedback is more likely to generate an "expansion of relatively specialized but important administrative skills." This is very much the case in the context of Bolsa Familia, as it required both "intrusive" and "complex" actions in order to register and deliver benefits to millions of previously unserved poor families across Brazil's vast and heterogenous territory. Thus, policy implementation and state-building took place simultaneously and iteratively. As Seekings (2017, 379) argues, we can see this as the kind of state-building that takes place "not according to some prior plan or project, but achieved incrementally, with capacity expanding more through the actual performance of welfare-state functions than in anticipation of it." The data from my interviews highlighted in particular key transformations in the welfare state's human capital, physical capital, and social capital during this time period.

In terms of human capital, there was a concerted investment in strengthening the capacity of the state actors involved in delivering the program—at the federal, state, municipal, and local levels. As previously discussed, at the federal level, the government recruited a cadre of professional civil servants with technical expertise to lead the program from its center within SENARC. However, this team also invested in ensuring that actors working across the multiple layers of the program's governance structure had the appropriate knowledge to be effective in their roles. In particular, the federal government invested in directly training state-level actors (whose job it was to then train the municipal-level actors in their state) as well the municipal-level actors in Brazil's major metropoles. This was an extensive and ongoing investment throughout the program's growth. As one actor

reflected, "in terms of training—we had tests, we had videos, we had classes, we had meetings, we had group dynamics, we had conferences. We trained cohort after cohort of people here in Brasília." (Interview SENARC 2018). However, beyond the capacity building objectives of the trainings, these interactions also served as a means to strengthen both formal and informal ties between different state actors (both within and between different levels of program governance). These policy communities were critical for promoting an ongoing and real-time exchange of information and learning. While these communities have been held together for years through in person meetings, phone calls, and emails—in more recent years the proliferation of new technologies (including messaging platforms such as WhatsApp) has facilitated the growth and speed of these connections:

> There are formal groups, like those with SENARC, with Education, and with Health. But there are also informal groups, like those between state coordinators and between the states and the municipalities. After each training that we do with a municipality, we make a WhatsApp group and add everyone there. Sometimes the municipalities are even able to answer each other's questions. For example, if a municipality asks a question and I don't see it (because they are so many groups, you know?), another municipality will respond "*Oh, I do X to resolve this.*" It's very cool—there is always an exchange of information happening. (Interview SEDESE 2020).

> One thing that I think makes a big difference [to our effectiveness], is having a close relationship with MDS. For example, we have the "Group of Metropoles." It's not just a WhatsApp group. It's much more than that. We talk on it every day, on the weekend, all the time. It guides us in all our actions. We're all on here [the Bolsa Família and Cadastro Único mangers in Brazil's 12 metropoles) and MDS, too. If there's a problem, you can alert the group: "*The system is down in Belo Horizonte.*" "*Rio too.*" "*São Paulo too.*" And MDS will respond, "*Ok, wait a moment, we will go talk to Caixa.*" This is makes life easier for them and for us. We used to send emails and it might take a while. Now, it's immediate. This has made a huge difference. Beyond just a WhatsApp group, it's the relationship that is established with the other metropoles and with MDS. (Interview GTREC 2018)

In terms of physical capital, the need to implement Bolsa Família demanded that municipal social assistance networks develop the requisite local infrastructure to support the program. This necessitated, first, investing in physical locations to act as registration sites. As a former SENARC worker recounted:

> In the beginning we faced the challenge of not even having physical structures where we could provide services to the families. I used to go to some of the locations in order to support the roll out of the Cadastro Único. I remember the lines of people—they were kilometers long—being treated like rats. Because they would sleep in the lines…At that time, the centers had no water, no computers. It was a very precarious situation. Ten years later you see centers with places for people to sit and social workers available to provide services. In many ways Bolsa Família ended up pressuring the municipal social assistance networks to develop this type of infrastructure. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Moreover, as the Cadastro Único evolved, the type of capacity required to support it also evolved—in particular, the need to invest in greater technological infrastructure. For example, during the upgrade of the Cadastro Único to an online system, SENARC collaborated with the Ministry of Defense to install internet antennas in remote areas which still did not have sufficient internet access to support the system (Interview SENARC 2018). A similar process of digital infrastructure building also happened at more localized levels, as municipalities worked to further decentralize Cadastro Único services throughout their territories. For, example, at the time of my fieldwork, the program's management team in Belo Horizonte was working to expand internet connectivity to various CRAS centers in preparation for expanding registration services to neighborhoods that were still digitally unconnected (Interview GTREC 2018). As one SENARC informant noted, "people have no idea that the Cadastro Único has been a catalyst for so many things—including for strengthening access to internet in the municipalities" (Interview SENARC 2018).

In terms of social capital, the public demand for Bolsa Família benefits served to establish a new link between the social assistance sector (as materialized in local CRAS centers) and the poor population. In many ways, it opened a door which the state could use to start building deeper relationships with these communities—in a way that worked to strengthen both the social assistance network and the Bolsa Família program. As described by a former minister of MDS:

> The social assistance system was fragile at the time Bolsa Família was created. In truth—people don't like to say this, but I will say it—the social assistance system constructed itself thanks to Bolsa Família…It was a pretty invisible network that was socially legitimated through the program, which gave it a link to the population. Previously, the network only existed when a

> child needed legal assistance, or when there was some type of violence—but it didn't exist for the poor population who didn't need a specific type of specialized service. Bolsa Família created this direct relationship between the poor and the social assistance system. So, the networks [social assistance and Bolsa Família] ended up strengthening one other—the chicken and the egg. (Interview Tereza Campello 2018)

This was illustrated in the way one CRAS worker described the changing relationship of their CRAS center with the surrounding community, and the role of Bolsa Família as a key benefit motivating families to seek out the center (and, in turn, gaining access to its broader set of services):

> When the CRAS center was first being built, we spent the first year just walking around the neighborhood, going street to street, letting people know that the center was coming. Sometimes at the beginning, we would hear the popular expression: "*This is just for the English to see."* People would ask us, "*What are you going to give to us*?" And our response was, "*Look, we haven't come to give you anything – we are here to build something with you. The idea is to construct something based on what you need*." Little by little we began working and building with the community – especially through partnerships with community leaders who would come with us to people's homes. In the beginning, if you were to go knock on a door and say, *'I'm from the CRAS center*"—people would say, "*What is that*?" They often confused us with the health center. But today people know what the CRAS center is – they know that is part of the social assistance network– many people come here looking for Bolsa Família benefits, but they understand that it is an entrance point for accessing other services as well. (Interview CRAS 2018)

Notably, beyond the role of Bolsa Família in prompting families to seek out services from the CRAS centers, it has also helped to enhance the ability of social assistance workers to operate outside the CRAS center in parts of the territory that have historically been difficult to access. For example, CRAS workers explained to me how the public recognition of Bolsa Família has helped them to overcome some of the challenges they face when conducting outreach in areas plagued by high levels of violence, such as those controlled by drug-traffickers:

> There are a few places within the territory that have a very strong presence of drug trafficking…. Sometimes when we arrive, even if we have on our identification badges, they ask us "*Who did you come to visit? What are you here to do*?" We always use Bolsa Família. Because it is difficult to explain that there is a family living there that you provide services to or someone who receives the BPC benefit. So we say, "*We are from Bolsa Família*." And that helps to facilitate access much more easily. Because they understand that Bolsa Família is a benefit. I think they see the program as a good thing. (Interview CRAS 2018)

While the human, physical, and social capital of the social assistance sector increased greatly during this period, municipal and local workers both decried the capacity-related challenges that they continue

face, preventing them from more effectively providing services and benefits to the populations that need them. For example, local workers in CRAS and regional centers frequently commented on how small their teams were in comparison to the demand that they were expected to meet. Typically, the CRAS centers I visited would have between three to five "technical" staff available to support its associated territory of 5,000 families. However, while CRAS territories are supposed to have a coverage area of 5,000 families, many of the centers estimated their actual coverage area to be closer to 10,000 families—given the number of people living in informal situations such as occupations. Beyond insufficient human resources, multiple informants also expressed frustrations over the inadequacy of their centers' financial and material resources. As one local worker explained:

> If you were to read the rules of SUAS—they are very well designed… If we were to actually have this kind of support from the government—the way which it is written in the rules—the chance of us being able to…help these families move out of situations of poverty and violence would be enormous. But in practice, this is not what happens. In practice, they put us here and tell us what tools of theirs we should use. They put all of the responsibility on the shoulders of the worker—as if we had superpowers to fix these families' problems. We don't. We need resources. If a family arrives here and is hungry—there is nothing we can do. Give them a hug? That doesn't get rid of hunger. No, there are some things that you need material resources for. We don't have any…. Sometimes, families come here and tell us all of their problems, and at the end up of they look at us and say, "*So what can you do*?" We can't do anything. (Interview CRAS 2018)

"To know in order to include": The Cadastro Único and the changing gaze of the welfare state

The Cadastro Único was a fundamental tool that shifted the way that the state bureaucracy "saw" poor citizens during this period of Expansion. Using the concept proposed by James Scott in his 1998 book *Seeing Like a State*, it was an instrument that made the poor population "legible" to the state. As described by former president Dilma, it was through the Cadastro Único that "poverty [in Brazil] started to have a face, a name, an address and characteristics known by the state" (Rouseff in Campello et al 2015, 15–16). Ultimately, however, its purported goal was not just to count the poor but also to make the poor count—in the sense of collecting this information as a means for enhancing the state's

ability to serve this population. This perspective is explicitly reflected in the official branding of the Cadastro Único, which was updated in 2010 to feature the promotional slogan "to know in order to include" (*conhecer para incluir)* (Figure 4.2). As discussed in Section 4.1, as the government worked to scale up the Bolsa Família program during the Expansion period, it also made important revisions to the Cadastro Único registry (such as the type of information collected) as well revisions to registration strategies (such as "active searching" and the decentralization of registration sites). These changes carried with them implications for how effectively the state could "know" and thus "include" different types of vulnerable and marginalized families.



Figure 4.2 Logo of the Cadastro Único: "To know in order to include"
Source: Cadastro Único promotional materials, Ministry of Social Development.

One of the most important implications of the changes implemented during this period was to make "visible" groups that had previously been invisible to the state. As a former Minister of MDS noted, "we made a huge effort to find the so called 'hidden poor.' That is, the poor who are so poor that they disappear. Many times, they don't have a birth certificate, or they live on the street or in the periphery where they have no official address" (Interview Patrus Ananias 2018). The Cadastro Único was explicitly adapted to be able to include these types of individuals. For example, it is not required to have civil documentation in order to start the registration process. While documentation needs to be submitted for every family member before their entry can be considered "complete," the government

has clear messaging that encourages families to register anyway, letting them know that the interviewer can help guide them in the process to acquire formal documentation. Research from Hunter and Sugiyama (2018) on the expansion of birth registration in Brazil and from Da Escóssia (2021) on the trajectories of Brazilians without identity documents both point to the key role of social programs—and in particular, Bolsa Família—in driving demand for civil documentation among poorer populations that were seeking access to benefits. As Hunter and Sugiyama (2018, 408) note, "document acquisition, one downstream effect of the rise of social assistance, represents a highly positive development for the expansion of citizenship."

Beyond making "invisible" families legible to the state, the Cadastro Único has been continually revised with careful attention to the nature of that legibility—considering how the kind of information collected shapes what types of families the state is capable of seeing. One major change that Bolsa Família introduced is the way that the Cadastro Único sees families. In the context of previous programs—such as Bolsa Escola and Bolsa Alimentação—only those family members who were directly targeted by the benefit scheme were included on the registry. In the context of Bolsa Família, however, all family members needed to be included on the registry—regardless of whether or not there was a specific benefit directed toward them. As described by a former Bolsa Escola and current SENARC worker:

> The [previous cash transfer] programs didn't look at the family as a whole. For example, Bolsa Escola. Its registration form (the Cadastro Único) only had space to include a mom and three children—even if the family had four or five children. The logic was *"We are willing to pay benefits for up to three children*." The government didn't have the management sensibility to say, *"Despite only being able to pay for up to three children, we want to know about the family as a whole—so we want to register all of the people in the family*." Bolsa Alimentação was the same way. This changed with Bolsa Família. Bolsa Família began to look at the family as a whole. The registration form required all members of the family to be included. This was particularly important in the context of the conditionalities. For example, imagine that a family has six or seven children. Even though Bolsa Família only pays up to five variable benefits for children, the monitoring of education and health conditionalities is done for all of the children. If any of the children fail to meet the conditionalities, the entire family's benefit is blocked. This is a huge gain if you

> look at it in comparison to Bolsa Escola, for example. In Bolsa Escola we only monitored up to three children. If there were four children in the family, the family kind of ended up choosing which three children they thought would have more success in school to include in the registry. The fourth child may have been sent to work or didn't end up going to school for other reasons. And we [the federal government] wouldn't know. Not anymore—not with Bolsa Família. (Interview SENARC 2018)

This widening of the state's gaze to the family-level was critical for ensuring the broader incorporation of these families into state services. In addition to shifting how the state saw the family as a whole, the revisions to the Cadastro Único registration shifted the state's ability to see different types of families—such as those living in situations of greater informality or those facing additional sources of structural exclusion or marginalization. This materialized, for example, through revisions to the questionnaire that collected information on both informal and formal sources of income, allowed space for a description of a family's address, allowed for same-sex partnerships, allowed space to enter a nickname or a "social name," and allowed for the identification of Traditional and Specific Population Groups (Interview SEDESE 2018).

Alongside changes to the questionnaire, the use of active searching strategies undertaken by mobile teams across Brazil further enabled the state to reach communities with whom it did not have pre-existing relationships. This was particularly true in the context of seeking out families who belonged to Traditional and Specific Population Groups. These are groups who have historically "lived in places distant from municipal centers with little attention and support from public policies" (MDS 2015). To highlight how the active searching began to change this relationship, a former SENARC public servant recounted the following anecdote:

> For you to have an idea, when we started this approach, we had to do it in a centralized way because the municipal governments didn't have any connection with these populations—both because they didn't have access and because they weren't interested...We had to contract a company to go to the municipalities, register *quilombolas*, get the data, and then go to the local government and have them transmit it to us. But we realized that this strategy wouldn't work in the long term, and we had to make the municipalities take control of their responsibility for these vulnerable populations. We made a huge effort of organizing meetings between

> governments and representatives of these vulnerable groups…in order create a connection between the state and the families in order to ensure that this population would be reached. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Over time, the share families registered in the Cadastro Único belonging to Traditional and Specific Population Groups has grown steadily. As of 2022, they comprised over 11% of registry entries (over 4 million families) (Figure 4.3). In addition to the active searching strategies, there was (and continues to be) an effort to further decentralize Cadastro Único registration sites within municipalities to local CRAS centers dispersed throughout the territory. Many of the existing municipal-level or regional-level registration sites are often difficult for many bolsista families to access—given that many poor families live in remote or peripheral areas and face challenges such as limited access to transportation, financial resources, time, and information. In the terminology of Herd and Moynihan (2018), this results in a high "administrative burden" being placed the citizens least able to shoulder it. Moreover, this is not a one-off burden, given that each time a family's situation changes, they need to go to a registration site to update their information.

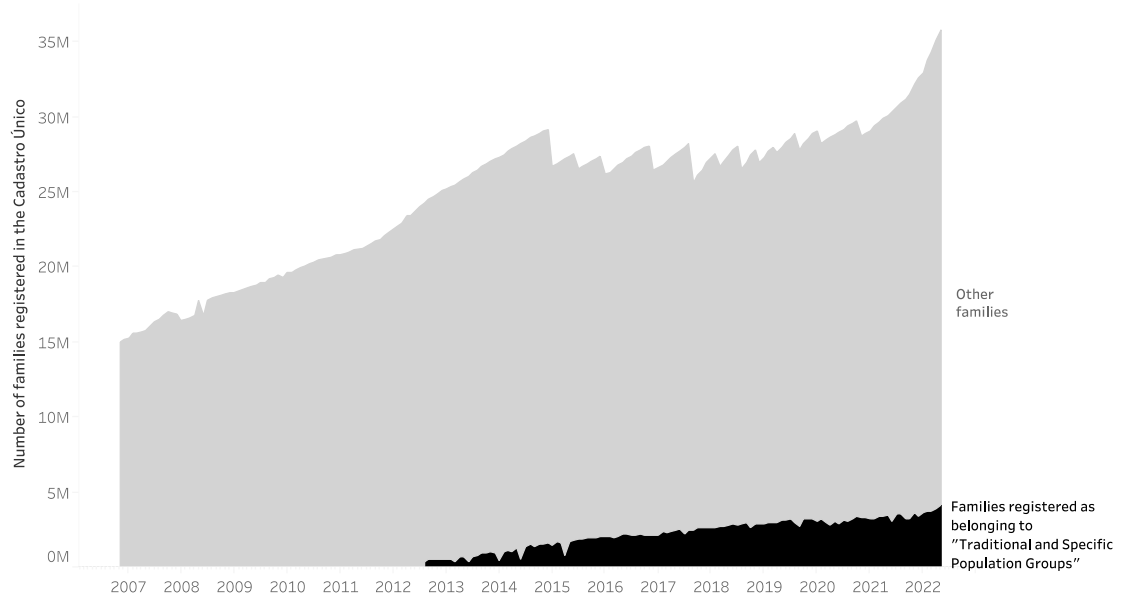


Figure 4.3 The rise in registration of Traditional and Specific Population Groups (in black) in the Cadastro Único (2007-2022)
Source: Data from Data from Ministry of Citizenship, CECAD 2.0.

While the Cadastro Único has been adapted to account for a greater degree of diversity in the reality of families' lives, it has not yet been adapted to account for the dynamism of that reality. For example, many poor families tend to have volatile incomes due to frequent changes in their employment status. In order to allow for these fluctuations in income, the program has a Permanence Rule (*Regra de Permanência*) which allows bolsistas to temporarily remain in the program in the case that their income exceeds the per capita thresholds for the program (up to a maximum of half of the minimum wage). However, if a family fails to update their Cadastro Único with their change in income, they risk having their benefits blocked due to detected "irregularities." Similarly, if families fail to update their Cadastro Único with information such as changes in address or family composition (i.e. deaths, births, marriages), they risk having their benefits blocked. As a local social worker described, these types of changes are common for many families:

> These families are really dynamic – I mean *really* dynamic. They move constantly within the CRAS territory and also in terms of family composition. Sometimes in one year, a person will enter and leave a household three times—they come, they go, they come, they go. Sometimes, when we go to someone's house, they have so-and-so from the countryside living with them, or a cousin, or a homeless person, or even a stranger. We have gone to people's homes and there were strangers living there with them. (Interview CRAS 2018)

While the discourse on cash transfer programs tends to focus on benefits being blocked due to conditionality non-compliance, according to local CRAS and regional workers the share of families who experience blockages due to non-compliance is very small in comparison to the share who experiences blockages due to detected irregularities in their registry data. One regional worker estimated that around 90% of the cases of blocked or canceled benefits that her center currently deals with are in relation to detected irregularities (Interview Regional 2018). The consequences of these blockages can be very severe for families. The gap between the speed of bureaucracy and the urgency of families' lives is brought to the forefront in these moments. As one municipal worker expressed, "the Cadastro has an issue dealing with families that are experiencing emergencies. There is no way for us to place an alert in the system. You have a family that is extremely vulnerable and needs their

benefit to be released with a certain urgency, but there is no field to specify this—nowhere to indicate '*This is very urgent*!'" (Interview GTREC 2018). While it is virtually impossible to respond efficiently to every individual issue from a bureaucratic perspective, it is simultaneously necessary to do so from a human perspective. As conveyed in the words of a SENARC worker: "You have almost 14 million families in this program. If you are able to guarantee that your processes are 95% efficient – that's great. But when we are talking about families in situations of poverty—you cannot just consider a family a number" (Interview SENARC 2018).

"An annoying cricket in their ear": Incentivizing pro-poor universalization of integrated state services

As the previous sub-sections detailed, the Bolsa Família program catalyzed the creation of a bureaucracy capable of finding and delivering cash benefits to the poorest families across all of Brazil's municipalities. However, while the primary benefit offered by the program was a monetary transfer, the objectives of the program were broader. The program's focus on breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty through the integrated delivery of services (manifested primarily through the program's conditionalities) ended up prompting inclusive capacity building feedback effects on other state bureaucracies as well. As explained by a SENARC worker, this was an intentional part of the program's design:

> The idea wasn't to just create a cash transfer program. We wanted to create a program that could fight structural poverty – that could help create a way for other policies to be integrated with it. Not to say that it could resolve all the world's problems – no. But we thought that the Cadastro Único and Bolsa Família would help to identify the poorest families and actually make it so that the different social sectors would see and serve this public. (Interview SENARC 2018)

This took place across multiple sectors linked to program, such as the social assistance, education, health, and financial sectors.

In the context of social assistance, one key factor driving this feedback effect was the designation of bolsistas as a "priority public" for the sector's services. This designation was formalized through a 2009 directive on the *Integrated Management of Services, Benefits, and Income Transfers in the Context of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS)* (MDS e Comissão Intergestores Tripartite 2010). This document and its underlying concepts (particularly language around the importance of integrating "services with benefits") permeated many of my interviews with social assistance workers at the municipal and local levels. As explained by a local CRAS worker:

> The public of Bolsa Família and of the Cadastro Único are the priority public of CRAS centers. These are the families that are being seen every day by social assistance workers and psychologists, that are participating in workshops, that need access to a subsidized energy tariff, that need to access a NIS identification number in order to request a BPC benefit. If I am going to organize an activity, the first families that I will mobilize are Bolsa Família beneficiaries. So, in truth I see the arrival of this program within the CRAS centers as the activation of an integrated policy—where services and benefits can work together. (Interview CRAS 2018)

In this sense, Bolsa Família did not only serve as an "end" for many families in terms of receiving a cash transfer, but also as a "means" in terms of incorporating them into a larger network of public services and social assistance. Ultimately, the success of Bolsa Família as is in large part due to this embeddedness within a broader network. For example, a recent comparative analysis between Bolsa Família and the South Africa's Child Support on how income transfer programs can enhance women's empowerment found that Bolsa Família is more effective due this type of embeddedness (Hunter, Patel and Sugiyama 2021). As the authors explain:

> A better social service infrastructure distinguishes the context in which BF is embedded. In Brazil, a well-developed primary health care network resulting from the Family Health Program (PSF) and a comparatively decent social assistance system, represented by the Reference Centers for Social Assistance (CRAS), work in coordination with BF and its home ministry, the Ministry of Social Development. Without the extensive reach of these programs, which deploy teams of nurses and social workers into marginalized communities, beneficiaries [of Bolsa Família] could not reasonably meet the program's specified conditionalities, which (we argue) induce women to interact with the state in ways that can enhance their social integration and sense of agency (Hunter, Patel and Sugiyama 2021, 260).

However, while Bolsa Família has helped to integrate bolsistas into the social assistance network in many municipalities, this remains a challenge in contexts where Bolsa Família still is operated outside of the social assistance sector. As explained by a SENARC worker:

> Whether or not we want it to be this way, there is a part of Bolsa Família that is operated outside of the social assistance sector. In 60% of municipalities, it is operated within the social assistance sector, but in 40% it is not. There is an autonomous unit that provides Cadastro Único services for Bolsa Família. I understand the reality of the arrangements, but I am not able to see how Bolsa Família can be disassociated with social protection services—I think it is absolutely necessary. (Interview SENARC 2018)

The gap between these two types of arrangements can be illustrated in the case of Belo Horizonte, which only recently moved the operation of the Bolsa Família and Cadastro Único into the social assistance sector. Prior to the city's 2017 administrative reform, they operated within the Secretariat of Social Policy. In the previous context, in which Bolsa Família operated outside the social assistance sector, local workers described the challenges they faced in developing close relationships with beneficiary families as follows:

> At the time, even though we were in the CRAS center and knew that the priority families were Bolsa Família beneficiaries—we didn't know who they were. We would receive a list from the government with their names—and usually a list that wasn't up to date. And we would go try to find these people to offer them services. The relationship we built with them was different. They were already registered; they were already receiving Bolsa Família—so, we had to go looking for them. Many times, this didn't create the type of contact you needed to build a relationship with the family—it was very sporadic. (Interview Regional 2018)

Beyond its role in expanding the reach of the targeted social assistance sector, Bolsa Família has also helped to facilitate families' access to more "universal" public services such as education and health that previously had more limited coverage in poorer areas. This was primarily materialized via the conditionalities placed on the program that helped to hold the state accountable—by pressuring it to meet its "co-responsibilities" of providing schools and health centers for this population. While families are not required to comply with conditionalities if there is no school or health center nearby,

the data on their inability to do so raised a flag regarding the lack of service coverage in many poor communities. As described by a former minister of MDS:

> The path to universalization of services is not necessarily a shorter route to expanding coverage to the poor…While we need to universalize services, the poor cannot be the last people to receive them. Bolsa Família created this pressure on the system. It was an annoying cricket in the ear of public management with evidence saying "*Look, there are no services here. Look, there are no services here.*" (Interview MDS 2018)

This is not to say that this process was smooth. Multiple informants reflected on the challenges that they faced (and continue to face) in managing this type of inter-sectoral program.

> When we started, Education and Health would look at Bolsa Família and complain that "*We are going to be forced to help the Bolsa Família team. This is not my responsibility* (*não consta nas minhas attribuções)—that was the phrase that we would always hear—to [do X related to conditionality monitoring]. I will do it, but it is just extra work for me and has nothing to do with my sector*"…But today I think that they see that Bolsa Família has served as a vehicle for the universalization of their systems—for the education sector to meet its national goals related to the share of children in schools, for the health sector to reach groups that it had never reached before. This would not have happened using their standard tools. (Interview MDS 2018).

While the research on conditional cash transfer programs tends to focus on the impacts of receiving conditional benefits for families (how it has changed the "demand" side), it often misses the impacts of delivering conditional benefits for the state (how it has changed the "supply" side). Similarly, while economists have focused on asking whether poor people would prefer to receive cash transfers *or* public services (see for example Khemani et al (2019) and Sandefur et al (2015)), the experience of Bolsa Família suggests that in reality this is not necessarily an "either/or" question. Arguably, in contexts where public services were not yet fully universalized (such as Brazil in the early 2000s)—conditional cash transfer schemes can play an important role in incentivizing their expansion to poorer citizens; in this sense, it is not so much a question of trade-offs but of complementarities.

Moreover, as with the example of the social assistance sector, Bolsa Família provided a lens of prioritization in the education and health sectors—ensuring that programming included a focus on the poorest. For example, schools that had a larger share of children whose families were enrolled in

Bolsa Família were targeted for inclusion in the federal "More Education Program" and the "Health in School Program." The role of Bolsa Família in promoting the prioritization of bolsistas in education and health services also materialized at the sub-national level. For example, as one municipal health worker explained:

> SUS is very inclusive—it has very high coverage in our municipality. But I think Bolsa Família helps us to be aware of who is the most vulnerable population in the city, so that we can prioritize them. Because for us, who work in SUS at the local level, one of our main tasks is what we call "health monitoring" (*vigilância da saude*). This is something that is very important for us. Bolsa Família helps us to prioritize this population in our monitoring—it helps us to know who is in a greater situation of vulnerability so we can better facilitate their access to health services. (Interview SMSA 2020)

Though, according to informants, promoting this type of approach in the education and health sectors was a gradual and difficult process—particularly given that concepts such as "universality" and "targeting" can have very different meanings across sectors. For example, as a SENARC worker reflected:

> The health sector had a very crystalized idea of what "universality" meant. This was a very strong principle and it conflicted with the notion of looking specifically at one group. So, it was very difficult for us to engage with them using a discourse that asked them to look at the poorest. They would say to us, "*No, we look at everyone.*" So, we would say "*Ok. That's great. But could you look just a little extra at the poor? A little extra at those in Bolsa Família*?" (Interview SENARC 2018).

In addition to bringing a lens of prioritization, Bolsa Família's conditionalities promoted a new logic in terms of how to think about the policy users of education and health services. From the logic of Bolsa Família, it was not enough to simply extend services to users; the sector must also work to understand the underlying barriers that different families face in utilizing these services—to go beyond students and patients as such and contextualize them within their broader socioeconomic situation. The Bolsa Família team intentionally worked to advance this type of logic. As one SENARC manager explained:

> We wanted the education sector to be able to see who were the children that were not coming to school….We started to begin a dialogue with them, saying—"*Let's see why they are not coming,*

> *let us know, and the social worker can go to their house to see what is happening. Maybe this child is facing some type of problem with violence or child labor. What is going on with this family that is preventing the child form coming to school*?" It wasn't easy to get them to buy into this approach. But we kept trying—it was a process. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Changing institutional mindsets is slow work and remains a process that is still ongoing today. For example, municipal workers recounted how they continue to face challenges with their educational counterparts in effectively engaging on this agenda:

> We had an inter-sectoral training activity the other week with representatives from health and education—because they operate the conditionalities. One of the activities we worked on was how to report the reason why a child was absent school. There is a long list of possible reasons, but 85% of the cases are currently listed as the code 58. What is code 58? "*The school did not report why the student was absent*." When this information gets sent to us, we don't learn anything. If I want to work on providing integrated services to a family—health, social assistance, and education—the role of information is very important. If the information that we receive is "*I don't know"* there is no way to operationalize this. (Interview GTREC 2018)

While broader bureaucratic transformation may still be limited, the seeds of this transformation have been planted through the changing mindsets of individual bureaucrats. For example, one education sector worker (a former teacher, currently leading the education sector's engagement with Bolsa Família at the state level), reflected on how her perspective on the program has shifted over time:

> I have learned a lot over time—I now have a different perspective on Bolsa Família. I never used to understand why people thought that this program was so important. Many other people in Education don't see it either…People still see it as something that is just linked to social assistance. But it is not just the responsibility of social assistance. The role of the education sector needs to go beyond just reporting students' attendance and putting a code in the system—which in practice, is what we do now. No, schools need to look further to understand why children are not coming. Do they have a doctor's note? Is there something going on in their family? Schools need to be looking out for all their students, but especially those who are the most vulnerable. (Interview SEE 2020)

Summarizing the argument: Substantive citizenship during the Expansion

In sum, we see that in the context of substantive citizenship, Bolsa Família had important policy feedback effects on building more inclusive state capacity. This took shape not only within the program's bureaucracy itself, but also in related sectors such as social assistance, education, and health. This transformation radically changed the state's ability to "see" and "serve" poor populations—

making them both visible in state databases and prioritizing them in the delivery of state services. However, these changes only went so far. For example, they fell short of ensuring that new state structures were supported by adequate human, material and financial resources, that they were flexible enough to adapt to the complex, dynamic, and constrained realities of the poor families with whom were designed to interface, and that expansions in coverage of services were met with equal improvements in the quality of those services.

4.4 Cohesive citizenship: Drawing a line

While the Expansion period fostered the legal and bureaucratic inclusion of millions of poor families, this was not necessarily accompanied by a process of social approximation. This section explores this issue from the perspective of "the state as a focus of collective identity" and the resulting implications for cohesive citizenship. While the program's strict and transparent targeting criteria served to ensure that its benefits reached the poorest citizens, this approach has also served to create and reinforce boundaries between those designated as bolsistas and everyone else. As Marins (2017, 144) has argued, these boundaries interact with prevailing social dynamics to shape the public perception (and self-perception) of bolsistas: "the poverty line established by the program is more than a symbolic division, a virtual border that distinguishes the 'poor' from the 'non-poor.'…This distinction leads to other differentiating moral criteria, such as 'deserving' and 'underserving,' 'worker' and 'bum,' and 'good mom,' and 'bad mom.'" The following sub-sections explore three ways in which the program's design and implementation interacted with these types of social cleavages to preserve (and even increase) the social distance between groups. Specifically, it looks at 1) the personal implications of the impersonal classification of bolsistas as "poor"; 2) the social implications of the public and prejudicial narratives surrounding the program; and 3) the political implications of the individualized rather than collective targeting of the program.

"You are extremely poor": Boundaries of entitlement and the (im)personal politics of poverty classification

In order to target cash transfers to "the poor," the state must first define what "poor" means and then classify people as "poor" or "not poor" based on that criterion. While on one hand this is an impersonal category from the perspective of the institution classifying people, on the other hand it is a very personal category from the perspective of the people being classified. As Scott (1998, 82–83) notes, "state officials can often make their categories stick and impose their simplifications, because the state, of all institutions, is best equipped to insist on treating people according to its schemata. Thus, categories that may have begun as the artificial inventions…can end by becoming categories that organize people's daily experience." In this context, in order to receive Bolsa Família benefits, one must first accept a categorization as "poor" or "extremely poor." Importantly, these are concepts that are not emotionally neutral and often carry connotations of shame or humiliation. As described by one CRAS worker, "the fact of accepting the identity of being a 'Bolsa Família beneficiary' signals that you have a really terrible income—or no income at all—and that you have to be dependent on the benefit. No one wants to be dependent on this; I don't think anyone *wants* to receive a benefit like this" (Interview CRAS 2018). This is consistent with accounts from municipal managers who described how beneficiary families often try to hide the fact that they receive benefits. This desire to conceal one's beneficiary status is also reflected in interviews with bolsistas conducted by Marins (2017), for example, which recounted stories of bolsistas' embarrassment while waiting in line to withdraw their benefits at banks or lottery agencies and concealing their bright yellow identifying cards to the extent possible.

The personal tensions surrounding the state's classification of bolsistas as "poor" was evident during a meeting I observed in a local CRAS center for a group of beneficiary families. The CRAS worker conducted a presentation for the group on how Bolsa Família works. When she began describing

eligibility thresholds and the definition of "being poor," the dynamic in the room became visibly uncomfortable. When asking the worker to reflect on her experience giving this presentation, she explained to me that:

> I feel a bit uncomfortable, you know, telling people that "*You are extremely poor*." It is very strange. But it is the information that we have to give them—that they have the right to know. I think they have the right to know how much they are receiving, why they are receiving it, and how the government classifies them in order to decide how much they receive. (Interview CRAS 2018)

Several informants recounted to me situations where people's desire to distance themselves from an identity of being "poor" actually led to irregularities in their Cadastro Único registry—for example, in cases where they stated that they earned *more* money than they actually did in an effort to avoid the embarrassment of people knowing how precarious their situation actually was. This is compounded by the fact that in many registration centers interview kiosks are lined up directly next to one another, limiting the privacy of the information exchange. As described by a regional worker:

> There is not a lot of privacy in the area where the interviews are done. At the kiosks people sit right next to each other. Sometimes, when the Cadastro asks a question such as "*Is there anyone in your family that is in prison*?"—or something else related to difficult circumstances for the family—if there is someone next to the person that they know, the person feels embarrassed to respond. In general, it doesn't really cause many problems, but occasionally we see that it does. For example, when asking people about their monthly income. Some people feel embarrassed to say that they have no income. So sometimes—this has happened here before—they make up an income that doesn't exist. When we do a home visit to verify their income, you realize that they lied out of embarrassment—because they were ashamed to say that they have nothing. (Interview Regional 2018)

Moreover, in order to be classified as "poor" one must first "prove" one's poverty—both through the Cadastro Único interview but also through verification home visits to audit the veracity of the self-reported information (which are required for 20% of new registrations). In this context, poverty classification takes on a performative aspect between the state and the bolsista, with a high asymmetry of power in favor of the state and high potential consequences for the bolsista. The implications of this for fostering a defensive or distrustful posture in some families was evident throughout my fieldwork. For example, as previously mentioned in Chapter 3, in my encounters with beneficiary

families there remained a concern that I was a social assistance worker who was there to verify their poverty status and could potentially revoke their benefit. This type of dynamic was also mentioned by several of the social assistance workers themselves. For example, as one CRAS worker reflected:

> Personally, I think that the home visits can be very invasive. We are very careful when we conduct them—taking into account the issue of privacy for the family, of their potential concerns. Some people—particularly those that receive BPC or Bolsa Família—approach us with a bit more distrust, I think mostly out of fear of losing their benefit. *'Who is this public agency coming to my house? What is this person coming here to do—are they coming to cut my benefit*?" This happens sometimes. But the majority of the community is not like that with us." (Interview CRAS 2018)

Moreover, the program's stringent classification of who is considered "poor" has created a situation in which only a subset of vulnerable families are recognized as deserving of state support. Bolsa Família considers only income per capita in its calculation of who is "extremely poor" and "poor" and includes a hard cut-off line between those who are eligible and those who are not. When I asked bureaucrats "what one thing they would change about Bolsa Família," almost all of the workers included in their response that they would increase the eligibility cut-offs or consider adding additional eligibility criteria (such as looking at expenses as well as income) or taking into account other dimensions of poverty beyond income. While almost all workers agreed that the program was very well designed and built on a sound methodology—they voiced concerns over the "injustices" imposed by the rigidity of some of the criteria: "Imagine a family with an income per capita of R$ 300 and two children at home—they have no right to the benefit. If they earn even one cent over the threshold—they don't qualify" (Interview CRAS 2018). From this perspective, the program has fostered a binary division between bolsistas ("poor") and non-bolsistas ("non-poor"), even though in reality families exist on more of a continuum—with those living just above and just below the poverty line facing a very similar set of circumstances.

In the spotlight: The dangerous balancing act between "social control" and social judgement

Not only do bolsistas have to contend with the personal implications of being classified as poor, but they also have to contend with the social implications of being classified as a program "beneficiary." Since its inception, the Bolsa Família program has been a highly prominent program in the public eye. While on one hand, this watchful eye has strengthened mechanisms for "social control" (through which citizens can help to ensure transparency and accountability in the distribution of benefits), on the other hand it has cultivated an environment of social judgement (in which citizens end up adjudicating for themselves who is and who is not deserving of benefits). This has materialized in several notable ways, including social judgments about inclusion/exclusion errors, social judgments about how bolsistas spend their money, and social judgments about the moral character of bolsistas. Interestingly, these judgements come from a variety of actors across society (both bolsistas and non-bolsistas) as well as the state (both the social assistance sector and other sectors) and are spread through both formal channels of communication (such as the mainstream media) as well as informal channels (such as gossip).

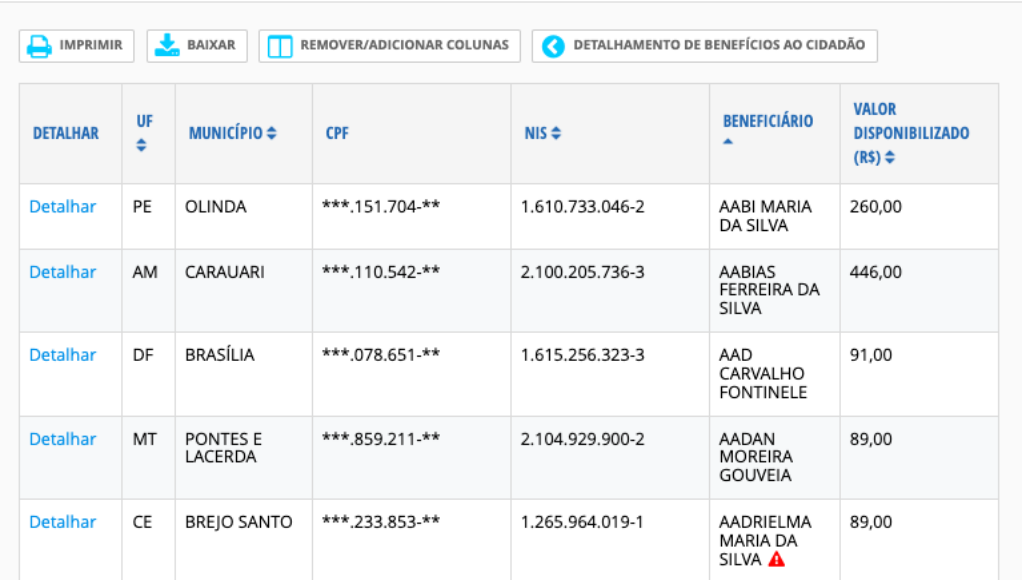
As the PT government's hallmark social program, Bolsa Família was constantly scrutinized in political discourse and in the mainstream media. While analyses of Bolsa Família press coverage over time have shown both positive and negative sentiment, an early wave of reporting focusing on issues of "fraud" in the program (both inclusion and exclusion errors) cast a long shadow on public perceptions of the program and its users (Lindert and Vincensini 2010). Multiple SENARC and MDS informants pointed to one key media report in particular—referring to it as a "massacre." In October of 2004, the major media network Rede Globo ran a 23-minute Sunday special on the then recently created Bolsa Família program (Memória Globo 2004). The special aired on the popular show *Fantástico*, and featured cases of families who received benefits but were not poor (inclusion errors) as well as families who did not

receive benefits but were poor (exclusion errors). Despite the fact that the program evolved significantly since that time and is now considered to be "exemplary" in terms of its targeting efficacy (S. Soares et al. 2018), these narratives have remained persistent over time in the public discourse—transforming the category of bolsista into a contested social group based on rare cases of egregious errors. In the words of a CRAS worker, "The media constructs a sense of shame. It takes one case in a million and transforms it into a scandal of fraud: '*The relative of a mayor in a rural town receives Bolsa Família!*'" (Interview CRAS 2018).

In efforts to combat perceptions of fraud, the government invested in extensive measures of transparency and "social control." For example, in addition to verifying Cadastro Único registry data through cross-checks with other government databases and home visits by social workers, the government publishes the data of all bolsistas online in its transparency portal (see Figure 4.4) and has hotlines available for citizens to call and "denounce" people that they think are wrongly receiving benefits. This is an important element to promote program accountability, particularly considering the need to combat a history of clientelism in social assistance delivery. However, this type of social control also manifests in a situation where bolsistas are constantly being monitored by others—often by others who do not have a well-informed understanding of the program's underlying rules (for example, how the per capita income calculation works, whether or not someone can continue to work while receiving the benefit, or whether or not someone can own an asset such as a car). As one informant put it, while the "design of the program is simple, the rules behind it are very complicated" (Interview SENARC 2108). Thus, it is unsurprising that there is a constant flow of questions and "denouncements" from the public (including bolsistas) about whether the "right" people are receiving the "right" benefits. As one SENARC worker reflected:

> The public has a very strong sense of ownership over the program—which is both good and bad. On one hand, it helps to promote social control, which is a very important aspect of the

> program for us. People know enough about the program that they call to tell us that that there are people receiving the benefit that they don't think should be receiving it. On the other hand, we receive a lot of empty "denouncements" because a lot of people don't actually know the specifics of the program's rules. (Interview SENARC 2018)



IMPRIMIR | BAIXAR | REMOVER/ADICIONAR COLUNAS | DETALHAMENTO DE BENEFÍCIOS AO CIDADÃO

DETALHAR	UF	MUNICÍPIO	CPF	NIS	BENEFICIÁRIO	VALOR DISPONIBILIZADO (R$)
Detalhar	PE	OLINDA	***.151.704-**	1.610.733.046-2	AABI MARIA DA SILVA	260,00
Detalhar	AM	CARAUARI	***.110.542-**	2.100.205.736-3	AABIAS FERREIRA DA SILVA	446,00
Detalhar	DF	BRASÍLIA	***.078.651-**	1.615.256.323-3	AAD CARVALHO FONTINELE	91,00
Detalhar	MT	PONTES E LACERDA	***.859.211-**	2.104.929.900-2	AADAN MOREIRA GOUVEIA	89,00
Detalhar	CE	BREJO SANTO	***.233.853-**	1.265.964.019-1	AADRIELMA MARIA DA SILVA	89,00

Figure 4.4 Transparency Portal: Details of Bolsa Família Beneficiaries (Example Screenshot)
Source: CGU Transparency Portal.

This type of social monitoring does not end at the point of program eligibility. Another key source of public scrutiny that bolsistas face is regarding how they choose to spend the cash that do they receive—despite there being no formal rules restricting this. The following anecdote from a SENARC worker contextualizes the public pressures to monitor this aspect of the program alongside the complicated realities in which some families are making difficult decisions about how to spend such scarce resources:

> We once received a complaint about a woman who used the money from Bolsa Família to pay her husband's bar tab. This was way back in the beginning of the program, and we were still adjusting some of the rules. We never had the intention to control the use of the money—but we thought, let's see what is happening with this…When the municipality went to conduct a home visit, the woman explained to the social assistance worker that "*My husband is sick. He is an alcoholic. We do everything we can to stop him from using alcohol, but sometimes he hides his drinking from us. He had this hidden bar tab, and he began receiving death threats if he didn't pay it. I can't be without the father of my children.*" How on earth am I supposed to say that she didn't use the money well? (Interview SENARC 2018)

In order to combat these kinds of stereotypes, MDS invested heavily in conducting evaluation studies to be able to show the actual impacts of the program (such as impacts on labor market transitions, consumption patterns, etc). However, in a broader context of the politically motivated narratives that dominated mainstream media coverage at the time, this type of research was not always enough to reframe public perceptions. As a former minister of MDS recounted:

> When one of our research studies found that people were using their Bolsa Família benefits to buy refrigerators, Globo published an article with the headline *Bolsa Geladeira*! (Refrigerator Grant!)—as if it were a scandal [see Figure 4.5]…We had to explain that refrigerators, stoves, blenders—all of these things—are components of food security. (Interview Patrus Ananias 2018)

This type of social judgement over bolsistas' consumption patterns remains prominent in the national psyche—including among bolsistas themselves. For example, in an online Facebook group of bolsistas, I read multiple posts from users showing what they bought with their benefits—seeking to publicly justify their spending on items such as school supplies for their children or groceries for their children.



Bolsa-eletrodoméstico

ALI KAMEL

Todos são testemunhas de que, quando o Bolsa Família foi lançado, o objetivo era matar a fome de 54 milhões de brasileiros. Meus leitores são também testemunhas de que, desde o início, venho dizendo que não existem 54 milhões de famintos. Pois bem, uma visita à página do Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social (http://www.mds.gov.br/noticias/consumo-de-bens-duraveis-aumenta-por-causa-do-bolsa-familia) vai surpreender. Ali, o governo anuncia que vários estudos comprovam que o Bolsa Família tem ajudado os beneficiários a comprar eletrodomésticos. Isso mesmo, nada de arroz, feijão e carne, isso tudo que há muito já está na mesa dos pobres brasileiros, como provou a Pesquisa de Orçamento Familiar do IBGE; o que tem sido comprado é geladeira, microondas, máquina de lavar, fogão, liquidificador, forno elétrico, televisão e DVD.

Rosa Maria Marques, da PUC-SP, é citada dizendo que, no passado, todo dinheiro extra era usado pelos pobres na compra de alimentos, mas que isso mudou, graças ao efeito multiplicador do Bolsa Família: "Com o passar do tempo, as famílias ganharam segurança de que vão receber o benefício e, assim, puderam destinar parte de sua renda para a compra a prazo de eletrodomésticos." Rosa cita outros fatores para explicar o crescimento do consumo daqueles bens, como a elevação constante do salário mínimo, a estabilidade monetária, o aumento do número de trabalhadores com carteira assinada e a ampliação do crédito consignado, mas a ênfase do press-release do ministério é a injeção de recursos do Bolsa Família, R$ 10,9 bi previstos para este ano.

O release cita também Felícia Madeira, do Seade (São Paulo), para quem oscilações no orçamento sempre impediram que famílias pobres fizessem gastos que necessitassem de um horizonte longo, fato remediado agora pelo Bolsa Família: "Como existe a garantia de que o dinheiro virá, a pessoa se planeja e pode abrir um crediário para comprar um eletrodoméstico ou um equipamento para trabalhar."

O ministério dá exemplos. A catadora de lixo Rosineide dos Santos, 47 anos, de Maceió, com três filhos, recebe R$ 76 do Bolsa Família, mas declara uma renda total de R$ 200. Com isso, pegou um empréstimo de R$ 500 no Banco do Cidadão, uma instituição que opera com microcrédito para empreendimentos populares. O release diz que ela já tem fogão, liquidificador, cafeteira e forno elétrico, mas que, assim que saldar a dívida, pretende comprar uma televisão. Ou seja, não usa o Bolsa Família para se alimentar nem o Banco do Cidadão para um pequeno empreendimento: usa para aumentar a conta de luz. Patrícia Belmira Henrique, de 43, manicure mineira, recebe R$ 112 do Bolsa Família. O dinheiro, diz o release, ajuda a pagar a máquina de lavar roupa. "Estou feliz, porque é a minha primeira máquina de lavar. Antes, tinha que lavar a roupa na mão. Dava um trabalho enorme."

O release cita ainda o economista Cícero Péricles de Carvalho, da Universidade Federal de Alagoas, para quem o Nordeste está se transformando num cenário de muitos investimentos produtivos. O release prossegue: "A explicação para esse crescimento, além da diminuição das desigualdades regionais, vem sempre da mesma origem: as transferências de renda federal crescentes e os investimentos sociais que impactam sobre a maioria da população nordestina." O texto conclui, orgulhoso, citando o caso de Alagoas, que há 45 meses bate recordes de consumo popular, sem, porém, "ter um crescimento econômico que justifique tamanha elevação de compras". A razão, diz o texto, é clara: os R$ 2 bi que a Previdência dá aos aposentados de lá (o dobro do que dava em 2002) e os R$ 300 milhões do Bolsa Família distribuídos por ano a mais da metade da população do estado.

Aposentadoria e Bolsa Família. Há futuro nisso?

O discurso oficial agora é que o dinheiro do Bolsa Família aumentaria a demanda por bens duráveis, o que levaria à ampliação de fábricas e ao aumento de empregos. Balela. Mesmo se fosse verdade, o consumo cresceria nas áreas carentes e a produção, nas áreas já afluentes, perpetuando as desigualdades. Na realidade, o programa transfere, mas não gera renda: o consumo só aumentaria se a propensão de consumir dos beneficiários do Bolsa Família fosse maior do que a propensão dos que pagam o imposto que torna o programa possível, o que é improvável. O contribuinte, sem o imposto, gastaria o dinheiro em alguma coisa. Assim, trata-se de uma soma de resultado zero, não havendo aumento de produção. O programa distribui renda? Sim, mas de uma maneira não sustentável: o efeito cessará assim que o programa tiver um fim. Distribuição sustentada de renda só se obtém educando o povo, para que se possa abastecer de gente qualificada uma economia crescente.

Ninguém pode ficar contrariado sabendo que pessoas pobres, na ausência de fome, estão comprando eletrodomésticos. É bom olhar a Pnad, como faz o release, e constatar que entre 2002 e 2006, nas faixas de renda mais baixas, cresceu muito o número de lares que tem esses bens. Mas é angustiante olhar os dados das provas nacionais e internacionais que medem o conhecimento de nossas crianças e constatar que tudo vai de mal a pior. Se não há fome, por que gastar R$ 10,9 bi com o Bolsa Família em vez de aplicar a maior parte disso em educação? Para aumentar artificialmente a venda de eletrodomésticos em áreas carentes?

Essa política condenará as crianças de hoje a continuar, como os seus pais, a depender do Bolsa Família para ter um microondas, enquanto um investimento maciço em educação faria delas seres independentes, produtivos, indispensáveis para chegarmos ao bom futuro.

ALI KAMEL *é jornalista. E-mail: ali.kamel@oglobo.com.br.*

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Figure 4.5 "Household Appliance Grant": Headline from March 4, 2008 Globo newspaper
Source: Globo Digital Archives.

The consequences of these public narratives have also spilled over into the operation of the program itself—materialized in the personal prejudices of some of the social assistance, health, and education workers who implement the program. As described by several key informants working in these different sectors:

> *Social Assistance:* There are still many professional public sector workers who don't agree with Bolsa Família. Both within the social assistance sector, in health centers, and in schools. We need people to understand the program better in order to get rid of these criticisms. Their criticisms very much follow the popular narrative, that "*It is a benefit that makes people not want to work*" or that "*People continue to stay poor because of the benefit.*" In reality, it is very much the opposite. The purpose of the program is so that poor people have the minimal conditions in order to meet their basic needs and be able to create strategies to get out of a situation of poverty. If we—as public sector workers—don't have this perspective—beneficiaries also won't have it. (Interview CRAS 2018)

> *Health:* We still have a lot of prejudice on the part of health workers. We have a lot of people who look at a certain family and say "*Oh, they don't deserve to receive Bolsa Família. They live in a good house, etc.*" As if living in a "good" house implies that this person is not currently facing a situation which qualifies them for this benefit. We are trying to deconstruct a series of prejudices that health workers have in relation to this population (Interview SMSA 2020)

> *Education:* Prejudice against people receiving Bolsa Família doesn't just materialize in the relationship of the school with the families, but sometimes it also happens involuntarily with the students themselves. I have heard both students and teachers say: "*You can't be absent because you receive Bolsa Família.*" They create a certain image of that student being a "Bolsa Família kid." Back when I was studying to be a teacher, I used to have this same perspective. I didn't understand it the way that I do now. (Interview SEE 2020)

While the state built during the Expansion period gained new capabilities in terms of its capacity to "see" the poor population, it did not necessarily see this population as equal. While the Bolsa Família bureaucracy noticed and invested in addressing this type of challenge (for example through training modules for Cadastro Único interviewers on how to treat poor families without prejudice during their interactions), this type of challenge cannot be overcome simply through capacity-building sessions—it requires broader processes of social transformation.

1 in 14 million: The limits of individual targeting and the lost potential for collective action

In their 2012 study *Vozes de Bolsa Família*, Walquiria Leão Rego and Alessandro Pinzani spoke with bolsistas across Brazil—learning about their experiences and amplifying their voices. One of the key themes that emerged from these interviews was the phenomenon of the "invisibility and silence" experienced by those living in situations of poverty. As the authors of the study point out, this silence was perpetuated in the context of the program, where benefits are distributed individually to families without complementary community-building efforts:

> In the majority of cases, beneficiaries told us that they don't meet or talk with one another, unless they are waiting in line at the bank to withdraw their benefits or in line to update their registry. Most municipal governments do not have the capacity to create spaces for beneficiaries to meet and debate about the difficulties they face in understanding what the procedures required by the program. In this way, the problem of their "silence" persists. (Rego and Pinzani 2012, 190)

This type of criticism of the program was widely recognized at the time, both by civil society as well as by the state itself—with different views on which actor should be responsible for addressing this type of challenge. As a former Minister of Social Development reflected:

> I remember one time we were at a global social forum, and a leader from an NGO violently criticized Bolsa Família—based on the view that Bolsa Família doesn't empower citizens, that it is individualized, that it doesn't create a collective environment of solidarity, etc. A leader from another social movement had a really interesting response to this. He asked: "*So, are you saying that it is the state that has to organize society? Not the NGOs, or social movements, or political parties? That it is the state*?" Of course, it is not the role of the state to do this, but we could have created an environment that facilitated this better. We didn't create any space where these women could organize themselves into some sort of community association of Bolsa Família beneficiaries, where they could develop an understanding of shared problems. We were not able to generate this. (Interview Tereza Campello 2018).

When the program was first being created, the federal government faced a difficult decision regarding who should be the primary actor implementing the program on the ground: civil society organizations or municipal governments. While they chose the latter, a decision which was instrumental in fostering the kind of inclusive state-building discussed in this chapter, the lack of articulation with the former may have also hindered the type of collective-building described here. While the creation of municipal councils for social assistance offered a layer of popular participation, their structure was not designed

to defend the situation of an individual family (facing, for example, blockage or cancellation of their Bolsa Família benefits), but rather to defend more collective issues (such as the closure of a CRAS center) (Interview CMAS 2018).

During my fieldwork, the lack of community spaces alongside the need for community discussion became very apparent. For example, the only ongoing group-based spaces I found for bolsistas to communicate with one another were informal social media groups. While CRAS centers organized occasional meetings for bolsistas (for example, required meetings for those in a situation of non-compliance), social assistance workers mentioned that they found it difficult to convene more regular collective discussion groups (for example, due to low attendance). In these social media groups, it was evident that bolsistas had a lot of questions about the program and how to navigate various issues such as those related to program changes, benefit amounts, benefit blockages, and messages received from MDS. Frequently, for example, people posted photos of the messages received on their withdrawal receipt or in their Bolsa Família app, asking "*What does this message mean*?" or "*What do I have to do? Help me. I don't understand*" (Facebook user posts in Tudo Sobre Bolsa Família group). Despite intentional efforts from SENARC to improve communication with bolsistas (such as conducting focus groups around messaging and developing a "dictionary" of more accessible terms, Interview SENARC 2018), the language used still remains confusing to many bolsistas. The challenge of navigating formal program communication is exacerbated by factors such as limited formal education or illiteracy among poorer populations a well as fears of interacting with the state (for example, out of concern that it could result in benefit cancellation, as previously discussed in this chapter).

Because Bolsa Família, like other CCT programs, targeted dispersed individual families rather than organized collective groups (such as formal workers organized in labor unions), this meant that the program had limited political feedback effects in terms of coalition-building among policy recipients.

In the framing of Holland and Ross Schneider (2017), this reflects the kind of "easy" approach to redistribution that was pursued by many Latin American welfare states at this time. As Bolsa Família only required layering new social assistance benefits on top of its old corporatist model, rather than radically reimaging the entire social protection system, it followed the kind of politically palatable model that "resulted in wide but not deep benefits, and wide but not deep welfare coalitions" (Holland and Ross Schneider 2017, 990). As Roberts (2021, 533) has argued, because of this, these policies had "a self-limiting quality that prevented them from serving as the first step in a sequential or cumulative process of reform leading to the "harder" stage of redistribution (Holland and Ross Schneider 2017); as such, they did not generate higher quality and effectively universalistic public services, or genuinely progressive systems of taxation, which the new inclusion did little to advance." This is very clear in the context of Bolsa Família, where the political dialogue around the program's design has not advanced beyond first-order questions–for example, the program's conditionalities remain focused on issues of access to services rather than quality of services and the program's financing remains focused on fighting for discretionary budget allocations rather than revisiting the progressivity of the broader fiscal system.

The lack of a more an organized and politically empowered program constituency hinders the potential for the program to go beyond its current model. As Rego and Pinzai (2012, 17) have reflected, in this sense one of the most imperative changes required to Bolsa Família is:

> to help bolsistas to organize themselves to share experiences between one another (as well as with institutions), to articulate their demands and transmit them to the local and federal authorities, in order to finally break the vicious cycle of the silence of the poor and the deafness of the institutions, so that bolsistas can stop being mere objectives of politics and become subjects of them.

However, overcoming this requires deeper structural change linked to the social perceptions of poverty and of the poor, in a country marked by high social inequality and deep class divisions. As one CRAS worker put it:

> You have to remember that we are talking about families who are constantly reminded by society that they are poor, that they will stay poor, that they need to stay in their place of poverty, that they don't have rights. Why? Because, unfortunately, we live in a country where who has access, who has rights, are the rich. (Interview CRAS 2018)

As Rego and Pinzai (2012, 236) found, feelings of resignation and self-exclusion among bolsistas were common: "It was common in our interviews to hear phrases like 'This is not for us' or 'I know my place.'" Building a political coalition in this context means, not only uniting a very diverse and fragmented group of people, but also fundamentally shifting aspirations. As one GTREC worker reflected, this is something that is still very much nascent in the way the program is delivered:

> We are a long way off from discussions not just about inequality but about equity. At a minimum, to be able to say to beneficiaries: "We are not giving you anything. This is your right. You need to fight so that what we are offering is better tomorrow. Today, it is like this, but tomorrow it could be better. (Interview GTREC 2018)

In the absence of a strong organized constituency among bolsistas, the welfare state itself has assumed this role in part—with SENARC bureaucrats advocating strongly on behalf of the program itself, if not specifically on behalf of individual bolsistas. Arguably, this can be seen as an alternative to the model of "state-sponsored activism" such as that identified by Rich (2019) in cases such as AIDS policy, urban housing policy, and policies pertaining to waste-picking—where the bureaucrats administering programs built alliances with social movements in order to help overcome collective action problems faced by program users.

Summarizing the argument: Cohesive citizenship during the Expansion

In sum, we see that in the context of cohesive citizenship, the targeting of the Bolsa Família toward poor families acted as a type of double-edged sword for their social inclusion. As Marins (2017, 260) has argued, the program achieved "social inclusion" in terms of greater access to goods and services, but also often came at the cost of "moral disqualification." The program created artificial boundaries between "poor" and "non-poor" families, which carried very real consequences in the personal, societal, and political spheres. Impersonalized administrative processes, stigmatizing public narratives,

and the individual targeting of benefits all worked to reinforce (and even deepen) social divisions between bolsistas and other bolsistas, between bolsistas and non-bolsistas, and between bolsistas and the state.

4.5 Conclusion: Inclusion without equity

This chapter traced the emergence and expansion of the Bolsa Família program during a critical period of welfare state building in a newly democratic Brazil. The shifting orientation of the state during this period coincided with a broader inclusionary turn in Latin American politics that was materialized primarily in the extension of state benefits and services to historically excluded and marginalized sectors of society. The rise of Bolsa Família represented a major advice in the way the Brazilian state saw and served poor populations—involving, for example, new legal commitments and new bureaucratic instruments. During this time, the program was fundamental in restructuring the relationship between the state and a large sub-set of "the poor" toward a more rights-based engagement than in the past and greatly increased the access of the poor to the state (and vice versa) through extensive decentralization, active searching, and inter-sectoral strategies. However, despite the important consequences of these changes for strengthening the welfare state's capability to deliver benefits and services to a much wider segment of the population (with measurable impacts on important outcomes such as poverty reduction and inequality reduction), this did not actually result in the replacement of a truncated welfare state with a universal one. Instead, a parallel state (typified in many ways by "poorer services for poor people") was layered on top of an existing one. For this reason, I argue that the Expansion period is story of inclusion without equity. While a new foundation for the state's relationship with society was constructed during this time, it remained tenuous and incomplete. While the program was rights-based, it was never guaranteed as a right; while it expanded

access, it was not matched by generosity or quality; while it promoted inclusion, it failed to secure belonging.

Of course, however, the story of Bolsa Família—like all other policies—is a dynamic one and must be read in context. Each phase of its trajectory is suspended in time between a historical past and an uncertain future. In the context of the Expansion period, the policy trajectory represents a major decisive break from the past. The program was built on top of a long legacy of exclusion in an urgent context of destitution. As one informant put it:

> When we arrived, the milk was already spilled. People were dying of hunger. There were elderly people who had to contributed to social security who did not have anything to eat. So, we had to work with what we had—we had to work in reverse in a way. First, we needed to guarantee the right to income and after this we did the work of reaching out to families. Now we are on this path. We have already found the families (or at least the majority of them) and now we need to start getting closer to them and linking them with the services that they need. (Interview Regional 2018)

In this sense, the Expansion period can be seen as a time of rapid but constrained change—one which prioritized the targeted delivery of cash benefits over the universalization of decommodified services (as noted by Lavinas (2017) in her argument on the tendency toward the financialization of social policy during this time). As one policymaker reflected: "In the end, Bolsa Família was a configuration of what it was possible to create at the time" (Interview SENARC 2018). The degree to which this new (albeit cracked) foundation has shaped potential trajectories of citizenship in the future will be explored in the subsequent chapters, in the respective contexts of a right-wing backlash and a pandemic-induced emergency.

CHAPTER 5 | THE BACKLASH

"Every day when you wake up in this country there is one less right for the poorest population"

- Interview SMASAC (2018)

This chapter re-examines the question of Bolsa Família and citizenship from the perspective of the "shock" of the right-wing backlash which took hold in Brazil leading up to and following the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016. The Backlash period is in a way defined by its opposition to the citizenship gains made during the Expansion period (explored in the previous chapter). As described by Payne and De Souza Santos (2020, 34), the so-called "backlash" or "countermovements" movements that arose in Brazil (and across the Latin American region more broadly) existed specifically "to oppose and counter, or roll back, the social, economic, political, and cultural rights" that had been achieved since the 1990s. This is in line with Pastashnik's (2019, 50) view of policy backlash as a form of negative policy feedback that "engenders rising waves of countermobilization." Heller (2020) refers to this new type of reactionary negative politics in Brazil as "retrenchment populism." In the context of Bolsa Família this introduced a new type of policy uncertainty deeply linked to a politics of fear (over the potential removal or dismantling of the program) which reshaped the nature of negotiation in political, bureaucratic, and social bargaining spaces.

This chapter builds on the previous chapter to explore how the foundations of formal, substantive, and cohesive citizenship formed during the expansionary period help us to understand Bolsa Família's evolution during this new political moment under the administrations of President Michel Temer and President Jair Bolsonaro (the period shaded in grey in Figure 5.1). In particular, it unpacks how policy legacies played a role in building resilience against potential trajectories of retrenchment and contextualizes this discussion within the broader literature on the surprising durability of welfare states

in the face of pro-austerity governments and rising polarization (Pierson 1996; 1994). As Patashnik (2019) and Hacker and Pierson (2019) have argued, in contexts of heightened polarization (such as the case during this period), the threat of backlash increases as a potential type of negative policy feedback effect. In these types of contexts, it is important to think not necessarily about policy feasibility, but rather about policy sustainability.

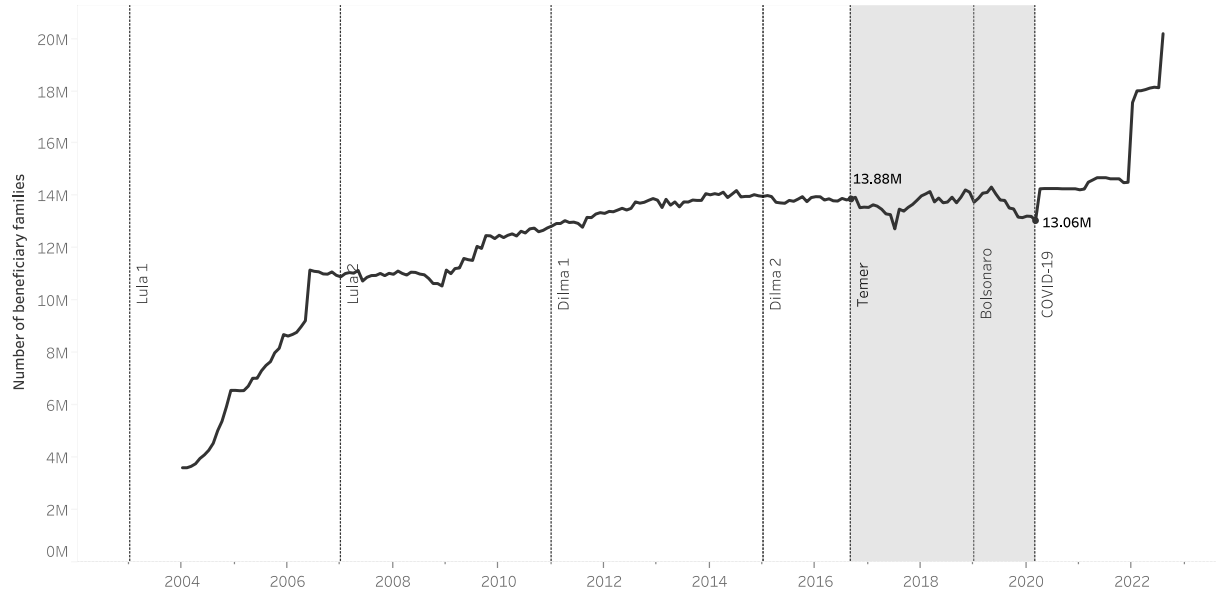


Figure 5.1 "The Backlash" period in context: Coverage of the Bolsa Família Program 2004-2021 & Auxílio Brasil Program (November 2021-August 2022) (monthly data)
Source: Data from Ministry of Citizenship, Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management, VIS Data 3
Note: The Backlash period (September 2016 – March 2020) is shaded in grey

Section 5.1 provides background for the rest of the chapter, discussing the rise of the right-wing countermovements in Brazil and highlighting the implications for Bolsa Família. It shows that while the new politics of austerity promoted by the governments in power during this period did not necessarily lead to a rollback in the program *per se*, they did usher in a new era of uncertainty for social programs as a whole and cemented a new institutional framing of the program around a discourse of fraud and a distrust of bolsistas.

Section 5.2 looks more deeply at the implications of this in the context of *formal citizenship* (corresponding to "the state as law")—exploring the tension between alternations in political power and the durability of rights on paper. It argues that while Bolsa Família was never successfully institutionalized as a legal "right" on paper (leaving many vulnerable families living with the uncertainty that it could be ended on a political whim), both the extensive legal barriers and the high political costs that would be involved in removing or substantially altering the program have promoted its stability in the context of changing political leadership. The strong legal foundation behind the program and its widespread political support are largely a legacy of the program's 15 years of legal consolidation and public recognition of its success.

Section 5.3 looks at implications in the context of *substantive citizenship* (corresponding to "the state as a set of bureaucracies")—exploring administrative changes in the program alongside bureaucratic forces of resistance. It argues that while intensified audits of program data created additional access barriers and reinforced a narrative of fraud, the integrity of the program continued to be defended by a bureaucratic corps of progressive technocrats and bolsistas continued to be protected by its larger network of frontline social assistance providers. This insulated and committed bureaucracy is largely a result of strategic recruitment and retention of highly competent and prosocial public servants at the federal level early in the program's creation alongside sustained investments in capacity building and integration with social assistance services at the state, municipal, and local levels over time.

Section 5.4 looks at implications in the context of *cohesive citizenship* (corresponding to "the state as a focus of collective identity")—looking at the implications of the state's discursive reframing of the program in the context of the deepening moral, ideological, class, and identity divisions in Brazil. It argues that even if the legal and bureaucratic foundations of the program largely remained stable during this period, the stigmatizing social imaginary of Bolsa Família and of bolsistas intensified during

this time. The legacy of public narratives about fraud and dependency that emerged early in the program's creation resurged as economic recession and political polarization weakened the binding ties of the social fabric and reshaped the contours of belonging.

Section 5.5 concludes, arguing that the backlash period studied here can largely be read as a story of policy durability. While the program did not make greater gains on its road toward achieving a more universal "citizen's income" or promoting greater integration into universal forms of service provision during this period, its lack of retrenchment can be understood as a result of the policy resilience developed during the expansionary period. However, as will be evidenced throughout this chapter, there are clear differences in the degree to which this is true across different types of citizenship—with the foundational fissure that developed in the realm of cohesive citizenship during the expansionary period continuing to crack under the weight of added pressures during the backlash period. Moreover, while the program itself did not necessarily face retrenchment, millions of vulnerable and low-income families did suffer from the increased restrictions in access to benefits during this time and the program's broader success faced a threat of being undermined in a context of reduced investments in associated education, health, and social assistance services (which, as evidenced in the previous chapter, is in fact one of the most important means through which Bolsa Família has the potential to transform the state's relationship with poor and vulnerable populations).

5.1 Pressures on Bolsa Família: From the impeachment of Dilma to the rise of Bolsonaro

A wave of discontent: The impeachment of Dilma Rousseff

President Dilma Rousseff was formally impeached on April 17, 2016 by a 367-137 vote in the Chamber of Deputies (Brazil's lower house of Congress) and removed from office on August 31, 2016 by a 61-20 vote in the Senate (Brazil's upper house of Congress). The highly controversial April 17th vote in

the Chamber of Deputies was watched live by millions of viewers, including large groups gathering in public squares across the nation. The floor of the Chamber of Deputies was a surreal scene, complete with protest signs (both for and against impeachment), a confetti canon, football chants, and crowd surfing. In the 9 hour and 47 minutes session (including 6 hours and 2 minutes of voting), each of the federal deputies took their turn at the podium to declare their vote and justify their decision (Câmara dos Deputados 2016). Among those voting "Yes" to impeachment, some of the most commonly cited reasons were voting in the name of god, the deputy's family, and the institution of family or voting against corruption and the "bad government" of the PT. Among those voting "No" to impeachment, some of the most commonly cited reasons were voting in the name of democracy, the constitution, and the socially marginalized and working people of Brazil or voting against a *golpe* (coup)[13]. Among both groups, highly cited reasons included voting in the name of Brazil, the Brazilian people, and the deputies' electoral base (Prandi and Carneiro 2018).

This dramatic moment reflected the stark political and social polarization that had been simmering in Brazil over the previous few years in the wake of an economic recession, growing popular discontent, and the unfolding *Lava Jato* federal corruption investigation—fueling a backlash against the PT who had held control of executive power from 2003 to 2016. While Dilma was ostensibly impeached on charges related to questionable budget maneuvers, the underlying wave that fueled the impeachment proceedings began building steam several years prior. After a decade of sustained economic growth accompanied by poverty reduction and an emerging middle class, the global financial crisis began to take hold in Brazil in 2011—sending the nation's GDP tumbling on a downward trend toward recession in 2014 accompanied by consequences such as rising poverty and unemployment (Figure

[13]Note that the use of the term coup (and various qualified versions of this term, such as "parliamentary coup") to describe Dilma's impeachment remains highly contested and politically charged. See Marsteintredet and Malamud (2020) for a broader discussion on the definition of coups in this context, emphasizing conceptual distinctions between coups as an illegal act of overthrowing government versus legal tactics for government replacement.

5.2). The cascading implications of these economic pressures—ranging urban sprawl due to inflated housing prices during the commodity cycle to pressure on transportation systems that became more expensive—manifested in the everyday lives of Brazilians in myriad ways, stoking a growing fire of grievances.

In June 2013, an unexpected wave of protests engulfed the country.[14] Originally sparked by a 20-cent increase in the price of bus fares in São Paulo, protests spread like wildfire (organized in large part through social media) and protesters' lists of grievances expanded rapidly and ranged from the quality of public services to government corruption. As reflected on one popular protest sign: "*Tem tanta coisa errada que não cabe em um cartaz*" (There is so much wrong that it doesn't fit on a poster) (O Povo 2013). The timing of the protests mattered too: they took place alongside Brazil's hosting of the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup and in anticipation of its hosting of the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. This only added fuel to the fire as the immense amounts of public funding being invested in these international mega-events quickly become embroiled in scandals of corruption, over-spending, and construction-induced community evictions. Angry over the comparative levels of domestic public investment in everyday public services, protesters held signs demanding "*Padrão FIFA*" (FIFA quality standards) for services such as hospitals, schools, and public transport or asking questions such as "*Quantas escolas valem um Maracanã?"* (How many schools is one soccer stadium worth?) (G1 2013).

[14] There is no clear consensus on the name of the 2013 protests in Brazil. The various names it has been given are as diverse as the protestors' list of grievances. Among other names, it has been referred to as the June Journeys, the Vinegar Revolt, the V-for-Vinegar movement, the Salad Revolution, the 2013 Confederations Cup riots, and the Brazilian Spring.

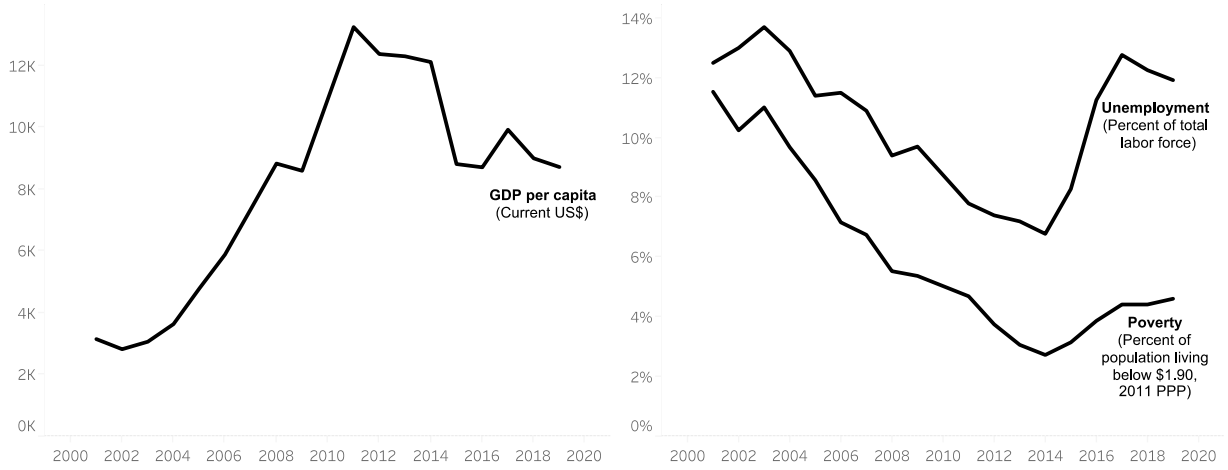


Figure 5.2 Bleak prospects: GDP per capita, poverty, and unemployment trends in Brazil 2000-2019
Source**:** GDP data from World Bank World Development Indicators, Poverty data from World Bank LAC Equity Lab (with data for 2013-2019 from PNAD-C), Unemployment data from IMF World Economic Outlook database.

This public discontent, while originally garnering support across political parties and across social classes, slowly morphed into a movement against the PT government largely led by middle-class supporters clad in Brazil's iconic yellow and green national football jersey and brandishing the national flag. For its part, as the Bolsa Família program is popularly associated with Lula and is emblematic of the PT's efforts to expand social programs, it was swept up into the rising tides of *anti-petismo* (anti-PT sentiment) and broader anti-establishment politics. In this way, Bolsa Família became one of many emerging symbolic battlegrounds[15]—both in the political arena and in the public eye. For example, in the 2015 pro-impeachment public protests (largely organized by movements such as Movimento Brasil Livre and Vem para a Rua), protestors could be seen holding signs with slogans such as "*Não dependo da Bolsa Família*" (I don't depend on Bolsa Família) (Figure 5.3). This type of negative view of Bolsa Família appeared to be widespread among these movements. For example, in a survey of protesters

[15]Of course, Bolsa Família (and other social programs) was only one of many such issue areas. For example, see Payne and De Souza Santos (2020) on the backlash which took place against LGBT and feminist movements or Domingues (2019) on the backlash against racial equity movements.

participating in a pro-impeachment demonstration on April 12, 2015 in São Paulo, 60.4% of them said that they agreed with the statement "Bolsa Família bankrolls lazy people" (Solano 2019).



Figure 5.3 "I don't depend on Bolsa Família": Sign from a March 2015 protest in favor of the impeachment of President Dilma
Source: Conexão Jornalismo (2015).

Bolsa Família was also a site of political battle during the actual impeachment. Two days before the vote in the Chamber of Deputies, the PT released a video with President Dilma's public pronouncement about the upcoming proceedings. In her short speech, she made time to include a warning that the if the "*golpistas*" (participants of the coup) assumed power, they would take actions to "revoke rights and cut social programs like Bolsa Família and Minha Casa Minha Vida [a public housing program]" (PT - Partido dos Trabalhadores 2016). The following day, however, Vice President Michel Temer (who was to assume power in the case of impeachment) actively denied this route of action, tweeting that "I read accusations in today's newspapers that I would end Bolsa Família. False. This is a lie meant to take me down. I will maintain all social programs" (Michel Temer 2016). During the actual April 17th vote in the Chamber of Deputies, Bolsa Família was referenced four times by four different Federal Deputies in their vote against the impeachment of President Dilma—citing the success of the PT's social programs and progress in the fight for social rights as part of their

justification (Câmara dos Deputados 2016). In his vote declaration, Patrus Ananias (Federal Deputy of the PT for Minas Gerais and former Minister of MDS under President Lula) even went as far as to refer to the impeachment proceedings themselves as "a *golpe* against Bolsa Família…a *golpe* against Minha Casa Minha Vida…a *golpe* against the poor."

A new fiscal regime: The administration of Michel Temer

After Temer took up his position in the presidency following Dilma's impeachment, he began to implement a series of fiscal austerity measures that have been commonly referred to by the left as a *desmonte* (dismantling) of social rights. Despite popular concerns over Bolsa Família's fate, the program's budget was largely left intact—even while other social programs faced significant spending cuts. However, importantly, the narrative surrounding the program was reframed, with administrative and strategic implications. Under Temer's administration, the government's approach to the program was framed within a discourse of combatting fraud within the program by removing those who earned more than they stated in their self-declared Cadastro Único registration. As discussed in the previous chapter, this narrative is very much a legacy of the program's early years of implementation (given the poor quality of the program's registry prior to 2006) and the associated (often politically motivated) media coverage that it generated. While the original targeting errors were largely corrected throughout the program's evolution with the vast improvements made to the Cadastro Único database, a popular belief remained (among some segments of society) that fraud on the part of bolsistas was widespread within the program. As discussed in the previous chapter, the belief that bolsistas engaged in deceitful practices in order to gain access to the program (and thereby deviating scarce resources away from other families who needed the benefits more) was also held by some frontline workers involved in the delivery of the program (Eiró de Oliveira 2019).

Despite routine data verification efforts that have existed for several years within SENARC to ensure the accuracy of self-reported data in the Cadastro Único, in June 2016 Osmar Terra (the new minister of MDS instituted under the Temer administration) launched a public strategy of passing a *pente-fino* (a fine-toothed comb) through the list of bolsistas to "correct fraud and diverted resources that cause losses to the Union, in order to effectively support the neediest strata of the population, without waste" (Portal Planalto 2016). It was described with pride by the administration as "the largest data audit initiative in the program's entire history," identifying over 1.1 million "irregularities" leading to 469,000 people having their benefits canceled and 654,000 having their benefits blocked due to a suspected income greater than the program's eligibility threshold (Ministério da Cidadania 2016). While there is no data publicly available on the actual income levels of these families identified as "irregularities," it is important to note that the 654,000 families who had their benefits blocked rather than canceled had an income that fell within a small margin above the eligibility threshold (suspected to earn a monthly per capita income in the range of R$ 170-400 (approximately GBP£22-£58)), and thus were still quite poor themselves. During the first eleven months of Temer's administration (between September 2016 and July 2017), the program decreased by more than 1.1 million families—at that time, the largest absolute contraction of coverage in the program's history. While the intensification of audits of registry data led to a temporary contraction in program coverage, other reforms later re-expanded program coverage (such as "zeroing" the waiting list) as well as increased program generosity (following through on a commitment made by the previous government,[16] the average benefit was increased by 12.5% in 2016 and again by 5.67% in 2018). By the end of his administration, program coverage had returned to roughly the same level as at the beginning of his term.

[16]In order to ensure that benefit values keep up with inflation, an increase of 9% in Bolsa Família benefits was approved in the budget by Congress in 2015 and announced by President Dilma on May 1, 2016.

In December 2016, Temer also passed a highly controversial constitutional amendment for a "New Fiscal Regime" that would limit federal expenditures for 20 years (also referred to as a spending ceiling, or *teto de gastos).* A drastic and legally binding austerity measure, this change could have large implications for the reach and efficacy of social policies for years to come. While this would not directly impact Bolsa Familía's budget during this period, its impacts would be felt in many other ways. As argued in the previous chapter, a key pillar of the program's success has been its role in promoting integrated access of the poorest to not only income benefits but also to the public services of education, health, and social assistance. Despite progress toward greater inclusion of the poor population in these areas, these services are still far from being universal in both reach and quality. Where funding was already insufficient to reach more universal goals, these new spending limitations would only make progress that much more difficult (see for example studies by Vieira and Benevides 2016, Castro et al. 2019, and Rossi and Dweck 2016). As Rossi and Dweck (2016, 5) argue in their analysis of the potential impacts of the New Fiscal Regime on education and health: "instead of improving [these services] in Brazil, this opens space for…the elimination of their universal character." This reflects a much larger and systematic threat to welfare state retrenchment than more programmatic short-term budget cuts—particularly given that such austerity measures were taking place alongside increasing economic and social vulnerability due to the impacts of the economic crisis on households. Moreover, the longer-term implications of this spending cap specifically for Bolsa Família (and its potential opportunities for expansion) will return in the following chapter on the COVID-19 crisis in a revitalized debate over Brazil's path toward a citizen's income. Ultimately, however, Temer's influence over any major reforms during his term was limited as he also found himself caught up in corruption scandals and faced plummeting levels of popularity. As Taylor (2020, 600) notes, the period during Temer's presidency "will likely be overshadowed in history books by the surprising rise of cashiered army officer and conservative firebrand Jair Bolsonaro."

The rise of the right: The election and early administration of Jair Bolsonaro

Jair Bolsonaro was elected to office in October 2018 in a highly polarized run-off vote against the PT's candidate Fernando Haddad (a last minute replacement for Lula, who, despite leading in the election polls, was imprisoned on alleged corruption charges and was ruled ineligible to run) and assumed the presidency in January 2019. Many of the same political sentiments and class divisions that fueled Dilma's impeachment carried him to victory. His election was not only a repudiation of the traditional political parties that had been in power, but also a reflection of a rise of new right-wing ideologies and coalitions, particularly among the middle classes.[17] Indeed, data from the 2018 Brazilian Electoral Panel Study show that "in addition to resentment against the Workers' Party, a cultural backlash perspective, and strict views on law and order, as well as economic liberalism and rejection of social policies, were the characteristics of support for Bolsonaro" (Rennó 2020, 1). During his candidacy, Bolsonaro indicated that Chicago-trained economist Paulo Guedes would be appointed as his finance minister—throwing support behind Guedes's proposed agenda of austerity, privatization, and a shrinking role for the state.

However, in the case of Bolsa Família, Bolsonaro ultimately followed a similar tactical approach as Temer, promising not only to maintain the program but to "improve" it by cutting down on fraud. This is a change from his historical position on the program, in which he publicly criticized it in multiple instances, claiming it fostered clientlism and government dependence of "non-productive" members of soceity (Mello 2019; Fortuna 2019; Diniz 2020). In one 2011 speech in the Chamber of Deputies, he argued that it served only as a "vote buying scheme" that "takes money from those who

[17]Following Cardoso (2020), I use the plural term "middle classes" to emphasize the diversity of the middle class in Brazil, which includes both the traditional and more stable intermediate- and upper-middle classes as well as the newer and more vulnerable lower-middle classes. This diversity also corresponds with a diversity of political orientations. Notably, Bolsonaro's support from the conservative upper-middle classes played a key role in earning him the additional votes needed to win the election.

produce and gives it to those do nothing" and that it should be "if not ended for good, transitioned [into something else]." It was not until 2018 during his election campaign that he began to speak publicly in support of the program. At this point, he argued that despite the "fake news" cirulcating that he would end the program, he promised to maintain it as a matter of "humanitarianism" and that in fact it should be "looked upon with great compassion." He focused his discourse both in his electoral campagian and after taking office on the need to combat fraud in the program (see for example Figure 5.4). He also followed through on his campaign promise to add a 13th payment installment to the program to be paid in December (a "Christmas bonus"), arguing that it could be funded by the money saved by removing the "fraudulent" bolsistas from the program. Interestingly (from the perspecitive of this thesis's conceptual interest), under the Bolsonaro adminsitration the Ministry of Social Development was also nominally rebranded as the Ministry of Citizenship (*Ministério da Cidadania*).



//Translation//

BOLSA-FAMÍLIA:

"Fraud within Bolsa Família is common. There are millions of benefits that don't go to those who really need them. The correct targeting would result in a big positive financial impact and help those who really need it.

It is necessary to invert the clientelistic logic surrounding Bolsa Família. If those who are in the program really had no income, then the unemployment rate would be much higher than what is reported. Efficiency should be measured by the number of people who will no longer need the benefit!"

JAIR BOLSONARO

Figure 5.4 "Fraud within Bolsa Família is common!": Twitter post from presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro
Source: Jair M. Bolsonaro (2018c).

During the early months of his presidency, program coverage reached an all time high (at that point in that time) of 14.3 million families in May 2019. However, coverage dropped sharply by over 1.3 million families between May 2019 and March 2020—a level of contraction even larger than that seen during the Temer administration and the largest to date in the history of the program. While the number of benefits cancelled was not necessarily higher than in previous periods, a record low number of new families were added to the program during this time (from June 2019 onward). Just before the arrival of COVID-19, Bolsa Família reached a relative low of approximately 13 million families with over 1.6 million families left on a steadily growing waiting list (shown in grey in Figure 5.5). It is important to note, however, that the waiting list is not a new issue specific to Bolsonaro. Indeed, we see that during Dilma's later administration, in the context of the economic crisis, the waiting list grew to a high of 1.9 million families. However, in contrast to the period under Bolsonaro after mid-2019, under Dilma the "entry door" had not been closed shut (there remained a flow of new concessions, as shown in black in Figure 5.5—albeit a small flow in comparison to demand). The waiting list is a longtime element of the program, which often features in the media and is particularly controversial when considering the program from a rights-based perspective. Families get put on the waiting list when they are eligible for the program, but there is not yet "space" available for them. According to informants, this space is determined by three different factors: the national goal of program coverage (based on national poverty estimates), the current availability of budget for the program, and finally municipal goals of program coverage (based on municipal poverty estimates). Note that these poverty estimates, however, are calculated using data from the 2010 census, and thus do not accurately reflect the current need profiles in each area—a fact raised by multiple informants as a source of concern.

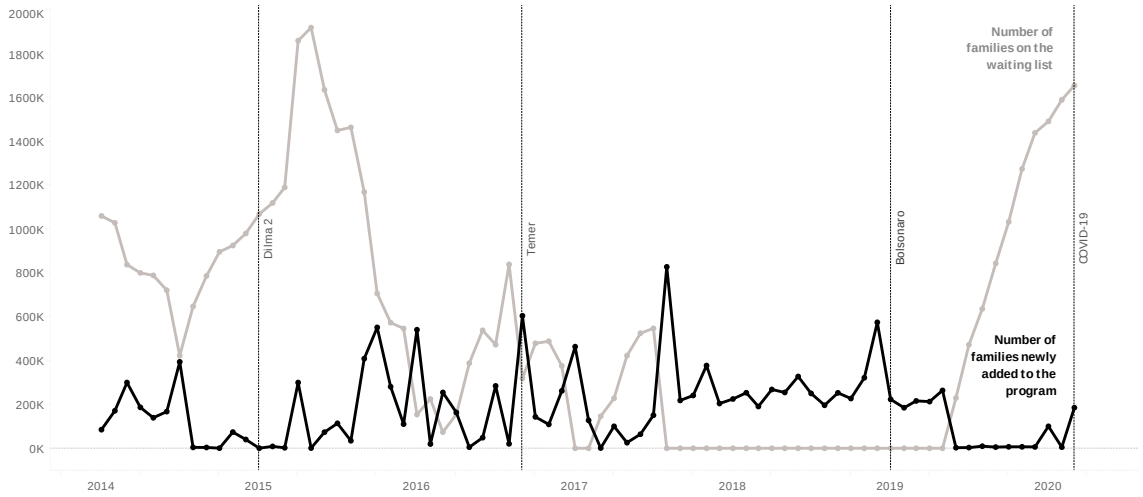


Figure 5.5 The "entrance door": Number of families on the Bolsa Família waiting list (grey) and number of families newly added to the program (black), Jan 2014 – Mar 2020 (monthly data).

Source: Data on waiting list size from Metrópoles (2020) for January 2014-February 2020 and Globo (2020) for March 2020. Data on new benefits issued from the Ministry of Citizenship, Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management, VIS Data 3.

Note: While data on the number of program beneficiaries is publicly available from the government, data on the number of eligible families on the waiting list is not. Through access to information requests, different media outlets have reported on waiting list lengths over the years. Compiling these different sources, an incomplete but informative picture emerges.

Summarizing the background context: Bolsa Família during the Backlash

In sum, we see that the backlash period represented a turning point for the social rights agenda in Brazil. It was a time of growing social unrest against a backdrop of increasing economic vulnerability and rising frustrations over unmet expectations of the Brazilian state. A negative politics of anti-corruption and anti-petismo gave rise to a broader anti-state agenda with critical implications for welfare programs and their target populations. These pressures of retrenchment, however, were not met unopposed. Notably, they had to contend with the historical legacies of the policies and programs that had been entrenched over the previous era—and fundamentally shaped the political opportunities and constraints available during this moment. The following sections take a more nuanced look at how these dynamics played out in the context of Bolsa Família across the three different dimensions of citizenship considered in this thesis.

5.2 Formal citizenship: Alternations in power and the durability of rights

As the previous chapter details, Bolsa Família was a cornerstone in restructuring the relationship between the state and the poor population in the context of social assistance from a charity-based approach to a rights-based approach, grounded in law. While the program's targeted nature and conditionality requirements have left it short of delivering a more universal form of formal citizenship—the program's enactment, entrechment, and expansion have made important incremental progress in this direction. From the perspective of formal citizenship (considering "the state as law"), the backlash period sheds light on the following policy feedback factors influencing the changing nature of state-society relations "on paper" during this period: 1) the legal foundations of the program as policy design features which have acted as both barriers to potential removal and barriers to potential expansion; 2) the high political cost of removing benefits which has served as a powerful disincentive to program rollbacks; and 3) the program's lack of formal codification as a "right" which has fostered a lingering degree of vulnerability and uncertanity for those who depend on it. The following sub-sections explore these in greater depth.

A double-edged sword: Legal barriers to program change

Bolsa Família has an extensive legal foundation which has strengthened its durability over time. According to the MDS website referenced in March 2019, as of that date there were 4 laws, 18 executive orders, and 73 ministerial directives (alongside 9 normative instructions, 128 operational instructions, 3 presidential decrees, 1 technical note, and 2 resolutions) that pertain to Bolsa Família.[18]

[18] http://mds.gov.br/assuntos/bolsa-Família/legislacao

Importantly, each type of rule has very different legal origins and thus different degrees of difficulty for introducing, revising, or removing them. As described by a senior legal expert in SENARC:

> Laws (*leis*) have to pass in Congress, executive orders (*decretos*) are an administrative act by the president, and ministerial directives (*portarias*) are an administrative act by a minister. So, within the ministry is the easiest way to change the rules—depending on who is in power. The order from the president involves other ministries—so it is a bit more complicated. And laws have to pass in two houses—one with 513 deputies and the other with 81 senators, each with their own agendas. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Bolsa Família's legal foundations have served as something of a double-edged sword in this regard, however. While this legal foundation presents barriers to any government that may seek to dismantle the program, it also made it difficult for the PT government to adapt the program over time. There was a common response among SENARC workers when I asked about why certain broadly agreed-upon technical improvements had not yet been made to the program. It generally followed the narrative that: "You have to be careful what you wish for. You may enter Congress with a proposal, but don't know what you will leave with. It is out of your control…without a coalition and a very consistent coordination of the executive it would be very risky—you would be risking 15 years of the program" (Interview SENARC 2018). Legal changes in this sense were thus ultimately viewed as a high-risk political negotiation.

Seen from this perspective, retrenchment pressures may have in fact been taking place much earlier, in parallel with the Expansion period. As Hacker (2004), argues, to understand retrenchment it is important to look beyond formal changes in the rules to also understand the more hidden forces which may have prevented certain changes from taking place. Indeed, he suggests that "by looking only at affirmative choices on predefined issues, retrenchment analyses tend to downplay the important ways in which actors may shape and restrict the agenda of debate and prevent some kinds of collective decisions altogether" (Hacker 2004, 245). This gains particular relevance in the context of policies that need to be continually updated to keep up with changing circumstances—such as a

cash transfer program designed over ten years ago in a different socioeconomic context and without the benefit of the policy learning experience that has taken place since. In this view, simply preventing improvements can be an invisible form of retrenchment. In the case of Bolsa Família, fear from the left of a conservative political congress that could push for policy reform (such as changing the entire program) or "policy conversion" (such as creating new conditionalities), ended up fostering inadvertent "policy drift" (as the program did not adapt as needed in certain ways as proposals for improvements were strategically not introduced).

Conversely, these dynamics have also made it more difficult for more conservative political actors to pursue a direct strategy of formal policy reform or displacement. In this context, where the barriers to change are high, we would be more likely to see a more intentional form of policy drift (such as actively not improving the program) or policy conversion where space for internal adaptation of the program allowed (such as subtle changes in implementation practices or program framing or rebranding) (Hacker 2004). Following the impeachment of Dilma, my informants indicated that there was indeed a resurgent political debate over revising certain technical program rules within a framing of removing bolsistas who were seen to be "wrongly" in receipt of benefits. As described by one SENARC bureaucrat:

> When there was the impeachment, the program entered a phase of questioning. It was fascinating because they [conservative political actors] questioned things like program rules that had already been established and consolidated for many years and were put in place based on research. For example, the issue of families remaining in the program for two years regardless of the variation in of their income. This was one of the things that was recently questioned as an irregularity of the program, as an example of "poor management." It was not poor management. It was a choice we made based on studies about the volatility of vulnerable families' income. (Interview SENARC 2018)

In the lead up to Bolsonaro's election, program workers largely shared the expectation that the program would not be done away with entirely, but at best it would stay the same as it was. As one CRAS worker explained, "If the program sticks around, I think it will stay the same as it is now or with changes for the worse—changes in order to make it more difficult for families to access or stay

in the program." (Interview CRAS 2018). Their fears that the program would face more administrative pressures rather than major legal changes turned out to be prescient, as a later subsection of this chapter will discuss.

It is easier to give than to take: The political costs of removal

Perhaps even more so than the legal barriers to program removal, the political costs of program removal promoted a higher resilience to retrenchment. This ensured that not only would it be difficult for subsequent governments to do away with the program, but that they would not want to do so in the first place. As Pierson (1996, 143–44) notes, while "welfare state expansion involved the enactment of popular policies in a relatively undeveloped interest-group environment…welfare state retrenchment generally requires elected officials to pursue unpopular policies that must withstand the scrutiny of both voters and well-entrenched networks of interest groups." In other words, while giving people benefits is very popular, taking them away is not. The electoral consequences of such an action are particularly acute when those benefits reach a large share of the population—such as in the case of Bolsa Família. As one informant observed, while "the political 'bonus' of the program at the federal level stayed with Lula, it would bring a political cost to whoever tried to reduce or end the program—so its permanence has now become the minimal obligation of the federal government" (Interview SENARC 2018).

While several informants expressed concern that the program could technically be undermined by means of an executive order changing the value of the benefit to R$ 0 or lowering the eligibility threshold to R$ 0, they also noted that this would be highly unlikely. As this is one of the few political spaces in which sitting presidents have discretion to actually visibly expand the program (in a way that is directly associated to their own government), these types of changes are viewed as an opportunity to accrue their own political bonus. Indeed, we saw this dynamic at play during the backlash period

when measures were introduced to increase the generosity of payments—with Temer publicly claiming credit in 2016 and in 2018 when the benefit amounts were adjusted for inflation and Bolsonaro publicly claiming credit in 2019 when a 13th bonus payment installment was added. Moreover, Bolsa Família is a very "visible" program, in which bolsistas are very cognizant of the government's role in delivering benefits—and accordingly, formal changes are both highly noticeable and directly felt. This stands in contrast to other types of more "invisible" social protection spending—such as highlighted in the work by Christopher Howard on the "hidden welfare state" (as constituted by tax expenditures with social welfare objectives rather than direct expenditures to individual programs) and work by Suzanne Mettler on the "submerged state" (in which benefits are dispersed through webs of indirect incentives and subsidies rather than the direct programs) (Howard 1999; Mettler 2011). This also stands in contrast with the delivery of public services like education and health—where changes in quality are often intangible and harder for users to directly identify and attribute responsibility (Melo 2008; Niedzwiecki 2018).

Indeed, past research on the role of Bolsa Família in multiple rounds of presidential elections (2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014) has found evidence of a "Bolsa Família effect" offering an electoral boost from bolsistas to incumbent candidates (Zucco 2015; 2013; 2008; Nicolau and Peixoto 2007; Licio, Renno, and Castro 2009; Hunter and Power 2007). Notably, support for the program is not just limited to bolsistas. According to poll data from August and September 2014, 75% of voters were in favor of the program and approval ratings remained above 50% across demographic groups (disaggregated by sex, race, religion, education, and region) (Paiva, Cotta, and Barrientos 2019). It was broadly agreed among my informants that "there would be a very high cost for anyone who arrived and said, '*It's over.*' If that were to happen, something else would need to be put in its place" (Interview SENARC 2018). The high political stakes of removing Bolsa Família likely featured in Temer's and Bolsonaro's defensively supportive positions on the issue of program continuity. This is reflected in the discourses

of the political candidates from the 2018 presidential race; across party lines, no candidate mentioned the removal of the program. As one SENARC worker reflected, "as you can see, all the presidential candidates are saying that they will maintain or expand the program…they know they can't just get rid of it. I see this very much as a result of the program's success, of the improvements in the lives of the families that receive it, and the support for the program among society – especially the part of society that receives it" (Interview SENARC 2018). Though while all candidates explicitly supported the program's continuation, some did so with more caveats than others. For example, as discussed above, Bolsonaro very explicitly couched his support for the program within a discourse of cracking down on fraud.

Importantly, the political cost of program retrenchment in the case of Bolsa Família is not only paid at the time of elections. The program's high domestic and international visibility (as discussed in the previous chapter) alongside the tangible impacts on millions of families ensures that the public eye is always watching—offering some layer of ongoing political accountability. In this way, the program's budget is protected to a degree (at least compared with other less high-profile social assistance programs which faced quick and large budget cuts) due to politicians' fear of public outcry. As one bureaucrat explained, "If someone thinks about messing with Bolsa Família, it generates a commotion in the country. So we don't usually have issues with budget. For example, you can see in the news the recent tumult that arose in response to the proposal that half of Bolsa Familia's budget would be mandatory, but the other half would require congressional approval…The president ended up going back and making the full budget obligatory" (Interview SENARC 2018).

The program's decentralized model has also played an important role in fostering more broad-based support for the program among subnational political actors, regardless of the party in power. This

feature makes Bolsa Família politically unique in comparison to other countries—for example, Argentina. As a SENARC bureaucrat recounted:

> Once, I was talking with a visiting provincial minister of health from Argentina [about Bolsa Família]. He was a very political man, and he said to me: "…In Argentina, we also have a national income transfer program. But it is basically done by the federal government—you don't have the participation of the province and the municipality…So if the government changes and they want to end the program, they can—because you would have no pushback from the municipality. But here, you created a program that has a political spine at the municipal level… because at the municipal level, local mayors can still reap political gains from it. If the local mayor does a good job managing the Cadastro Único—this is great for him. If he does a poor job—well, it will not be so good for him. People may be poor, but they communicate: '*My cousin who lives in another city said that the management here is very bad—because it functions in his city, but it's not functioning here*.'" (Interview SENARC 2018)

This view is more broadly supported by the findings of Sara Niedzwiecki in her recent book on how subnational politics shape the uneven implementation of social policies across Latin America. In her comparative study of CCT programs in Argentina (Asignación Universal por Hijo) and Brazil (Bolsa Família), she finds that in Brazil there is a blurrier attribution of responsibility for CCTs to the federal government and a clearer involvement of state and municipal actors—and that this played a role in mitigating the impact of subnational political alignment for successful policy implementation (Niedzwiecki 2018). The way that policies utilize federalism and leverage different levels of governance in building allied (or opposing) support is an important feature in fostering resilience (or vulnerability) to policy backlash (Hacker and Pierson 2019). Just as the municipality-led and state-led initiatives that experimented with cash transfer programs in the 1990s were crucial for paving the political and technical path for scaling up Bolsa Família nationally, the program's decentralized roots in every one of Brazil's 5,570 municipalities today is crucial for preventing a rollback of the program.

Still not a "right": Living with the fear of uncertainty

Despite having a strong legal foundation and high political deterrents to removal, Bolsa Família is not actually protected as a legal "right"—as previously discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, while it is

unlikely that the program will be removed, it is not guaranteed. From its inception, the program was couched in a discourse of "rights" and strategically designed to facilitate bolsistas' access to the actual legal rights of health and education. However, it was never actually codified as a right in the Constitution or the *Lei Orgânica da Assistência Social* (LOAS), in contrast to other non-contributory social assistance programs such as the *Benefício de Prestação Continuada* (the BPC is an unconditional cash transfer targeted to low-income elderly people and people with disabilities) which is protected in both the Constitution and LOAS. As noted by a former senior manager of Bolsa Família, "In reality, Bolsa Família is not a right… What we tried to do all these years was insert a perspective of rights into Bolsa Família. For example, expanding coverage goals so that the program became almost universal among the poor population. In this way you create a sort of cultural stew that makes it more difficult to extinguish the program. But, if the government wanted to extinguish the program today, it could" (Interview SENARC 2018).

This has created an uncertainty that has weighed heavily on bolsista families throughout the program's history. For many bolsista families, this monthly benefit is a means of survival given the extreme precarity of their financial situation. Thus, this uncertainty translates into a fear that they could lose the income that their family depends on without warning. This fear is reflected in the following anecdote recounted to me by a SENARC informant about a false rumor that circulated about the program in 2013:

> There was a recent event that showed us how worried families are about the future of the program—about the possibility of losing their benefits. There was a rumor that was spread around [social media] that Bolsa Família was going to be cut and that families wouldn't be able to withdraw their benefits. People went and slept overnight in lines outside banks in order to be able to withdraw their benefit in time. And it was a just rumor. It is so sad to see this. The families don't deserve this constant uncertainty. They have this right—and we, as a nation, need to ensure that it is guaranteed for them. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Several studies at the micro-level exploring bolsistas' experiences and perceptions have also highlighted this uncertainty, particularly in relation to the ongoing potential for benefit blockages or

cancellations (but also at discrete political turning points, such as elections). For example, Eiró and Koster (2019) and Jones (2017) both find a generalized perception among bolsistas that payments are not reliable and share a common fear that their benefits could be cut off "randomly" at any time for "no apparent reason." This issue of program uncertainty was echoed by many of my informants, particularly in the context of the lead up to Bolsonaro's election when people were unsure of how a change in leadership would affect the program. Several bureaucrats and program operators noted that they would like to see Bolsa Família actually guaranteed as a right in Brazilian legislation, made a compulsory part of the budget, or have adjustments to benefit amounts and poverty lines legally tied to inflation as means of guaranteeing the stability of the program—"so that beneficiary families would not have to constantly question the future of the program—'*Will it end? Will it continue? What will the new president do*?"' (Interview SENARC 2018). The program's long history of political attacks only reinforces the perception of fragility of the program. As one SENARC worker recounted, "I remember that Patrus [Anaias, former Minister of MDS under Lula] once made a joke during a workshop that: *'God protects drunks, children, and Bolsa Família*.' Sometimes I think, '*Wow, it really is protected though*.' Because we have faced every kind of attack against it. We face a lot of challenges here, but the biggest one is always the risk that the program will be discontinued, that it will be ended" (Interview SENARC 2018).

Many of these more technical fragilities of the program were well known during the expansionary period, but failed to achieve sufficient political support to address them at the time. Reflecting on why these changes to guarantee more long-term commitments were never enacted, one informant suggested two interpretations:

> One reason may be because when there was the political space to do this, there was not yet enough technical maturity in the program; and when the program had later reached a greater level of technical maturity, there was no longer the political space. The other interpretation I have for this is that there was just no political interest. Because in a system of presidentialism, a politician has an interest in the fact that he has the power to decide

> when and how he is going to readjust a program like Bolsa Família, unfortunately. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Another informant echoed this limited willingness of politicians to push for greater program guarantees, noting that "no one had the courage to fight for it—no one wanted to fight for it—not even Lula, not even Dilma" (Interview SENARC 2018). While the program was created and consolidated legally and administratively under the PT, the choice not to further pursue certain policy decisions created a weakened foundation that would later leave the program exposed to heightened austerity pressures under new political arrangements. Indeed, in the months leading up to the 2018 election, there was a lot of uncertainty among government workers about what shape the program would take in the future if a more "hostile" government were to take power. As expressed by one CRAS worker, "Talking about the future of Bolsa Família is difficult, because it depends on what government we will have. We are in a government now [under the Temer administration] that does not support the program...We have an election this year, and we don't know who will win. The future of the program depends a lot on who will win" (Interview CRAS 2018). These concerns were compounded by the financial crisis facing the country and pressures toward greater austerity. As another CRAS worker reflected, "Anything that creates a cost for the government is something that we don't know what will happen to it. We know we are in a moment of a critical financial situation" (Interview CRAS 2018).

Summarizing the argument: Formal citizenship during the Backlash

In sum, we see that in the context of formal citizenship, the backlash period was generally an experience of policy continuity informed in large part by policy legacies from the expansionary period. The strong legal foundations of the program made potential changes difficult, and the high political costs of removal made potential changes undesirable. However, the implications of the failure to formally codify the program as a legal right (based on principles of citizen entitlement) during the

expansionary period continued to reverberate during the backlash period, particularly given the heighted moment of uncertainty under changing political leadership. Thus, while "the state as law" continued to offer a degree of protection to citizens by committing the state to following its planned course of action, the shallowness of that offer became ever more apparent.

5.3 Substantive citizenship: A technocratic state in a divided democracy

This section turns it gaze from "the state as law" to "the state as a set of bureaucracies" and explores the associated implications for substantive citizenship. As argued in the previous chapter, one of the fundamental advancements of the Bolsa Família program in regard to substantive citizenship was its achievement in building a state for the poorest population, where none had previously existed. While the result was very much the creation of a parallel state in many ways, again falling short of universalistic goals, the incremental progress made in this direction was profound. Particularly in the case of developing physical and personnel infrastructure in the social assistance sector across Brazil's vast territory and promoting access to related state services (though often still of lower quality) such as education, health, and banking. From the perspective of substantive citizenship, the backlash period sheds light on the following policy feedback factors influencing the changing nature of state-society relations "in practice" during this period: 1) the reframing of registry audit and verification administrative procedures within a paradigm of state distrust of bolsistas; 2) the role of federal technocrats as a core "protective constituency" of the program and their stability over time despite changing political leadership; and 3) the role of frontline service providers in enacting everyday "resistance" through effective program implementation and direct support to bolsista families. The following sub-sections explore these in greater depth.

The "pente-fino": Data verification within a new paradigm of distrust

While major formal changes to the program were not implemented during the backlash period (given both the legal barriers that made it difficult and the political costs that made it undesirable, as discussed in the previous section), some more subtle administrative changes did take place—with consequences for bolsistas in practice. This type of approach is broadly consistent with global trends in welfare state retrenchment. As Andrea Louise Campbell (2015, 284) notes in her reflection on *The Durability of Pierson's Theory about the Durability of the Welfare Stat*e: "Only a few social programs have been truly hollowed out. But many others, while appearing strong on macro-level measures such as overall spending, have been retrenched in subtle ways." In the case of Bolsa Família, this played out most clearly in the intensification of cross-checks of bolsista data in the Cadastro Único registry with other administrative records. While data verification was already a longstanding practice used as a policy tool to improve targeting and data quality in the self-reported registry, it took on a new meaning during this period as the program was discursively reimagined in the public eye.

Under the governments of Temer and Bolsonaro, the administrative approach to Bolsa Família was reframed around a narrative of combatting "fraud," based on the allegation that people were lying about their income in the Cadastro Único to receive benefits that they were not actually entitled to. Note that this narrative was not the result of a research study finding the existence of such fraud, but rather public perception and anecdotes of individual cases that were uncovered. For example, Bolsonaro repeatedly tweeted about the "millions of fraudulent cases that range from politicians to the curious incident of a pet." While he referenced the pet (a cat named "Billy") in three of his tweets about the need to cut down on fraud (Jair M. Bolsonaro 2018a; 2019; 2018b), he failed to note that it was an isolated case from ten years earlier (2008) that was actually quickly discovered by the checks in place at the time and the benefit was swiftly revoked (Vargas 2009). This narrative is a legacy of the media discussion surrounding the poor-quality of data in the registry that the Bolsa Família program

began with in 2004, which was inherited from the previous group of social assistance programs that it replaced. This perception has persisted over time (among certain groups in society), despite the massive administrative effort made by MDS in collaboration with Caixa and municipal program operators to clean this registry during the program's early years, and continual improvements made to it throughout the program's evolution that have added layers of data verification including home visits to verify the accuracy of the reported data and periodic cross-checks of the reported information with other federal databases (*averiguação cadastral*). While this narrative is thus not something "new" that emerged during this period, it moved from the background to the foreground of the public debate regarding the program and gained new salience in the context of growing fiscal pressures and new political leadership.

In 2016, the program entered a period of intensified audits (*auditoria)* led by various government oversight agencies—in line with the growing public discourse surrounding the need to "pass a fine-tooth comb" (*pente fino)* through the list of bolsistas. These initiatives were still ongoing during my fieldwork in 2018. As described by one SENARC informant, this "popular trend" started with an analysis done by the Public Prosecutor's Office (*Ministério Público Federal*) and was later followed by analyses from other agencies such as the Federal Court of Accounts (*Tribunal de Contas da União*, TCU) and the Comptroller General of Brazil (*Controladoria-Geral da União*, CGU). Indeed, as one informant at the municipal level told me, "2016 was The Year of Audits. There were audits of all kinds. You would be working on addressing one, and then all of a sudden, another one would show up – and then another, and another. At some point, you didn't even know which audit it was that you were addressing anymore" (Interview GRETC 2018). It was described by most local workers as a "complicated" or "turbulent" moment, and was largely seen by municipal and local workers as linked to the contemporary political environment.

These analyses sought to verify the information of bolsistas as reported in the Cadastro Único by checking them against other databases. While in principle this had the potential to improve the quality of data verification control mechanisms available to the government, it did not necessarily do so in practice. As noted by informants, the audits were conducted with varying degrees of rigor as well as varying degrees of understanding of factors such as Bolsa Família's specific eligibility criteria, the Cadastro Único documentation requirements, or families' actual withdrawal status of their payments—which, in some instances, led to wrong conclusions about the extent of "irregularities" detected in the registry. However, when the various audit results were reported to the media (resulting in some cases in headlines suggestive of a scandal involving hundreds of thousands of people defrauding the government and costing the public billions of reais, see for example Figure 5.6), it prompted pre-emptive action on the part of the Bolsa Família bureaucracy to temporarily block families' benefits while the audit results could be looked into more carefully. However, as described by one SENARC worker, this type of approach has severe consequences in practice given that these data points actually refer to highly vulnerable families who often depend on regular and timely payments:

> One of these agencies went to the media and set off big alarms. We had to block the benefits of 345,000 families until we could find out what was happening. Now we are working with the municipalities to unblock them in the cases where there was never anything wrong. For example, the family I told you about who had lost their job—and no longer had the income that [X oversight agency] found in another database. [We] had to block their benefit, even though they were actually eligible. This has harmful consequences for the family. [X oversight agency] says "*Oh, just pay them back the money retroactively*." But the families that receive Bolsa Família depend on these benefits monthly—they are not using Bolsa Família to save—it's not helpful for the benefit value to accumulate and then we tell them we will pay them retroactively. What about the period when they were without the benefit? What consequences did that have on their internal family dynamic? (Interview SENARC 2018)



Terça-feira 31.5.2016 | País | O GLOBO 9

Fraudes no Bolsa Família podem chegar a R$ 2,5 bi

Ministério Público Federal encontrou no cadastro do programa mortos, doadores de campanha e até empresários

CAROLINA BRÍGIDO
carolina@bsb.oglobo.com.br

BRASÍLIA. Apuração do Ministério Público Federal (MPF) identificou suspeitas de irregularidades no pagamento de R$ 2,5 bilhões do Bolsa Família entre os anos de 2013 e 2014. A quantia refere-se a pagamentos a 1,4 milhão de beneficiários, incluindo os titulares do programa e as famílias deles. A procuradora da República Renata Ribeiro Baptista, coordenadora do grupo de trabalho responsável por inspecionar o Bolsa Família, deu prazo de 30 dias para o secretário de Renda e Cidadania, Tiago Falcão, informar quais providências serão adotadas para normalizar a situação.

As falhas foram identificadas pelas Câmaras Criminal e de Combate à Corrupção. Foi enviado ofício à Secretaria de Renda e Cidadania, que é vinculada ao Ministério de Desenvolvimento Social e Agrário, no último dia 23. As irregularidades foram apontadas a partir do cruzamento de dados da secretaria com informações do Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (TSE), da Receita Federal e de Tribunais de Contas. De acordo com o Ministério Público, o sistema foi criado para "contribuir para a transparência e o aprimoramento da aplicação de recursos públicos federais no âmbito do Programa Bolsa Família".

SAQUES COM MAIS DE UM CPF

O Ministério Público Federal classificou as suspeitas de irregularidades em dois grupos. No primeiro, estão saques realizados por pessoas já falecidas, ou sem CPF, ou pessoas com mais de um CPF vinculado ao número cadastrado no Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Agrário. No segundo grupo, estão beneficiários que são servidores públicos, doadores de campanha, além de donos ou responsáveis por empresas ativas.

Junto com o ofício enviado à Secretaria de Renda e Cidadania, foi encaminhada a lista dos beneficiários sob suspeita. O Ministério Público pediu que a secretaria apresente um cronograma pormenorizado com todas as providências a serem adotadas.

Fiscalização. Ministro Osmar Terra: necessidade de avaliação de benefícios

"O programa Bolsa Família não pode ser uma proposta de vida"

Osmar Terra
Ministro do Desenvolvimento Social e Agrário

O Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Agrário divulgou nota dizendo que "não ignora a possibilidade de irregularidades ocorridas na gestão anterior". O texto ressalta o empenho da pasta em "aperfeiçoar o controle e os mecanismos de fiscalização dos beneficiários do programa Bolsa Família". Ainda segundo a nota, o ministério vai criar um comitê de controle para analisar as informações e "garantir que o Bolsa Família seja destinado para quem mais precisa".

PENTE-FINO NOS BENEFÍCIOS

Ao assumir o cargo, o ministro do Desenvolvimento Social e Agrário, Osmar Terra (PMDB), já havia declarado a necessidade de o Bolsa Família passar por um pente-fino e ser avaliado. Segundo o ministro, beneficiários que não precisam mais do programa podem sair para obter outras formas de renda.

— O Bolsa Família não pode ser uma proposta de vida — disse Terra, após a posse.

Ele defendeu que o programa tem que melhorar sua eficiência. ■

Figure 5.6 "Fraud in Bolsa Família could reach up to R$ 2.5 billion": Example media headline in May 2016 about the registry audit conducted by the Public Prosecutor's Office
Source: O Globo Archive (2016).

When the public that a policy serves is families living in situations of poverty and extreme poverty, these types of "small" bureaucratic changes can in fact have huge impacts on people's lives. While this fact may be obvious, it is, unfortunately, too often overlooked by those in positions of decision-making power. In an effort to try to avoid this type of issue, MDS decided to complement the audits being done by oversight agencies with an augmented *averiguação cadastral* of their own—using additional databases that they were able to procure given the growing public interest in the issue. As described by a SENARC informant:

> MDS wanted to try to avoid this by doing our own super big *averiguação cadastral*. We have already been doing this type of registry verification for a long a time, but now since everyone else was wanting to do it too we thought we could take advantage of the moment to try to expand the databases that we use to verify the registry (and therefore improve our verification process) by requesting ones that we previously couldn't get access to – and we got them! (Interview SENARC 2018).

In this way, while the overall strategy of data verification of SENARC conducted during this period was intensified and augmented through the involvement of new actors and the addition of new databases, it was not necessarily "substantially different from the one adopted in 2005 and maintained systematically from 2007 onwards" (Paiva, Cotta, and Barrientos 2019). However, even if the practices

used were not modified substantially, they were qualitatively different in important ways given the new political context.

Under the governments of Temer and Bolsonaro, the data verification exercises were being framed as a means to combat fraud and recoup wrongfully spent public resources rather than as a policy instrument to improve targeting (as was the case during the expansionary period). Indeed, much of the language by officials emphasized the amount of potential "savings" the government recovered through these investigative exercises, and spoke about reducing the number of bolsistas as a point of pride. For example, in January 2020 Osmar Terra (who was the Minister of Citizenship at the time) tweeted that, "in just 1 year of Bolsonaro's government we have managed to remove more than 1.3 million families [from Bolsa Família through the *pente-fino*]. The savings was 1.4 billion!"(Osmar Terra 2020). This discursive change shifts the fundamental premise of the relationship between the state and bolsistas from a relationship based on inclusion and trust to a relationship based on exclusion and distrust. One informant spoke about this change, reflecting on his experience working on the program under different administrations and the way that data verification practices were deployed:

> I was here in both the government of Dilma and the government of Temer. After Temer arrived there were *many* audit initiatives and speeches talking about the removal of beneficiaries as something positive. For example: "*This month we removed X number of people from the program because they had falsified their information*." For me, this promoted the broader vision that they wanted to share—that "*We are a government that doesn't accept people defrauding the government.*" This is a vision based on a notion of distrust…While I was critical of [inclusion errors] in the program during the administrations of Lula and Dilma and thought that we should have greater mechanisms of control [to verify the self-reported information in the Cadstro Único], I also don't think that it needs to be a system premised on distrust. (Interview SEDESE 2020)

The distrust of people living in a situation of poverty has a long history in the design and implementation of welfare programs. Bolsa Família's early decisions to frame the conditionalities as a means promoting access to other rights (rather than as a punitive measure for noncompliant families) and the decision to grant cash without spending restrictions (as opposed to in-kind transfers or vouchers) were important policy features that promoted a notion of trust in bolsistas (albeit, limited

trust). However, this moment of reframing represents a step backward in this regard. In the context of state-society relations and citizenship, we often talk about the public's trust in government. However, it is essential that we consider how the government's trust in the public also shapes this relationship—in particular, when this trust is unevenly distributed across groups such as the rich and the poor.

Progressive technocrats: Central bureaucratic resistance

While shifting politics ushered in this era of new administrative framing, a stable bureaucracy of progressive technocrats at the federal level worked to limit the potential damage in practice. A key notion in the literature on the politics of welfare state retrenchment is the role of welfare state expansion in building core "protective constituencies" that go on to later defend their programs against potential rollbacks. Importantly, as Andrea Louise Campbell notes in her 2003 book on *How Policies Make Citizens,* the creation of these groups is often a result of policy legacies that "confer resources, motivate interest in government affairs by tying well-being to government action, define groups for mobilization, and even shape the content and meaning of democratic citizenship" (A. L. Campbell 2003, 15). While analyses traditionally emphasize the role of policy consumers as the central political interest group, scholars have also drawn attention to other key interest groups such as service providers. For example, Rose (2013) finds that in the case of health insurance for the poor population in the U.S. (Medicaid), efforts to prevent retrenchment have largely been driven by state governors alongside health care providers, advocacy groups, public opinion, and federal government policy entrepreneurs rather than program beneficiaries *per se*. Having non-bolsista protective constituencies is particularly important in the case of programs where benefits are individualized (such as direct cash transfers) and where programs benefit marginalized populations (such as those targeted to the poor

population) who may face higher barriers to political mobilization (such as deprivations in income, education, or time).

In the case of Bolsa Família, a critical protective constituency that the program created was its own bureaucracy. This is particularly true at the federal level within SENARC, a highly technocratic agency committed to ensuring the continuity of the program. SENARC, while having grown significantly since the program's inception in 2003, continues to be run by a small core group of bureaucrats—many of whom have worked in the department for over ten years (and many of whose tenure actually pre-dated the creation of Bolsa Família and MDS, having worked on one of the preceding programs such as Bolsa Escola). As described by a former SENARC worker, "Bolsa Família has a relatively unique characteristic. Basically, the group of bureaucrats that is in charge of the program has been the same since the beginning" (Interview SENARC 2018). Moreover, this group of bureaucrats has been consistently described by key informants as "100% technical," "highly competent," and "extremely dedicated to the program." Indeed, as one informant recounted, "people used refer to the Bolsa Família management unit as '*gestorlândia*' (manager-land) because the vast majority were trained public managers. And they would refer to the Secretariat of Evaluation as 'the university,' because the people who worked there were mostly academics who came from the university" (Interview MDS 2018). This emphasis on research and program effectiveness has in turn served to strengthen the power of the technical bureaucracy over time, as Bolsa Família entered the global stage and was held up by international agencies as a model CCT program. This reflects Centeno's (1993) notion that one key source of technocratic power is the legitimacy derived from performing in delivering on outcomes. This was intentionally cultivated. As a former MDS minister noted, reflecting on the political attacks the program faced in its early years and the intensive research and evaluation agenda pursued by the ministry: "Research was one of the means we had to counter the waves of anti-Bolsa Família and anti-social policy sentiment" (Interview Patrus Ananias 2018).

Just as the power of this high-level federal bureaucracy played a key role in driving the program's formulation in the early years (Andrade and Lima-Silva 2016), the inertia of such an established bureaucracy has gone on to play an important role in pushing back against the pressures faced in the contemporary political environment. These dynamics were reflected in the description of a meeting between SENARC and an oversight agency informant, as recounted to me by an informant: "[The oversight agency] said to [the SENARC team], '*We're discussing some legal issue related to the former managers of Bolsa Família. You guys don't need to worry about it—it's about the former management.*' One of my colleagues responded, '*We are the former management, and we will likely be the future management as well.*"' (Interview SENARC 2018). While some SENARC bureaucrats chose to leave the government under the new leadership due to the increased difficulty of fighting internal battles and the wave of "very unpleasant situations" generated by politically motivated decision making, many chose to stay. As one informant told me, the majority of her colleagues chose to stay and "hold the line (*segurar a onda*)…Some people have [struggled with mental health issues] in this environment, but they considered the most important thing is to remain there to defend the program rather than just leave." (Interview SENARC 2018).

In our conversations, most informants within SENARC explicitly expressed their understanding of their bureaucratic role as one of defending the program internally at a technical level—even if it did not look like that from the outside. As one informant explained:

> What is the job of a bureaucrat? It is to do everything you can to defend the program. Sometimes to defend the program you need to tell the politician what he wants to hear…For example, in the current government [Temer administration], this means repeating the discourse that they invented: that *"the targeting is terrible, that is full of inclusion errors, that they improved the cross-checks, that now we do cross-checks x,y, and z*." But in truth, all of these cross-checks were designed by the technical team a long time ago and have been evolving for years. Though previously they were framed within another discourse—a progressive discourse of improving the program. But sometimes you just need to give the politician the discourse they want to hear, so that they will leave you alone and let you work - so that you can defend the more important things. That is just the life of a bureaucrat. (Interview SENARC 2018)

Her remarks highlight the important battle being fought by technocrats behind closed doors to ensure that the program continued operate how it needed to on a day-to-day basis to meet bolsistas' needs in practice, despite potentially having to dress it in different clothes. While the public discourse changed in the media as different political agendas gained or lost traction, the objectives of the people managing the program remained clear and consistent. The program's bureaucratic leadership continued to employ strategic tactics in defense of the technical integrity of the program, and informants were surprisingly explicit in their acknowledgment that this is what they were doing (and have been doing since the beginning). As one informant frankly put it:

> This is what bureaucratic behavior is. You fight the internal battle. You don't fight the battle in the newspaper. People would get mad at me, saying '*Oh, you're being a technocrat.*' I am. I am a progressive technocrat. I have done this for many years. We also played this game in the PT government. (Interview SENARC 2018)

The idea of SENARC being staffed by self-declared "progressive technocrats," rather than ideologically neutral ones, is an important distinction from some of the studies on technocrats that frame them as purely rational actors interesting in pursuing efficiency. In this case it is arguably a legacy of Brazil's "technopols"[19] that intentionally built this bureaucracy in the late 1990s and grew it during the 2000s. Notably, this case demonstrates that these types of state actors do not only operate in moments of policy expansion (such as the actors explored in Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea (2016)'s analysis on processes of building universal social policy), but also importantly in moments when politicians may be more interested in retrenchment. In their recent work, Lotta and Silveira (2021) highlight this fundamental role of bureaucrats in Brazil as a force of resistance (and more broadly, as a source of "anti-oppressive action") in preserving institutions, public polices, and their own jobs in response to oppressive government action in authoritarian contexts (see also the

[19] Domínguez (1997, xiii) uses this term to refer to the "technically skilled and politically savvy leaders who held key positions during critical periods of change" in Latin America.

work of Abers (2021) on institutional activism within the Brazilian state in the context of environmental and women's health policy).

Though, while SENARC managed to defend Bolsa Família itself, without a higher-level political commitment to an agenda of integrated social development the program's broader potential for impact was arguably reduced—as it associated services and benefits underwent their own processes of retrenchment and grew more distant and fragmented. As discussed in the previous chapter, the change from Lula's Fome Zero strategy to Dilma's Brasil Sem Miséria strategy reflected a massive improvement in the capacity of the welfare state to deliver an integrated social assistance agenda. However, during my fieldwork in 2018, I did not hear BSM mentioned even once. When asked about why no one talked about it anymore, one informant explained to me that:

> First, politics. BSM was Dilma's hallmark approach to social policy. Second, because BSM was a movement from Brasília, in the sense that it was actually an integrated approach to management rather than something that a person would consume on the street or on the local level like Bolsa Família. And finally, because in the end it stopped existing in practice. It is still there in the written framework, but the centralized approach is gone, unfortunately. (Interview SENARC 2018)

In this way, the strategy of pursuing no strategy can also be interpreted as a means of subtle retrenchment during this period. The turn away from BSM also coincided with a turn toward greater fragmentation of social programs—recalling the issue that Bolsa Família was created to address in the first place, with implications for the way that the state structures its relationship with bolsistas. As one state-level informant noted, "In 2004, there was a group of programs that were joined together to become Bolsa Família. Currently, we are starting to see growing fragmentation of these programs once again…and with each different program that is created targeted to a different group, you take away the focus we had on the family as a unit and begin to instead redirect our focus separately on the child, or the worker, or the elderly individual" (Interview SEDESE 2018). Thus, while the body of Bolsa Família was generally preserved during this period, its "teeth" were arguably being slowly and subtly worn down.

This is even more relevant if we consider the program's fundamental links with other public services such as education and health. As this chapter previously mentioned, following the introduction of a new law capping federal expenditures for 20 years, investments in the universalization of these services has fallen (leaving the country particularly vulnerable to the public health catastrophe it would face in the context of COVID-19, as warned for example by Doniec, Dall'Alba, and King (2018)). Moreover, these divestments are likely to have the largest negative impacts on the those who need them the most, as they cannot afford to "opt out" and seek private alternatives. This implies not only direct spending cuts to health and education services more broadly, but also to the rollback of associated programs targeted to promote the inclusion of marginalized groups within these more universal systems, such as *Farmácia Popular* which aims to expand access to essential medications (T. Resende 2021) or affirmative action policies which aim to expand access to higher education (Pinheiro and Soares 2020). While Bolsonaro's finance minister Paulo Guedes has argued that social programs like Farmácia Popular should be further cut in order to use that money to fund the expansion of Bolsa Família (T. Resende and Brandt 2020), this "either/or" logic fundamentally denies how the expansion of Bolsa Família in practice (seen from this thesis's view of a trajectory toward greater incorporation in the long-term) actually requires the parallel expansion and improvement of other integrated services and benefits.

"They cut people and we sign them up": Social assistance providers and the fight on the frontlines

Notably, the bureaucratic defense of the program was not limited to the federal level. At the municipal and local levels, both Bolsa Família program operators and social assistance service providers played an important role in supporting families during this turbulent time of increased audits—which is in fact the objective of their professional mandate. While the federal discourse framed the role of municipalities as "investigating" the irregularities that were found in the audits, the local and municipal

actors instead framed it as trying to help the families resolve blockage issues and regain access to their benefits. As one local worker explained, "When these families get caught in the audit, they don't understand very well what happened. We try to talk with them to explain and help resolve the issue" (Interview Regional 2018).

Interestingly, the local social assistance workers that I spoke with did not subscribe to the view that fraud was widespread. Rather, many insisted on explaining to me that the majority of the issues found were not a result people intentionally trying to defraud the system or take advantage of the government—but rather a result of innocent motivations and ignorance of the complex specificities of the eligibility criteria. Many cited examples that they had dealt with of low-income or vulnerable families that were on the edge of poverty but no longer technically eligible—hardly the case of the egregious inclusion errors that featured in the political dialogue. As one social assistance worker explained, "for example if a person a gets a job earning minimum wage and has 5 family members in their house, that person never imagines that they would no longer have a right to receive Bolsa Família because they are earning so little. But on paper they do not have this right since they are technically earning above the eligibility per capita threshold – and they are being held to account for this" (Interview CRAS 2018). This left many local workers questioning the motivations behind the audit actions—essentially viewing them as austerity by other means. As explained by a CRAS worker, in her view:

> The government is not using the system in order to remove people who shouldn't be receiving the benefit in order to free up resources for other people who are eligible but still waiting to receive benefits. No, the government is doing this in order to cut benefits and reduce the share of funding going to social policy. That's where I think the problem is: when the government uses the strategies that it should use to amplify rights in order to reduce them. (Interview CRAS 2018)

While people traditionally associate benefit blockages and cancellations in conditional cash transfers with a failure to meet the conditionality requirements (such as school attendance or health checkups), this is no longer the primary reason in the context of Bolsa Família. As one worker explained:

> Today what is causing the vast majority of benefits being blocked or canceled is the registry verification checks and audits. About 90% of what we see with families here is because of this – and they have to come and update their registry to fix it. It is much rarer that it is as a result of a lack of compliance with conditionalities – occasionally families will have benefits blocked because of this but very very rarely will they have them canceled for this reason. (Interview Regional 2018).

However, as explained in the previous chapter, going to the local CRAS or Regional center to update your Cadastro Único registry is no small feat for many families who are living in situations of poverty or extreme poverty. The time and financial constraints required to pay the transport fare and travel to these locations can be prohibitive in many cases, as is the difficulty of navigating a complex bureaucracy of which bolsistas often have limited or incorrect knowledge. Indeed, as the work by Eiró de Oliveira (2019) finds, widespread misinformation and fear of losing their benefits for an arbitrary reason during this interaction actually shapes many bolsistas' decision *not* to go to the local welfare office to update their registry as would be needed in order to resolve the issue.

Moreover, in some cases the trust that local workers have been building with families has been undermined by the increased audits. As one informant explained, "They cut the benefits there [in Brasília], but the family comes knocking at our door [in the municipality]. And they blame us – as if it were our fault, as if it were the fault of the people who operate the program" (Interview SMASAC 2018). While bolsistas may not make a distinction between the government in Brasilia and the government in the municipality, local workers were extremely aware of this distinction as well as their potentially contradictory objectives:

> There is the issue of the public's understanding of "the government." There have been so many cuts that they look at us like the face of a government that has come to cut their benefits. And in truth, we are the government. But we want, to the extent possible within the rules of the system, to give them access to that which they have a right. So we are making a counter

> movement in the sense that they are trying to cut people, but we are trying to include them to the maximum possible. (Interview GRETC 2018)

This is consistent with the literature on "street-level bureaucracy" which disentangles the role and power of frontline actors that provide services directly to citizens from that of higher-level management (Lipsky 1980) as well as the role of autonomy and discretion of these individual actors to reshape policy through implementation decisions at the point of delivery (Lotta and Santiago 2017). Importantly, in the context of Bolsa Família, this street-level bureaucracy also positively interacted with the stability of the federal technocrats within SENARC—building on the close-knit relationship constructed over the previous years of joint policy-learning. As one municipal worker reflected:

> We were lucky that the technical team remained in place after the change in government...They made a point to tell us: "*We are technical workers just like you.*" I think this makes a big difference in the program because the people who are there defend the program—from the perspective of defending an idea. They fight for it, and they listen to what we have to say too. This is different from other federal social programs that are run by different departments. (Interview GRETC 2018)

However, the power of frontline bureaucrats—and thus the ability of the state to actually reach and support families—lies in the human resources that comprise this group. Thus, while the actual form of the Bolsa Família program may remain intact, if parallel investments are not made in retaining, training, and recruiting the necessary personnel to support the program, its efficacy could be reduced in practice. As highlighted in the previous chapter, a key factor driving the success of Bolsa Família in reaching families in practice has been its investment in building the capacity of local, municipal, and state level workers. As expressed by a former minister of MDS:

> I'm not afraid of them cutting money for Bolsa Família, but rather that they stop doing trainings. Bolsa Família does trainings all the time. When the system changes, they do a training for the social assistance workers. Or something else changes and they do a training for the managers. Whoever is in in charge of the program needs to believe that this is something that is important, that this is something that guarantees that the system functions with a high level of quality (Interview Tereza Campello 2018).

Importantly, this is not just limited to the Bolsa Família program, but also includes the larger social assistance network that provides integrated services and benefits to bolsista populations. Even when families lose their benefits, they still receive the umbrella of specialized social assistance services

provided in their territory (and as a result of receiving Bolsa Família, they have been identified by these providers as a "priority public"). Thus the provision of Bolsa Família and local assistance services are intertwined, and the efficacy of both are reliant on the quantity and quality of human resources available to deliver them. As the municipal secretary for social assistance in Belo Horizonte explained: "The right to social assistance is materialized through people. There is no magic x-ray machine that can look to see if there is child labor or sexual exploitation taking place in a household. You need professionals: social workers, psychologists, lawyers" (Interview SMASAC 2018). Unfortunately, in the context of the fiscal and economic crisis and calls for increased austerity—not only was the need for social assistance rising but resources were also increasingly scare. As the municipal secretary went on to assert:

> The crisis is not a discourse: it is present in the municipalities. Poverty, situations of risk and vulnerability have only increased…So I don't know what will become of social assistance from here one year out. There's been a freeze in investments in this area. With the resources that we receive today, we can barely maintain what we have. Unfortunately, our current fight is just to maintain what we have achieved up until this point—let alone expand social protection to the poor and vulnerable families who need it. (Interview SMASAC 2018)

From this perspective, the achievement of rights in practice fundamentally requires longer-term commitment to funding not only the maintenance and expansion of cash transfer programs– but also the underlying network of frontline service providers that support the families who receive them.

Summarizing the argument: Substantive citizenship during the Backlash

In sum, we see that in the context of substantive citizenship, the backlash period brought with it a discursive reframing of the program within a paradigm of distrust of bolsistas and the need to cut down on fraud. This was accompanied by "minor" administrative changes, such as an intensified period of audits and improvements to the existing registry verification systems—however, these changes had very real consequences for millions of bolsistas who were temporarily deprived of a key source of income as they faced benefit blockages in the face of suspected inconsistencies in their

registry entries. However, in this context, "the state as a set of bureaucracies" was not only responsible for making these changes, but also responsible for resisting further changes and working to protect bolsistas throughout the process—as highlighted here in the complex interactions between politicians and technocrats at both the macro and micro levels. We often think of beneficiaries of social protection programs as their largest protective constituency; however, this period shows that bureaucrats and frontline service providers themselves are in fact a critical protective constituency in the context of Bolsa Família. Unfortunately, as this section highlights, this protective power was limited to the contours of the program itself and critically did not extend to protecting the broader integrated social development agenda in which the program was embedded.

5.4 Cohesive citizenship: Caught in the crossfire

In this section, we turn our gaze from "the state as a set of bureaucracies" to "the state as focus of collective identity" and the implications for cohesive citizenship. As the previous chapter showed, while Bolsa Família made key advances in promoting formal and substantive citizenship for the poor population during the expansionary period—it lagged behind in simultaneously promoting cohesive citizenship. At the heart of this disjuncture is the targeted nature of the program. While it was key for promoting accelerated progress on an agenda of poverty reduction, it also served as a barrier to advancing broader social incorporation. The sharp line drawn between "the poor" and "the nonpoor" (quite literally, the poverty line) served to crystalize class divisions and foment binary conflicts. From the perspective of cohesive citizenship, the backlash period sheds light on the way the state's failure to create a focal point of collective identity created the foundation for an increasingly widening divide across three principal fault lines: 1) the moral and ideological divide between the "deserving" and the "undeserving"; 2) the class divide between the poor and the middle class; and 3) the identity divide

between the "dependent" poor and the working poor. The following sub-sections explore these in greater depth.

A moral and ideological divide: The "Deserving" vs the "Undeserving"

In the context of Bolsa Família, one way in which the moral question of who "deserves" benefits deepened during this period was in regard to the government's public commitment to combatting fraud in the program. The political rhetoric on this issue focused on the need to remove those people who had lied about their income so that scarce resources could be directed "to those who truly needed them." Almost every instance of political leaders speaking about the audits and verification checks includes this specific caveat at the end (or an interchangeable variant) – emphasizing the need to remove the less deserving to create space for the more deserving. As this chapter has discussed, in many of the cases, the families who were "caught" in this process were in fact quite poor themselves (even if they were technically above the eligibility threshold), thus making it a very narrow and arbitrary window of deservingness—collapsing a broader political discussion about the amount of resources that should be invested in the welfare state into a conflict over which individuals should receive the scarce resources available. While this dialogue was brought to the forefront during this period, it is important to note that it is not a new dialogue. Indeed, as the previous chapter showed, historically strict eligibility thresholds alongside the existence of waiting lists have long created a sense of scarcity that fostered an increased sense of public scrutiny and social control over bolsistas' perceived deservingness to receive benefits. As Eiró de Oliveira (2019, 391) has noted, this perception permeates into the implementation of the program through informal systems of "bureaucratic rationing" adopted by some local social workers who "constantly engage in a moral assessment of household expenses and bolsistas' behavior in order to separate them into two categories: deserving or undeserving of

public aid." However, the renewed political attention to this issue within a context of growing austerity and intensified audits of bolsistas' registry data have only served to reinforce these pre-existing divisions.

Beyond the questioning of which poor individuals deserved to receive the scarce benefits available, the political moment ushered in a larger ideological debate on whether the poor population deserved to receive benefits from the state at all. As Payne and De Souza Santos (2020) point out, building on Rea (2018), the new right-wing movements that emerged during this period were characterized by a shared ideological view that rights should be granted based on principles of merit and deservedness; in contrast to left-wing movements that believed rights should be granted based on principles of equality. Similarly, in their framework for analysis on the contemporary right in Latin America, Luna and Rovira Kaltwasser (2014) distinguish the "right" from the "left" based on their respective beliefs that the main inequalities between people are "natural and outside the purview of the state" or "artificial and should therefore be counteracted by active state involvement." In this context, debates about non-contributory social assistance began to move away from the rights-based and citizenship-based agenda that informed the expansionary period under the PT government toward a more restrictive and anti-egalitarian view of the welfare state.

Notably, this view extends beyond social assistance to broader policies of social inclusion. This is perhaps most strongly reflected in Bolsonaro's discourse about affirmative action policies for marginalized groups (a public which in many cases overlaps with bolsistas), referring to these approaches as *coitadismo*. While this a difficult concept to translate into English, Taylor (2020) explains it as "a neologism which might be expressed as exaggerated pity." In a television interview on October 24, 2018—just days before the presidential election—then candidate Bolsonaro argued that "these affirmative action policies cannot continue to exist. It's all *coitadismo*. Poor black people, poor women,

poor gay people, poor northeasterners, poor people from Piauí. We are going to end this" (TVCidadeVerde 2018). While in the same interview he separated his discourse about Bolsa Família (which he promised to maintain, likely due to the political incentives discussed above) from affirmative action policies such as racial quotas—his logic that poor people did not deserve targeted support from the state based on the fact that they were poor was clear and unmissable. This anti-social inclusion stance was a fundamental cornerstone of Bolsonaro's election and represented a turning point in the social compact surrounding the role of the Brazilian welfare state and who was considered a deserving citizen. Indeed, in an analysis of Bolsonaro voters' issue positions in the 2018 election, Rennó (2020, 18) found that the critical stance of Bolsonaro supporters on "gay rights, women's rights, Bolsa Família, and racial quotas…challenge[d] the predominant view that social inclusion is consensual in Brazil (Alston et al. 2016)." In this way, the backlash period, particularly under Bolsonaro, reflects a project of what Evans (2020) refers to as "perverse nationalism": in which "the nation" is premised on a project of exclusion rather than inclusion, fundamentally disrupting the discourse of social incorporation pursued during the expansionary period.

A class divide: The middle classes vs the poor

This moral and ideological divide in a context of scarce resources of the welfare state was also deeply intertwined with a widening class divide—particularly between the middle classes and the poor population. The social and economic progress made during the previous decade fostered more equitable growth across the income distribution and an emerging middle class. As more households entered the middle class, their increasing purchasing power and expanding consumer credit fueled a consumption boom (F. H. Ferreira et al. 2013; Neri 2011). However, despite these gains, a large share of households still remained economically vulnerable, and the rising expectations of the newly minted middle-class remained unmet by lagging improvements in the quality of public services such as

education, health, transport, and security (which wealthier classes could afford to opt-out from). As the vulnerable and middle-class households confronted the reality of the growing economic crisis, public discontent began to erupt. The protests in 2013, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, while originally led by a broader mix of classes and ideologies quickly morphed into a narrower movement led primarily by the middle-classes against the PT and against government corruption. Some of the anti-PT and anti-corruption movements that led to the ousting of Dilma also later gave way to the new right-wing movements that elected Bolsonaro and supported a more restrictive social agenda.

As Barbara Weinstein recently explained it, this reflects a paradox in which the "dramatic period of social inclusion [in Brazil] has given way to a revanchist politics of exclusion and hate—with many of the beneficiaries of the first phase now key protagonists of the second one" (Jain Family Institute 2021). In his book unpacking the puzzle of Dilma's administration, André Singer builds on Alexis de Tocqueville's (1856) writings to explain this as the result of the growing economic insecurity and downward mobility among the middle classes that bred resentment against the poorest who were seeing welfare improvements as a result of social benefits (such as Bolsa Família). Central to the politics of redistribution is the tension over who wins and who loses—and some among the middle classes felt that they were unfairly losing while people in the poorest income classes were winning. This view was explicitly mentioned by a participant in the 2015 pro-impeachment protests in a study done by Solano (2019):

> The PT only governs for the poor. Bolsa Família, Bolsa handout, Bolsa whatever. And for us, the middle class who pays taxes? Nothing. They are the biggest criminal enterprise in this country and put us in the largest crisis in history. (Interview 20-year-old protestor from Class A, 2015, cited in Solano 2019)

While poll data suggest there was still generalized support for the continuation of the Bolsa Família program among the public in the lead up to the 2018 election, it was far lower among Bolsonaro supporters (56%) compared to Hadadd (PT) supporters (95%) (G1 2018). Moreover, in Brazil the

struggle over resources was taking place not only in a context of rising political polarization but also in a context shaped by the growing ubiquty of social media and messenger platforms such as WhatsApp. As right-wing countermovements increasingly organized themselves online, mis- and dis-information also spread rapdily in digital echo chambers further entrenching more extremist stances and reinforcing existing social and political divisions. As one informant noted, "There is a lot of 'Fake News' that circulates on WhatsApp which associates the crisis in Brazil with the supply of rights—as if we were in crisis because we spend money on cash transfer programs. But, of course, this is not true. These are the minimal social rights that are in our constitution. The majority of people—primarily the middle class—spread this news, and it multiplies" (Interview Regional 2018). This notion of an "oversupply of rights" as a driver of the fiscal crisis reflects a broader narrative among right-wing movements that the Brazilian welfare state (and, more fundamentally, the 1988 Constitution) is characterized by an imbalance of "too many rights and not enough responsibilities" (a notion explicitly argued by right-wing federal deputy Ricardo Barros in 2020).

From a perspective of policy backlash, we may think that Bolsa Família's initially narrow focus on the poorest population is one of the reasons that it has failed to gain the support it would need to be more robustly expanded to other segments of society. In order words, if we think about the program as a "first step" toward implementing a universal basic income (as it has often been framed)—it may have been a first step that explicitly undermined the likelihood of taking a second step due to the way it interacted with class conflict. In his 2019 article on *Limiting Policy Backlash: Strategies for Taming Counter-coalitions in an Era of Polarization,* Eric Patashnik highlights eight different strategic approaches governments can take to minimize the potential backlash against policies that serve diffuse or marginalized constituencies. In the case of Bolsa Família, one particularly relevant strategy that the PT chose not to pursue was the notion of "increasing the progressivity of benefits *after* policy embedding." The design of Bolsa Família chose to target the poorest from the start, rather than first building a

"protective constituency" among other income groups prior to expanding to this segment of society. This was a very intentional choice by the PT government at the time, as discussed in the Expansion chapter, but it may have also inadvertently made the program a target in the context of growing class tensions and the associated distributive battle over rights and responsibilities. Moreover, the program's shortcomings in actually living up to its rights-based rhetoric during the expansionary period (with many still viewing social assistance benefits as "given" by a state motivated by goodwill toward the poor, rather than "owed" by a state motivated by its duty to all citizens), left it particularly vulnerable to this changing narrative. This shortcoming was explicitly acknowledged by a former minister of MDS under the PT, who, in reflecting on what he would have done differently, noted that:

> Something we should have done more of was work on raising political consciousness—to talk to beneficiary families and say: "*This is the obligation of the state. You are not receiving this because of any favor. It is your right*"…We did not prepare the beneficiaries of Bolsa Família (and the other social programs that we put in place in Brazil based on the 1988 Constitution) for the moment that we are living now in Brazil—in which the rich are uncomfortable with the amount of money going to the poor population. (Interview Patrus Ananias 2018)

An identity divide: The "dependent" poor vs the working poor

The widening divide during this period was not just between social classes, but also within the poorest income group as well—particularly in relation to the identity of being a bolsista. As discussed in the previous chapter, the program's design and implementation tended to inadvertently reinforce an often stigmatizing identity of bolsistas as "poor." This is visibly marked, for example, by the easily identifiable bright yellow card required to withdraw benefits. During the backlash period this was compounded, as the political leadership espoused warnings about dependency on Bolsa Família benefits, framing poor people who rely on state benefits negatively in contrast with poor people who are able to exit the program and earn their income via employment. This reflects a broader discursive shift taking place during this period, as other scholars have noted, from a language of solidarity and social rights used by the PT to a language of individual responsibility and meritocratic achievement

(Heller 2020). The false dichotomy of providing income support versus promoting labor market incorporation is often referred to using the popular cliché of "giving a man a fish" versus "teaching him to fish." In addition to its other flaws, this metaphor fundamentally presumes that poverty is a problem that both can and should be solved through increasing production (more fishermen) rather than redistribution (sharing the fish) (Ferguson 2015).

Indeed, during his campaign, Bolsonaro used this fishing metaphor to frame social assistance more broadly as an undignified "handout" in contrast to the more "dignified" option of employment (see for example, the tweet shown in Figure 5.7, in which this arguably paternalistic view is literally visually accompanied by a paternal image of Bolsonaro's father teaching him to fish). Importantly, this view was not just promoted by the president, but also by those he appointed to lead the ministry in charge of delivering such benefits. For example, Osmar Terra (Minister of Social Development under Temer, and later the Minister of Citizenship under Bolsonaro), repeatedly made a point to emphasize that "Bolsa Família cannot be a life plan" (see, for example, his comments in the media article shown in Figure 5.6). Moreover, his views on this issue were clear prior to his appointment. For example, Terra previously publicly tweeted about dependency in Bolsa Família in 2011, saying that: "Since the creation of Bolsa Família, 86% of beneficiaries are unable to leave the program. There is an entrance, but no exit! Dependency forever!". Similarly, Onyx Lorenzoni (the Minister of Citizenship who succeeded Terra under Bolsonaro) made similar comments in 2014, emphasizing a binary distinction between "honest workers" (who he stated saw only a 6.78% increase in the minimum wage under Dilma's PT government) and bolsistas who "live off the expense of the government" (and who he stated saw a 10% increase in benefits) (Onyx Lorenzoni 2014). Notably, given the class tensions discussed above, this view was also often promoted by professional public servants working in various departments of the state. As one informant explained:

> There is a part of society that is constantly speaking out against Bolsa Família. Principally, the middle and upper-middle classes…which is 'us' in truth, no? Your typical public servant. I just took a training course a few weeks ago, and you would not believe it. In the beginning all I would hear is: "*These people don't want to work"* or "*Bolsa Família makes people lazy*." After I did my presentation, people were surprised and would come up to be saying, "*I had no idea the program worked like that!*" These people are intelligent – but they have been going along with the common messaging among their peers. (Interview SENARC 2018)



//Translation//

Our people do not need handouts. Our people need jobs and dignity! "I will not give you a fish. I will teach you to fish"

[Photo with same text as above with the following description of the image included: Jair Bolsonaro and his father (Ribeira/SP 1960)]

Figure 5.7 "I will not give you a fish": Twitter post from presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro
Source: Jair M. Bolsonaro (2017).

Several informants remarked on how they also saw this view reflected by society, noting that "even among some of the lower classes, there is a perception that receiving Bolsa Família is bad, and that you shouldn't be exploiting the government and that you should find a way to make it on your own" (Interview SEDESE 2020). Importantly, during the backlash period this political narrative was gaining traction within the context of a shifting identity crisis among the group of "new consumers" that

emerged for the first time under the period of financial inclusion and market incorporation during the PT government. This group who had found a sense of self-worth in their purchasing power, began to lose it again in the wake of the economic crisis. In their fascinating 10-year longitudinal ethnography on the political subjectivity of residents living in a low-income community in Porto Alegre, Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco (2020) trace the consequences of this for poor young men who began to turn further toward the right—fueled by feelings of economic insecurity and class anxiety. In one anecdote the authors describe, despite the fact that one man (Milton)'s own wife had actually received Bolsa Família benefits and that this "financial support was essential for building the couple's first house – Milton believed that the benefit left the poor lazy, accustomed to not working" (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco 2020, 11). These internal rifts reveal the extreme depths to which consensus around the social welfare project has broken down in Brazil, undermining even within-group solidarity as individuals seek self-worth through the rejection of an identity as "poor." This also interacts with Lena Lavinsa's critique of social policy in Brazil (including Bolsa Família), as being premised on a project of financialization that extends commodification and promotes a more residual model of social protection premised on private responsibility and market incorporation—ultimately reducing social cohesion and undermining more universal investments in decommodified goods and services (Lavinas 2013a).

It is important to note, however, that while the broader political and social dialogue promoted this view, many bureaucrats and frontline workers involved in delivering the program actively did not subscribe to it. As one local social worker exasperatedly explained to me, she personally confronts this type of criticism on a frequent basis:

> There is that common expression that people always say here: "*Don't give a man a fish, teach him how to fish*." I always say, "*OK, but will there be enough fishing rods for everyone? Will everyone have access to the lake? Will there be enough fish for everyone? No, there won't be*." So, we need to have social programs like this—there is no other way. And it's not just in poor countries—it's true in rich countries too. (Interview CRAS 2018)

Local program workers were acutely aware of the complex structural constraints facing bolsista families—such as lower income and lower levels of schooling (that cannot be changed quickly in the short-term, despite the program's longer-term focus on changing this reality for bolsistas' children) that reduce their chances of participating in an already struggling labor market. One social assistance worker shared example of an elderly client she had worked with to illustrate of the lack of alternative options that some individuals face:

> Ever since he arrived at our CRAS center we have been working with him. We had him apply for Bolsa Família and then we did everything possible to help get him a job. He took all the job tests and performed well. But nothing worked. He was elderly, and age matters. We realized "*Wow, he is going to have to receive Bolsa Família until he is old enough to receive BPC.*" So, for four years, until he reached the age threshold for BPC, his only income was Bolsa Família and the basic food basket that CRAS would give him. (Interview CRAS 2018)

However, during the backlash period, citizens such as this man who were living in a situation of poverty with limited or no prospects for employment, were painted in the public eye as unduly taking advantage of state support.

Summarizing the argument: Cohesive citizenship during the Backlash

In sum, we see that in the context of cohesive citizenship, the state's failure to promote a sense of collective identity though Bolsa Família during the expansionary period was compounded during the backlash period. With right-wing movements advocating for a smaller welfare state in the context of economic recession, conflicts over scarce resources intensified—further cementing existing moral, ideological, social, and identity divisions and undermining a logic of entitlement based on citizenship rights. Political discourses about beneficairies' dishonesty and dependency contrasted with narratives of meritrocracy and self-reliance. Moreover, forces of polititical polarization amplified the distance between binary sides—making it difficult to find middle ground. As Hacker and Pierson (2019) note in their special journal issue on *Policy Feedback in An Age of Polarization:* polarization changes everything. It makes solving collective action problems more challenging as the zero-sum contest between political

parties "gives everyone involved—elected and appointed public officals, allied interest groups, activists, and voters—increased incentive to resist initiatives launched by the other side" (Hacker and Pierson 2019, 15).

5.5 Conclusion: Backlash without backsliding

This chapter followed the trajectory of the Bolsa Família program through the turbulent period of policy backlash that began in the mid 2010s in Brazil. In general, it is a story of policy durability. However, as this chapter has detailed, this has manifested differently across different forms of citizenship. In the face of a conservative government with a pro-austerity fiscal agenda, the program's external public support and internal technocratic support have generally insulated it from possible pressures of retrenchment. In this way, it has been largely resilient across formal and substantive forms of citizenship. However, this has not been the case in terms of cohesive citizenship. The already weak sense of collective identity surrounding the program only crumbled further under its new discursive framing during this period. This served to widen already existing social divides in a context of growing economic insecurity and rising political polarization and restrict the expansionary potential of the program.

While I argue that limited "backsliding" has occurred from this perspective, as the program largely "looks" the same as it did before, I want to be careful in acknowledging that it is not just the maintenance of the program *per se* that is of interest. Indeed, as the first chapter showed—the important thing about Bolsa Família is not necessarily the transfer of cash, but rather the delivery of integrated state action to the poor and vulnerable populations who have traditionally been excluded. And while this particular program may have proven resilient, the burden of social protection has increasingly been placed on it, as other social programs have been cut back. Without robust integration with other high quality social services and benefits, one could argue that the program faces the

possibility of systematic retrenchment (from the perspective of the incremental path toward universalism) even if it had legally and technically remained "strong."

Finally, as the growing class tensions during this period highlighted, there is a large vulnerable population that has been left out of the safety net. As Paiva, Cotta, and Barrientos (2019) note, cash transfer programs "have gradually become the first and only social protection layer for low-income groups and those dependent on informal employment in several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean." However, in its current form, Bolsa Família (which never evolved past its first stage on the path toward instituting a universal citizen's basic income) is not designed to serve this purpose. This is an issue I will turn to in the next chapter on how the crisis of COVID-19 has starkly exposed the gaps in social protection coverage for vulnerable and informal populations, showcased the possibilities of what could be, and reinvigorated the public debate over the path toward universalism.

CHAPTER 6 | THE CRISIS

"[As the Financial Times put it, during the pandemic the] Minister of Economy was 'forced to reconcile his free-market Chicago Boy identity with the need for massive government intervention.' Substantial fiscal measures were adopted—or shoved down their throats by Congress—causing a short-circuit in Bolsonarismo. But an adequate response to a crisis like this one requires not only loosening spending restrictions during the period of emergency, but also rethinking the role of the State in society and in the economy to overcome the structural weaknesses that this pandemic has made crystal clear."

-Laura Carvalho, Short-circuit: The virus and the return of the State (2020, 9)

The COVID-19 crisis has upended societies and economies across the globe. Beyond the tragic loss of over 6.5 million lives,[20] it has exacerbated many countries' pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. Concurrently, it has revealed the stark limitations of many countries' policy frameworks to adequately respond to these challenges. In the wake of the dramatic employment losses and rising economic insecurity that followed lockdown interventions, governments were forced to reckon with the fact that millions of newly vulnerable citizens were falling through the cracks of their social protection schemes. In this context, debates about bold policy agendas such as universal social protection and universal basic income rapidly gained new traction and captured the world's attention. Thus, in many ways, the pandemic has acted as a "shock" to social protection policymaking environments by reshaping the desirability, visibility, and feasibility of different reforms—thereby opening a so-called "window of opportunity" for policy change.

However, there has been wide heterogeneity in the actual social protection responses of countries during this time. While some countries adapted quickly to the pandemic with short-term emergency solutions such as temporary income support programs (among other types of programs), other countries responded with limited or no action (Gentilini et al. 2021).[21] In Brazil, the government

[20] Our World in Data. Data as of August 31, 2022.

[21] In the context of Latin America, a comparative study of the heterogeneity of ten countries' cash transfer responses finds that the key variables driving the breadth and sufficiency of programs were leaders' perceptions of the costs of inaction,

initially responded with one of the largest and most generous temporary income support programs for low-income individuals in Latin America (at least through December 2020) (Blofield, Giambruno, and Pribble 2021). This involved re-expanding the Bolsa Família program (by adding over one million families who had previously been placed on a growing waiting list) and creating the temporary *Auxílio Emergencial* (AE, Emergency Aid) benefit (targeting low-income informal workers and building in large part on the existing Bolsa Família infrastructure). This also prompted reinvigorated policy debates about what the future of the Bolsa Família program should look like in a post-pandemic world—culminating in the program's eventual replacement by the *Auxílio Brasil* (Brazil Aid) program in November 2021. However, this chapter argues that while the experience of the pandemic and of Auxílio Emergencial advanced the public debate over the path to a citizen's income in Brazil, these changes were insufficient for prompting the deeper structural changes required to radically shift long-term policy trajectories and reshape the welfare state's relationship with poor and vulnerable citizens.

This chapter traces the trajectory of Bolsa Família and its broader policy context during this period of "Crisis" and reflects on the corresponding implications for citizenship. It builds on the previous two chapters to understand how the historical foundations of formal, substantive, and cohesive citizenship developed during the Expansion and the Backlash periods served to shape the different types of short- and long-term possibilities that emerged during the Crisis period. It engages with the broader literature on policy change and path dependency to analyze this shock as a moment of "policy punctation." It considers the central importance of factors such as narratives, policy instruments, and state actors in shaping inclusive policy trajectories, in line with other studies on cash transfer expansions in Latin America during COVID-19 (see for example Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea 2022). While

and the interactive effects of the presence a programmatic left government legacy, fiscal space, and divided government (Blofield, Pribble, and Giambruno Forthcoming).

acknowledging that COVID-19 has served as a "policy focusing event" and a "path clearing policy accelerator" (see Hogan, Howlett, and Murphy 2022) that was successful in reshaping the contours of the policy agenda, this chapter argues that it was ultimately unsuccessful in ushering in the type of transformational changes that would characterize it as a "critical juncture." Note that the time period analyzed in this chapter (the period shaded in grey in Figure 6.1) begins in March 2020 (when the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic) and ends approximately two years later in August 2022 (while the pandemic remains ongoing, this reflects the point in time at which this manuscript was finalized).

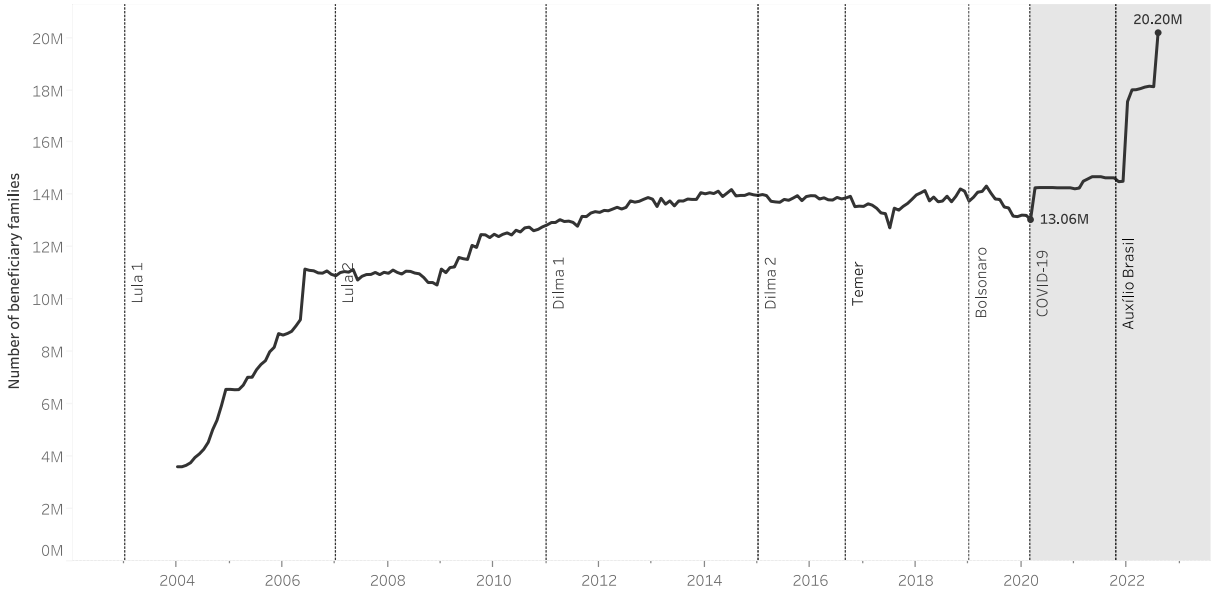


Figure 6.1 "The Crisis" period in context: Coverage of the Bolsa Família Program (January 2004 - October 2021) & Auxílio Brasil Program (November 2021-August 2022) (monthly data)
Source: Data from Ministry of Citizenship, Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management, VIS Data 3.
Note: The Crisis period (March 2020 – August 2022) is shaded in grey.

Section 6.1 provides background for the rest of the chapter, discussing how the COVID-19 crisis unfolded in Brazil and explaining the associated policy changes related to cash transfers that took place during this time. It discusses how Brazil responded to increasing economic and social insecurity with an expansive and generous short-term cash transfer program (Auxílio Emergencial) that raised new

questions and pressures for the future of Bolsa Família in the longer-term. It shows that while the pandemic ushered in a period of serious policy reckoning in Brazil, this did not end up leading to significant policy change given the program's eventual replacement by a minimalist Auxílio Brasil.

Section 6.2 looks at the implications in the context of *formal citizenship* (corresponding to "the state as law")—exploring the new expectations generated about cash transfer programs following the experience of Auxílio Emergencial in contrast to the actual changes that occurred in the transition from Bolsa Família to Auxílio Brasil. It argues that the growing political and social support for a more expansive cash transfer policy agenda was not enough to successfully enact legislative changes to move CCTs in a more rights-based direction. Not only did many of Bolsa Família's weaknesses in this regard persist in Auxílio Brasil (such as waiting lists, fixed monetary values, and pro-cyclical discretionary budgeting), but last-minute decision-making and constantly changing policy narratives created additional layers of uncertainty and instability for bolsistas. However, it also explores how changes in the broader political landscape during this time, in terms of legal precedents and new coalitions of actors, could play an important role in shaping the trajectory of formal citizenship in the future.

Section 6.3 looks at implications in the context of *substantive citizenship* (corresponding to "the state as a set of bureaucracies")—exploring the way that pandemic policies coincided with political pressures to usher in an era of "state-distancing." It argues that this took place both through passive and active processes. Given the need for social distancing and the suspension of relevant operational procedures (such as registration verification and conditionality monitoring) during the pandemic, the relationship between state actors and bolsistas grew increasingly "distant" during this time. Beyond this, the experience of Auxílio Emergencial prompted a shift in Bolsa Família's bureaucratic decision-making structures toward a more top-down approach with increasing influence from the Ministry of Economy and as well a push for the rapid digitalization of the Cadastro Único registration platform. These shifts

carried with them potential risks for the ability of frontline social assistance workers to effectively reach, orient, and support bolsistas in practice.

Section 6.4 looks at implications in the context of *cohesive citizenship* (corresponding to "the state as a focus of collective identity")—exploring the way that the new narratives prompted by the pandemic reshaped the social imaginary of Brazil as well as the social imaginary of the welfare state. It argues that while the pandemic made both poverty and informality newly visible to the state and to society, this visibility was not enough to overcome historical ideological and moral divides about the ideal size of the welfare state and who "deserves" to receive benefits. Rather than prompting new cross-class coalitions that could support the expansion of CCTs to a broader group of citizens beyond "the poor," political narratives that individualized responsibility for poverty and emphasized concerns of fiscal responsibility worked to reinforce social divisions and stoke distributional tensions (for example, between various low- and middle- income groups competing for scarce resources).

Section 6.5 concludes—arguing that the Crisis period can be interpreted as a period of opportunity without change. While the pandemic gathered global attention for its potential to serve as a "critical juncture," it has not yet prompted this type of paradigmatic shift in the context of cash transfers in Brazil. Instead of a marking a "fork in the road," the pandemic has reinforced the emergent politics of austerity and neoliberalism discussed in the Backlash chapter and continued to undermine existing cracks in formal, substantive, and cohesive citizenship. However, it remains to be seen how this new landscape will interact with an uncertain future (and a highly contentious 2022 presidential election) to shape policy pathways and state-citizen relations in the years to come.

6.1 Bolsa Família in a time of policy reckoning: Cash transfers during and after COVID-19

Short-term solutions: The creation of Auxílio Emergencial

On February 26, 2020, Brazil recorded its first confirmed case of COVID-19. By June 2020, the nation had become a global "hotspot" of the pandemic—a title it would intermittently reclaim throughout the following year. Despite being home to just 2.7% of the world's population, Brazil has suffered a disproportionate 5.7% of global confirmed COVID-19 cases and 10.5% of confirmed COVID-19 deaths (Our World in Data, data as of August 31, 2022). During several periods throughout the pandemic, Brazil's share of daily global confirmed cases and confirmed deaths reached well over 20% (Figure 6.2). From overburdened cemeteries struggling to keep up with the surging need for graves in São Paulo to hospitals running out of oxygen for intensive care patients in Manaus, Brazil repeatedly made global headlines for the horrific tragedies its people suffered throughout the pandemic. To date, COVID-19 has claimed the lives of over 680,000 people in Brazil (Brazil Ministry of Health, data as of August 31, 2022). It has also adversely affected the lives of millions more in a multitude of ways both known (ranging from lost loved ones to lost years of schooling to lost income) and unknown.

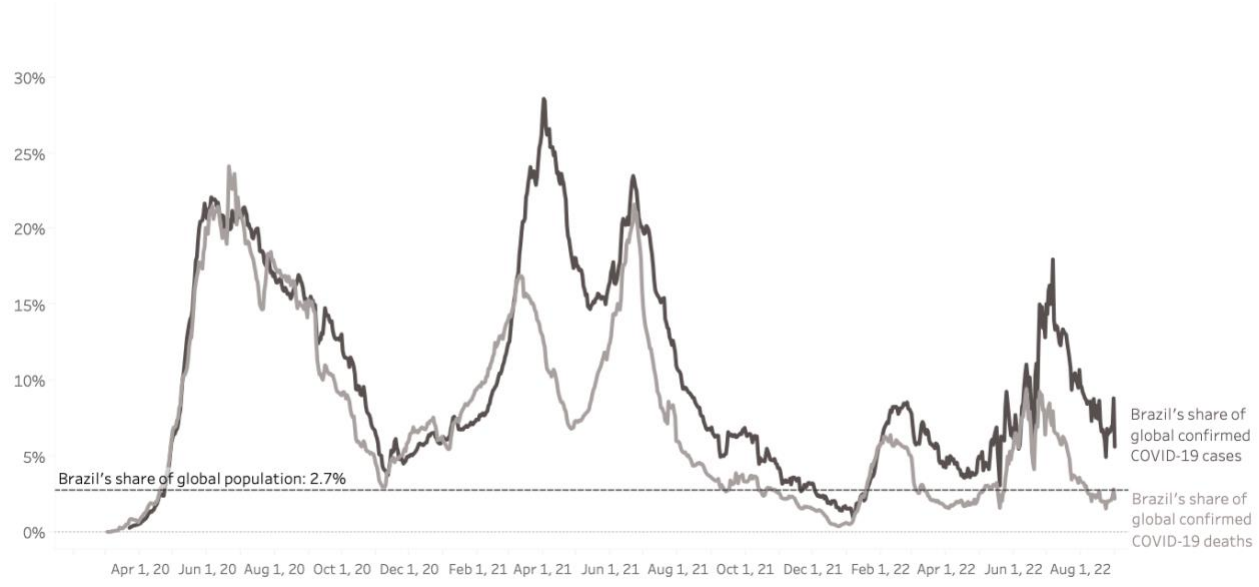


Figure 6.2 A disproportionate burden: Brazil's share of global daily confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths (7-day rolling average) (March 2020 – August 2022)
Source: Author's calculations using data from Our World in Data.

To slow the spread of the virus, municipal and state governments (and, to a lesser degree, the federal government[22]) enacted policies such as lockdowns and business closures to encourage people to stay-at-home. As with elsewhere in the world, these policies often led to a mix of outcomes: while necessary to protect the public's health, they also had knock-on adverse consequences in other areas such as employment and income. Millions of families were facing a rapid plunge into economic insecurity, alongside associated challenges such as food insecurity. For example, a March 2020 study conducted by Data Favela found that 72% of favela residents would not have enough money to maintain their basic standard of living after just one week of stay-at-home measures; and 1 in 3 residents would struggle to afford basic survival items such as food (Mena and Sant'Anna 2020). Unfortunately, Brazil's existing social safety net did not cover many of those who would need it during this shock. Social insurance programs such as unemployment support were restricted to those previously employed in the formal labor market and social assistance programs (such as Bolsa Família) were restricted to those who lived below the poverty and extreme poverty thresholds. This left many groups, such as low-income self-employed and/or informal workers, with a very difficult choice during the pandemic: risk their lives working anyway (as well as the lives of others) or forgo the only source of income they had. This was not a small group by any means; in 2019, informal workers comprised a staggering 41.6% of the nation's workforce (IBGE 2020).

To fill this social protection gap, in addition to expanding the existing Bolsa Família program[23], the Ministry of Citizenship[24] launched a massive new temporary cash transfer scheme: Auxílio

[22] The Bolsonaro administration repeatedly admonished stay-at-home policies in its public discourse (see for example Phillips 2020; Folhapress 2020; CartaCapital 2021). Indeed, data collected by various teams of scholars such as Petherick et al. (2021) and de Souza Santos et al. (2021) show that a large share of stay-at-home policy interventions were led by sub-national governments.

[23] Over 1.2 million families were added to the program from the waiting list between March and April 2020.

[24] In partnership with Dataprev (a state-owned technology company who managed the data processing and verification) and Caixa (who managed the payments).

Emergencial.[25] This scheme built largely on the existing Bolsa Família infrastructure and was designed to both increase the value of payments to bolsistas (who would receive AE benefits instead of BF benefits if the AE amount was higher) as well as to expand benefits to other low-income families and individuals—specifically to informal, self-employed, and unemployed workers and micro-entrepreneurs (with an income per capita threshold set at half of the minimum wage). While there was a general consensus among lawmakers for the need to create some sort of emergency income transfer program, decisions over the benefit amount, eligibility criteria, and benefit duration were hotly contested (as will be discussed later in this chapter). After extensive political debate alongside pressure from civil society, the AE program was eventually launched in April 2020 with a payment value of R$ 600 (with a maximum of 2 benefits per household, with single mothers[26] eligible for a payment of R$ 1,200). After the three-month initial period, the program was extended to last for an additional two months. When this extension expired, the Auxílio Emergencial "Residual" was created to last for four months with payments reduced to half of the previous amounts. When this ended in December 2020, there was a gap of three months in which families did not receive any AE payments until the program was reinstated as Auxílio Emergencial 2021 in April 2021. AE 2021 was designed to last for four months with payments reduced to R$ 250 (with single mothers eligible for a payment of R$ 375 and individuals living alone eligible for R$ 150). Following an additional three-month extension, the program finally ended in November 2021 when the replacement program for Bolsa Família (Auxílio

[25] Note that the benefit was originally referred to as the "Coronavoucher," but this term was later phased out after criticism related to its stigmatizing implications (Pichonelli 2020).
[26] Due to one of vetoes issued by Bolsonaro when enacting the law, single fathers were not eligible for the double payment. While this veto was later overturned by Congress, it was not until December 2021 that a provisional measure was issued to designate the appropriate funds for up to five payments be paid retroactively to eligible single fathers (Welton 2022).

Brasil) came into effect. See Figure 6.3 for a full timeline of the AE programs and their various extensions[27] throughout the pandemic.

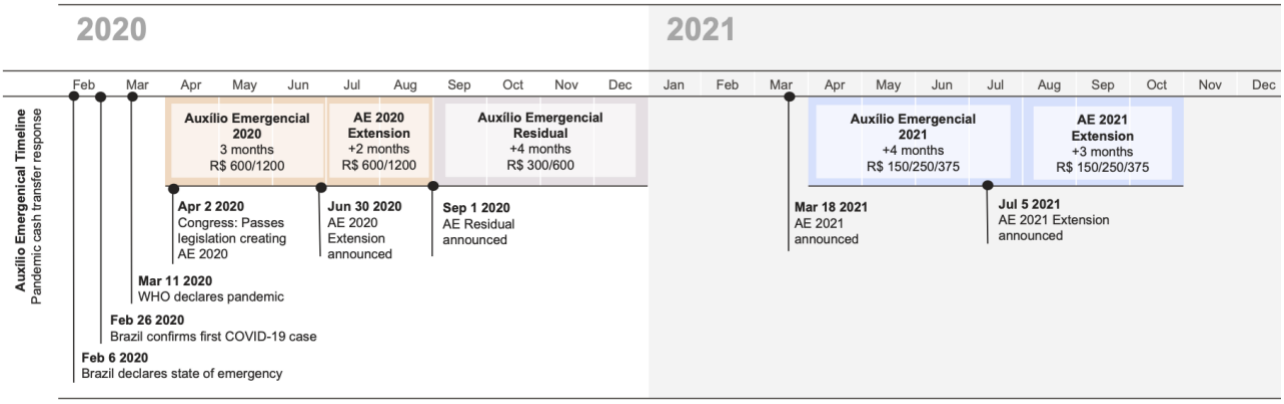


Figure 6.3 Auxílio Emergencial: A policy timeline 2020-2021
Source: Author's illustration based on national legal documents, government communications, and media publications.

To identify eligible beneficiaries, the AE program used the existing Cadastro Único single registry (with over 28 million families in the database, including the 14 million who already received Bolsa Família) as well as created a new mobile app for registration in partnership with Caixa (more than half of AE beneficiaries were identified this way) (see Figure 6.4). The subset of beneficiaries who registered via the mobile app were those that were not previously registered in the state's existing social protection databases but were economically vulnerable. Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes repeatedly referred to this group as the "invisibles"—a notion that this chapter will revisit in greater depth later.[28] While the program faced early implementation challenges and delays in getting benefits to families on time,[29] data from the Ministry of Citizenship indicates that in 2020 AE made cumulative

[27] Note that while the government ultimately decided to extend AE benefits four times, these decisions were repeatedly made at the last minute and thus offered very limited advance notice to beneficiaries. Looking back on the government's announcements, we can see that the various extensions were announced with between zero to three weeks of advance notice.
[28] This group comprised 38.2 million people. According to an analysis by FGV researchers, it represented 61% of all AE beneficiaries and was marked by high informality (65% worked in the informal sector), low-income (74% earned less than R$ 1254 per month), and low-schooling (55% had only completed basic education) (Gonzalez, Barreira, and Pereira 2020).
[29] For an overview of key implementation challenges see the list of 20 issues compiled by the civil society coalition Renda Básica que Queremos (2020) or the discussion by Tebet Marins et al. (2021).

payments of R$ 259 billion to a total of 68 million eligible people, and in 2021 AE made cumulative payments of R$ 60 billion to a total of 39 million eligible people (Ministry of Citizenship, 2022). It is important to note, however, that this does not mean that this number of people received every payment installment. For example, according to data obtained by Carvalho (2021) through freedom of information requests, of the 68.2 million people who received the 1st AE 2020 payment, 4 million people had been removed from the program by the time of the 5th payment. Following the September 2020 extension, more than 10 million people were removed from the program each month.

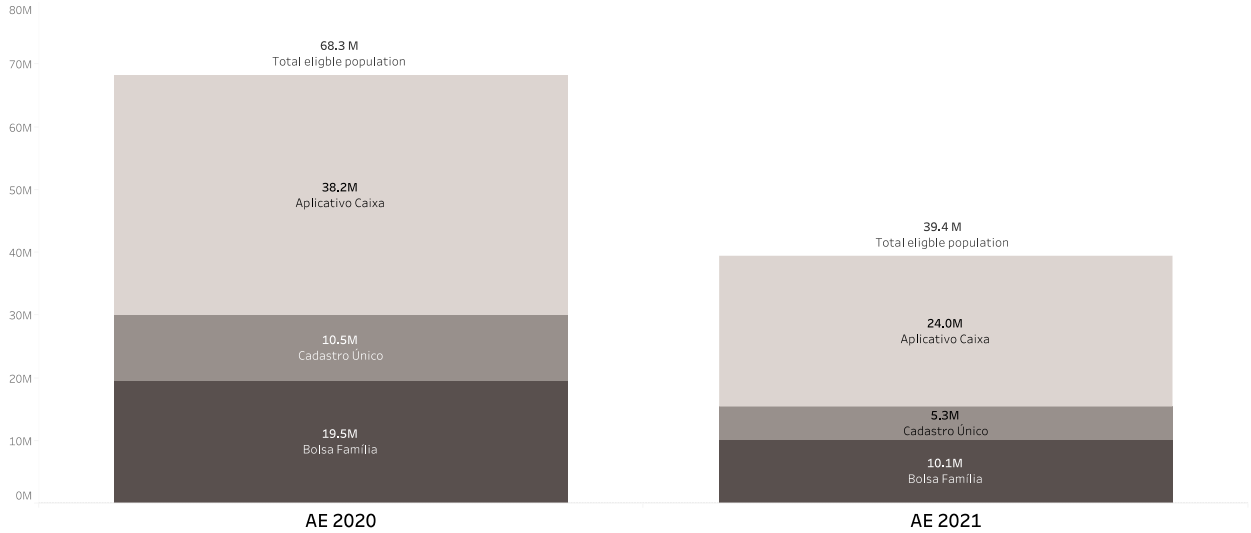


Figure 6.4 Auxílio Emergencial: Total beneficiaries by type
Source: Data from Ministry of Citizenship, Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management, VIS Data 3.

In addition to the federal Auxílio Emergencial scheme, many sub-national governments also devised and delivered their own complementary emergency income support programs (Portela Souza et al. 2021). These included new programs such as Renda Básica Temporária in Niterói (Rio de Janeiro), Renda Minas in Minas Gerais, Salvador Por Todos in Salvador (Bahia), AmpaRO in Rodônia, Auxílio Emergencial Municipal in Macaé (Rio de Janeiro), and the Programa Municipal Temporário de Transferência de Renda in Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul). Some existing sub-national cash transfer programs were also expanded vertically or horizontally to meet rising demands, such as the Renda

Básica de Cidadania program in Maricá (Rio de Janeiro). In the early months of 2021, during the period in which the federal Auxílio Emergencial benefits had lapsed, approximately one third of Brazil's 26 states and capital cities had temporary cash transfer measures planned or already in place to mitigate the pandemic's impacts (Valor Econômico 2021).

"The problem of the day after": Opportunities and constraints for the future of cash transfers

While Auxílio Emergencial was designed as a temporary solution to address a bounded moment of economic crisis, it left burning longer-term questions about the future of cash transfer programs in Brazil lingering in its shadow. After experiencing such an expansive and generous cash transfer program and after witnessing the deeper structural socioeconomic problems that the pandemic laid bare, citizens and state actors alike began questioning the return to a presupposed policy trajectory of "Bolsa Família as usual." A group of IPEA researchers writing in March 2020 referred to this as "the problem of the day after" (*o problema do dia seguinte*). As they put it:

> The difficulty for Bolsa Família is the following: will the newly included families stay in the program or will millions of people be once again left waiting for months to be accepted to the program, like what happened in 2019? The problem of the day after is also extremely important for Auxílio Emergencial—after all, what will the life of those living in poverty and those vulnerable to poverty be like when this program ends? Will they be a position yet to get back on their feet without a cash transfer from the State? (Bartholo et al. 2020, 13)

Of course, this problem reaches beyond the immediate technical decision about who will continue to receive benefits and touches on a deeper political nerve about the future of social protection. In some of the humanitarian literature, scholars have thought about this notion from the perspective of the how the "afterlives" of certain emergency interventions go on to shape recipients' political subjectivities and subsequent claims for future humanitarian aid (McKay 2012). In the context of this thesis, the question becomes how the "afterlife" of Auxílio Emergencial and the pandemic may end up shaping the state-citizen relationships and expectations within the realm of cash transfer policies.

On one extreme, the experience of Auxílio Emergencial carried the potential for radical policy transformation—the type envisioned by global calls to "build back better" and discussions casting the pandemic as "an opportunity." In the context of Bolsa Família, this materialized in discussions about transforming (or replacing) the program from a targeted conditional cash transfer program into an unconditional universal basic income policy. Advancing Bolsa Família in this direction could potentially support its return to the "road to citizens income," with direct implications for drastically expanding the types of citizenship this thesis focuses on. While previously seen as a "utopian" ideal, the pandemic shifted the debate about basic income by recasting it as an actually implementable policy solution for confronting the crisis (with agenda-setting implications for the post-crisis period) (Carvalho 2021). As one informant involved in state-level basic income policy discussions explained:

> The pandemic really gave the basic income discussion a lot of gas…[This was an issue that] wasn't on the government's agenda before—at least not with any significant force behind it. Because it's so expensive, you know? Before [the pandemic], if you suggested basic income, people would say "that is crazy" and would not even discuss it. Not now. Now it's on the table. If you bring it up, it gets discussed. And that's how things start to change. (Interview SEDESE 2021)

As some scholars have argued, in Brazil COVID-19 can be seen as a "focusing event" for advancing the policy agenda on basic income—through channels such as catalyzing social mobilization, organizing policy communities, and making visible previously ignored aspects of this issue (Brasil, Capella, and Ferreira 2021). The experience of Auxílio Emergencial revealed that an unconditional cash transfer with extensive coverage and generous payments was in fact possible in Brazil—and left in its wake growing support for basic income policies. For example, a survey conducted in the city of São Paulo found a 22 percentage point increase in the share of respondents who supported a basic income policy during this time—rising from 55% in 2018 to 77% in 2020 (Rede Nossa São Paulo 2020). This shift was reflected in the words of an aging and optimistic Suplicy, who shared in April 2020 interview that "more and more people are coming to me to say: 'you know, you were on the

right path.' It seems to me that there is beginning to be a conspiracy in favor of this idea. Everything is suggesting that I will live to see basic income implemented" (Mena 2020).

On the other extreme, however, is the case that the experience of Auxílio Emergencial would have no effect on the future of cash transfer programs or possibly even have a detrimental effect. As discussed at length in the previous chapter, Bolsa Família's pre-pandemic policy trajectory was one that was marked by a slow erosion of citizenship as the nation's social assistance network came under high political and fiscal pressures (partially mitigated, however, by internal bureaucratic forces of resistance). In a post-pandemic context of increasingly scarce fiscal space (given large government pandemic spending, including on Auxílio Emergencial) and rising demand for social assistance (given rising poverty and vulnerability among the population) there was a risk that these pre-pandemic trends could further accelerate if the broader political context remained unchanged.

Importantly, this debate over the future of cash transfer programs was taking place in a fundamentally different socioeconomic context than that which existed prior to the pandemic. While the government was initially able stymie the impacts of the pandemic on poverty in 2020 (and actually reduce it compared to 2019 levels), this changed in 2021 as Auxílio Emergencial benefits were reduced (in coverage and generosity) and intermittently stopped (IBGE 2021). According to estimates from Neri (2021), during the period when Auxílio Emergencial was temporarily stopped in early 2021, the number of people living in poverty more than tripled. While the situation improved when a reduced version of the benefits were reinstated, it still remained worse than pre-COVID-19 levels. Moreover, households' economic insecurity was further aggravated during this time by rising inflation, which soared over 10% in 2021, with lower income groups facing a steeper rise than higher income groups (Júnior et al. 2021; Lameiras 2022). Estimates from a recent study by Rede PENSSAN suggest that

approximately 60% of Brazil's population is currently living in a situation of food insecurity—a huge increase from pre-pandemic levels of approximately 37% (Rede PENSSAN 2021; 2022). This was reflected, for example, in reports from schools (often an early barometer of families' socioeconomic conditions) in November 2021 that revealed dire scenes of increased hardship with students fainting from starvation in class, abandoning school to work, and moving to more precarious housing arrangements (Carrança 2021c).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the actual cash transfer policy trajectory taken by the government (the replacement of Bolsa Família with Auxílio Brasil, discussed in the following section) fell somewhere between these two extremes—with different political and economic forces pulling and pushing it in opposing directions (discussed at length in the subsequent analysis on formal, substantive, and cohesive citizenship). While this trajectory fell far short of a more utopian basic income path (what could be considered a "critical juncture" type fork in the road) it did succeed in bringing some long-ignored discussions to the heart of the political debate and elevating them within the public consciousness. As a result, this secured new footholds to at least maintain previously achieved citizenship gains (protecting them against further erosion) while also inviting the possibility of more expansive trajectories in the longer-term depending on the nation's future political and economic context.

Longer-term transitions: The replacement of Bolsa Família with Auxílio Brasil

What changes actually took place to Bolsa Família in the wake of the pandemic and Auxílio Emergencial? Prior to the pandemic, the Brazilian government was already debating various proposals for revising or replacing Bolsa Família—ranging from changing its name to guaranteeing income transfers in the Constitution. However, following the experience of the more expansive Auxílio Emergencial and the looming question of "the day after," this debate gained new traction, prominence,

and urgency. Despite Guedes's repeated assertations that the government was working on a "smooth landing" for the transition away from Auxílio Emergencial, uncertainty about what would come next remained the dominant reality throughout most of this period. The federal government's discourse about what would come next followed a dizzying spiral, changing course from "Renda Brasil" in June 2020 to "Renda Cidadã" in September 2020 to "Bolsa Família" in October 2020 and back again to "Renda Brasil" in March 2021 before eventually landing on "Auxílio Brasil" in August 2021 (which ultimately began in November 2021). In tandem, opposition parties proposed various solutions for how to improve upon the existing Bolsa Família program as well as for how it could be replaced or complemented by a more ambitious basic income program. As this section will describe, the ever-changing policy debate during this time was a confusing and complicated one. This policy timeline is illustrated in the top portion of Figure 6.5, shown in parallel with the progression of the Auxílio Emergencial timeline in the bottom portion (previously presented in Figure 6.3).

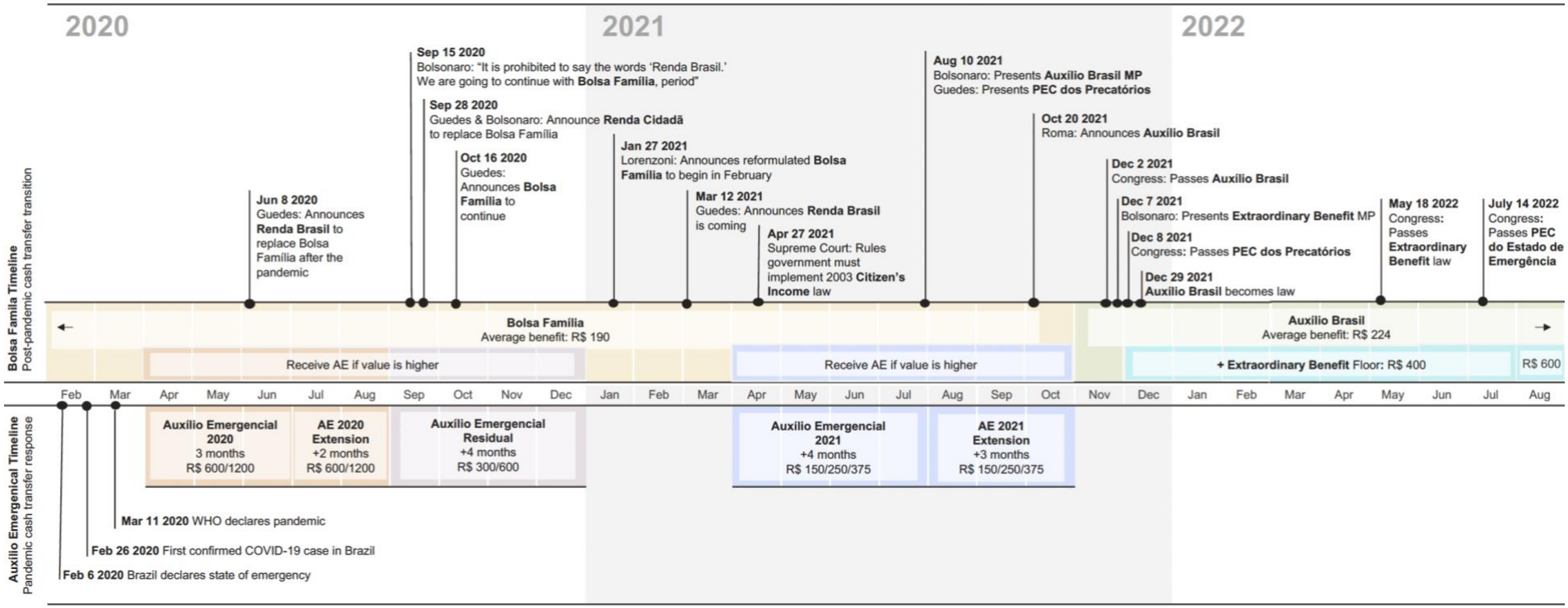


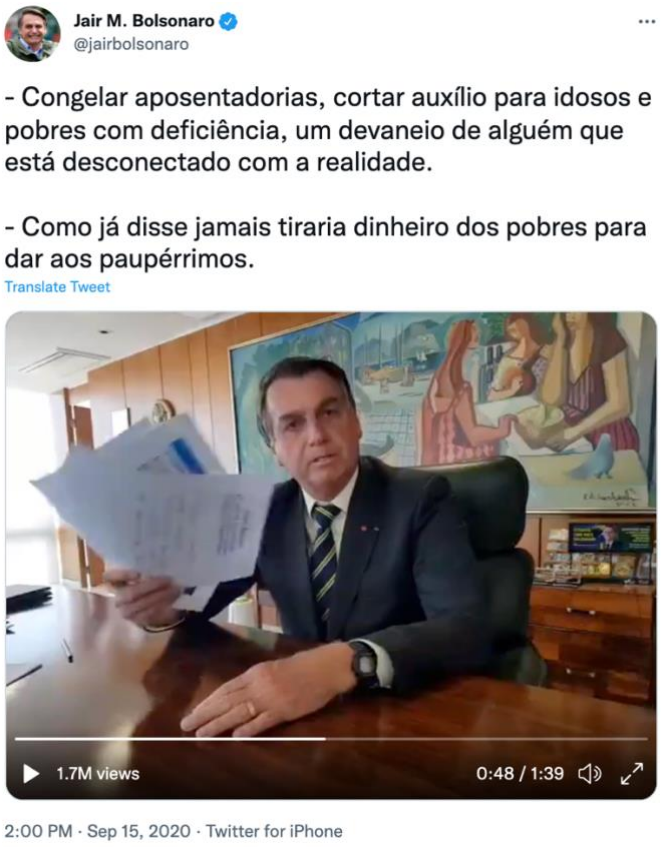
Figure 6.5 Bolsa Família (top) and Auxílio Emergencial (bottom) &: A parallel policy timeline 2020-2022
Source: Author's illustration based on national legal documents, government communications, and media publications

In the early months of the pandemic, the Bolsonaro administration focused its attention on changing the name of Bolsa Família. This was arguably a move to rebrand the program as his own, given the stickiness of its historical popular association with former President Lula and the boost in popular support Bolsonaro gained during the new Auxílio Emergencial program. Initially, the new "turbo-charged" program was to be called *Renda Brasil* (Brazil Income). While Bolsonaro's government had already been quietly contemplating a name change prior to the pandemic, this plan began to take a more concrete shape during the Crisis period as public attention surrounding the future of cash transfers began to grow. Notably, the administration's efforts on this front were led primarily by the Ministry of Economy and by Bolsonaro himself rather than by the Ministry of Citizenship (a bureaucratic shift which will be revisited in greater depth later in this chapter). In June 2020, Paulo Guedes announced to Congress that a program called Renda Brasil would replace Bolsa Família after the pandemic (Folha de S.Paulo 2020). The discourse surrounding this change emphasized a narrative of consolidating various existing social programs, increasing the coverage and generosity of benefits, and including the "invisibles" that were newly "discovered" in the context of Auxílio Emergencial. Several funding sources were being contemplated, including freezing the value of pension payments, restricting unemployment benefits, or tightening criteria for social assistance to low-income disabled and elderly individuals. In response, opposition parties suggested their own alternative solutions for how to improve Bolsa Família such as the *Mais Bolsa Família* (Bolsa Família Plus) program (PL 4086/2020[30]) from the PT or the complementary *Renda Mínima Permanente* (Minimum Permanent Income) program (PL 3934/2020[31]) from PSOL, that would be funded by various sources including increased taxes on the wealthiest.

[30] https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=2259412
[31] https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=2258614

In mid-September following critical media coverage regarding the potential funding sources of the proposed Renda Brasil, Bolsonaro changed course. In a video posted to his Twitter account (Figure 6.6), the president held up print outs of various media articles criticizing the program and incredulously read the headlines aloud. He declared that he would give a penalty "red card" to anyone on his economic team that considered this approach and closed the video by clearly affirming that "until 2022, in my government, it is *prohibited* to say the words 'Renda Brasil.' We are going to continue with Bolsa Família, period." Alas, less than two weeks later, Bolsonaro and Guedes jointly announced their new plan for the future of the program, which was now rebranded under the name Renda Cidadã (Citizen Income) and would be funded by sources such as caps on the government's payments of *precatórios* (a specific type of government debt[32]) and well as the country's principal financing mechanism for basic education (FUNDEB, for its name in Portuguese) (Poder360 2020). Again, the proposed financing approach faced strong criticism—including from various fiscal experts who saw it as a dubious maneuver to circumvent the spending ceiling (Estadão 2020). Thus, again, within a few weeks the government changed course. In mid-October Guedes announced that they would abandon their plan for Renda Cidadã and return to Bolsa Família, stating that "as we cannot find the fiscal space for a better program, we will go back to Bolsa Família. It is better that we go back to Bolsa Família than try to do something crazy, something that is fiscally unsustainable" (O Globo 2020). Bolsonaro followed suit, again distancing himself from the new program in his assumed role as football referee, publicly claiming that "what I said three months back still holds true: whoever says 'Renda Cidadã: Red card!" (UOL 2020).

[32]*Precatórios* refer to court-ordered government payments. These payments result when the government (federal, state, or municipal) loses a judicial case (and can no longer appeal it) that requires financial compensation to the winning individual, company, or entity. Examples of these types of cases include people whose land was expropriated for public works construction, taxpayers who are owed refunds, retirees seeking retroactive payments for time worked that was not factored into their pension, or civil servants entitled to salary readjustments. The government must then allocate funds in the annual budget to pay these debts. These are often very large sums—for example, in 2021 the federal government owed R$ 54.7 billion and in 2022 it was expected to pay around R$ 89.1 billion (UOL 2021).



//Translation//

"- Freezing pensions, cutting aid for the elderly and poor people with disabilities, is the delusion of someone who is disconnected from reality.

- As I have said before, I would never take money from the poor to give it to the very poor."

Figure 6.6 "I would never take money from the poor to give it to the very poor": Twitter post from President Jair Bolsonaro
Source: Jair M. Bolsonaro (2020)

As the new year rang in, Auxílio Emergencial benefits had expired but still no plan for the future of Bolsa Família had been decided on—despite apparent consensus on behalf of both the government and the opposition that benefits to poor and vulnerable families, who were facing a dire economic and social reality, needed to be strengthened. In January 2021, the Ministry of Citizenship proposed a restructured Bolsa Família program that they claimed would be put in place by February—emphasizing program changes such as adding a series of "meritocratic" benefits for things such as educational and sporting achievements as well as a focus on "productive inclusion" through approaches such as micro-credit (UOL Economía 2021). However, this again failed to materialize in practice and the government was instead faced with growing demands to reinstate the wider reaching and more generous Auxílio Emergencial program. While AE was eventually reinstated in March, this

still did not resolve the issue of what would come next. In a moment of political déjà vú, Guedes proposed, yet again, the previously prohibited solution of Renda Brasil (Terra FDR 2021). However, this plan was, again, abandoned as the government continued to extend the AE benefits and accordingly continued to delay discussions regarding longer-term changes.

Finally, on August 10, 2021, the government issued Medida Provisória (MP) 1061/21.[33] Among other things, this presidential decree (personally submitted to Congress by Bolsonaro) proposed that a new program called Auxílio Brasil would replace Bolsa Família and would enter into effect in early November (a few days after the end of the final Auxílio Emergencial payments). While the original language in the MP was light on details (for example, lacking information about how benefit values would be calculated), the general proposed vision for the program kept the basic conditional structure of the existing Bolsa Família program but altered it in the following key ways: revising the structure of core benefits (simplifying it into three types of benefits: a family composition benefit, an overcoming extreme poverty benefit, and a new early childhood benefit), adding a series of five potential ancillary benefits (related to daycare vouchers, a "productive urban inclusion" bonus for those with formal employment, a "productive rural inclusion" bonus for farmers, and meritocratic bonuses for children's academic and sporting achievements), including an "emancipation rule" that allows families whose income rises above the poverty line but remains below 2.5 times the poverty line to remain in the program for a period of up to 2 years[34], and providing a temporary "compensatory transition benefit" for those whose Auxílio Brasil benefit would be less than their previous Bolsa Família benefit (Câmara dos Deputados 2021a). Additionally, the MP allowed for up to 30% of the benefit value to be used as consigned credit for financial loans. Note that many of these shifts were

[33] https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=2293428

[34] Note that this is similar to Bolsa Família's "permanence rule" which allows for families to stay in the program for up to two years if their income per capita surpasses the poverty line but stays below half of the minimum wage, to allow for volatility of income.

consistent with aspects of the administration's previous proposals for changing the program throughout this period.

For the following three months, the MP underwent a period of intense debate and revision—in which 465 amendments to the text were proposed by Congress members (Congresso Nacional 2021a). After heated debates in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate (in particular, related to the possibility of ending waiting lists and ensuring the future adjustment of monetary values in line with inflation—issues which will be discussed in later sections of this chapter), the MP was passed on December 2, 2021, with five days to spare until its validity would lapse. While it remained largely in its original form, its final version included revisions that defined new fixed benefit values, increased the value of fixed poverty lines, removed the possibility to use benefits for loans (a decision later reversed in March 2022 through a different MP and consolidated as law in August 2022[35]), and fine-tuned some other benefit stipulations (Câmara dos Deputados 2021b). On December 29, 2021, President Bolsonaro approved the new law, formally creating Auxílio Brasil (Law 14284[36]). Additionally, in December 2021 Bolsonaro submitted another provisional measure (MP 1076/291[37]) to institute a complementary "Extraordinary Benefit" to top-up the amount received by bolsistas such that no family would receive less than R$ 400 (in line with an earlier public promise made by Minister of Citizenship João Roma in October 2021). This Extraordinary Benefit was designed to be a temporary measure, extendable on a monthly basis by the Executive Power until December 2022. However, in May 2022, the R$ 400 floor was made permanent through Law 13342[38], and a higher temporary floor of R$ 600 was instated beginning August 2022, following the passage of a new constitutional amendment discussed below (again, the

[35] See MP 1106 (https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2022/03/18/mp-estende-credito-consignado-a-beneficiarios-do-auxilio-brasil-e-do-bpc) and Lei 14431 (https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/2022/lei-14431-3-agosto-2022-793068-norma-pl.html).
[36] http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2019-2022/2021/Lei/L14284.htm
[37] https://www.congressonacional.leg.br/materias/medidas-provisorias/-/mpv/151187
[38] https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/2022/lei-14342-18-maio-2022-792654-publicacaooriginal-165291-pl.html

increase is only planned through December 2022). Note that the timeline of the extendable period coincides with the period leading up to Brazil's presidential election (in October 2022). See Table 6.1 for a summary of the primary differences between Bolsa Família and the approved Auxílio Brasil program (including supplementary legislation).

Table 6.1 Primary differences in the change from Bolsa Família to Auxílio Brasil

	Auxílio Brasil legislation	Supplementary legislation
Benefit structure	**Simplify core benefit structure** • Family composition benefit • Overcoming extreme poverty benefit • Early childhood benefit **Add ancillary benefits** • Daycare vouchers • "Productive urban inclusion" bonus for formally employed workers • "Productive rural inclusion" bonus for farmers • Children's academic achievement bonus • Children's sporting achievement bonus **Create temporary transition benefit** • Compensatory benefit for those who would receive less than they previously received with Bolsa Família	• Create option allowing for up to 40% of benefit value to be used as a form of consigned credit
Program eligibility	• Increase (fixed) poverty and extreme poverty thresholds • Replace "permanence rule" with "emancipation rule" (allowing for volatility of income)	
Benefit amount	• Increase (fixed) median value of benefits	• Establish supplementary Extraordinary Benefit to top-off benefits to a minimum amount per family (set permanently at R$ 400, raised temporarily to R$ 600)

Source: Author based on official legislative and bureaucratic documents (as of August 2022).

Alongside the legislative process creating Auxílio Brasil, a parallel process was taking place to create a legal solution to finance the more expansive program without "breaking" the spending ceiling. Returning to one of their previous ideas, the Ministry of Economy's proposed solution for this was to "open" fiscal space—in an act of financial and legal acrobatics—by delaying payments on government debt in the form of precatórios. Given the legal constraints posed by the spending ceiling,

this would require a constitutional amendment (the so-called *PEC dos Precatórios,* PECs 23/21[39] and 46/21[40]). While the debate over this amendment was very contentious given associated concerns of fiscal responsibility (reflected, for example, in the resignation of four senior treasury officials), it was eventually passed by Congress in early December 2021 becoming Constitutional Amendments 113[41] and 114[42]. These measures allowed for an increase in spending on Auxílio Brasil, ultimately reflected in the 2022 budget in which the allocated resources for the new program were increased from the original proposal of R$ 34.7 billion to R$ 89.1 billion (Câmara dos Deputados 2022). Note, however, that only around half of the additional fiscal space opened by this amendment (R$ 54.4 billion of R$ 113.1 billion) was ultimately directed to Auxílio Brasil, with the rest allocated to other areas. An additional R$ 41 billion PEC (PEC 15/22[43]) was passed as Constitutional Amendment 123[44] in July 2022 to finance the additional temporary increases in benefit amounts for the program (alongside other social benefits). However, due to electoral laws in Brazil which prohibit spending related to the distribution of additional benefits in election years, this PEC relied on the declaration of a state of emergency (ostensibly related to the rising price of fuel). While this PEC was thus formally known as the PEC *do Estado de Emergência* (State of Emergency), its earned a multitute nicknames in the media due to its controversial nature—having been referred to as various points as the PEC *das bondades* (goodwill) /*dos bilhões* (billions) / *eleitoral* (electoral) / *do fim do mundo* (end of the world) / *dos auxílios* (aid programs) / *kamikaze* (kamikaze) / *do desespero* (desperation).

Summarizing the background context: Bolsa Família during the Crisis

[39] https://www.congressonacional.leg.br/materias/materias-bicamerais/-/ver/pec-23-2021
[40] https://www.congressonacional.leg.br/materias/materias-bicamerais/-/ver/pec-46-2021
[41] https://legis.senado.leg.br/norma/35268195
[42] https://legis.senado.leg.br/norma/35289134
[43] https://www25.senado.leg.br/web/atividade/materias/-/materia/153518
[44] https://legis.senado.leg.br/norma/36089312

In sum, we see that the deep economic and social crises resulting from the pandemic ushered in a new era of policy reckoning for cash transfer programs in Brazil. Global debates over the inadequacy of existing social protection schemes were refracted at national, state, and local levels in the context of Brazil. The expansive and generous temporary income support program that Brazil instituted in this emergency context generated a new set of questions and expectations from society about the future of the welfare state. In the most optimistic scenario, the pandemic opened a "window of opportunity" to push social protection in a more rights-based and universalist direction. While Brazil ultimately did not pursue this path (instead, choosing to replace Bolsa Família with a relatively minimal successor, Auxílio Brasil), several important changes did take place during this time (in comparison to the policy path for Bolsa Família projected in the previous chapter) with consequences for citizenship. The following sections discuss some of these changes taking into account the different dimensions of citizenship considered in this thesis (formal, substantive, and cohesive).

6.2 Formal citizenship: Revisiting the right to income

As discussed in the previous chapters, while the extensive legal foundation of Bolsa Família gave it a strong institutional backing—it was never solidified as a right. Central features of the program's design left critical decisions about the concession of benefits at the discretionary control of the federal government—most notably aspects such as the value of benefit amounts, the value of the eligibility thresholds, and the allocation of budget resources (with its knock-on consequences for waiting lists). As Arretche et al (2021), have argued, policy design aspects such as these have rendered Bolsa Família more vulnerable to retrenchment pressures than other social programs through policy feedback processes such as "active drift." As the authors of that study note, while these design features originally interacted with the concentration of authority in Brazil to favor expansion during the program's first

decade (as I discussed in the Expansion chapter), this interaction later served to "freeze Bolsa Família in place" during the economic recession and rise of fiscal austerity agendas (as I discussed in the Backlash chapter). While these weaknesses had long been identified, my informants broadly agreed that the reason why they had never been addressed was because it would require changing the program's underlying legal infrastructure. As this needed to be altered in Congress, it would require significant political will and coordination—otherwise it could risk further backsliding. As the previous chapter highlighted, in a context of high political polarization and antagonistic leadership, avoiding legislative change was a safer option.

With the onset of the Crisis period, however, the political calculus shifted. Following the experience of Auxílio Emergencial and related questions over what would come next, the future of Bolsa Família found itself at the top of the political agenda. When Bolsonaro issued the MP proposing Auxílio Brasil (and effectively voiding the law creating Bolsa Família), these long-standing design issues were immediately put up for debate in Congress. However, as former senior SENARC official Letícia Bartholo put it in December 2021, the debate was not just about the design of the new program, but more fundamentally about whether "[Brazil] will take a step forward in terms of creating a social program that is actually a right of the poorest…" (Rádio CBN 2021). As the following sub-sections will discuss, while the new politics of the Crisis period succeeded in pressuring the government to expand the coverage and raise the value of benefits of Bolsa Família in its transition to Auxílio Brasil, the eventual changes enacted failed to actually move the program in a more rights-based direction (and instead allowed for the continuation of discretionary practices). However, shifts in the broader political and legal environment during this time (such as the emergence of new coalitions of actors and new legal precedents in favor of guaranteeing a citizen's income) offer a potentially stronger foundation for advancing a more rights-based agenda for cash transfers in the future.

Raising the bar: Post-pandemic pressures to expand program coverage and benefit generosity

Prior to the pandemic, political efforts to expand program coverage or raise benefit amounts (issues central to the idea of advancing Bolsa Família along the path to a citizen's income) were stalled. However, the pandemic—and notably the experience of Auxílio Emergencial—changed the political landscape surrounding this discussion. As AE had far greater coverage and offered a far higher benefit amount (at least initially and at least for most families) than Bolsa Família, this introduced new pressures on the government to push its future design in more universal and more generous directions. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is a high political cost involved with "taking benefits away." While Auxílio Emergencial was designed as a temporary program (and thus the transition back to Bolsa Família did not technically entail taking benefits away), it still had the effect of changing people's expectations regarding the possibilities of benefit coverage and values. In this context, even an expansion of Bolsa Família's pre-pandemic program coverage and benefit generosity could feel like a retraction if people's new point of comparison was Auxílio Emergencial. More deeply, the debate over the creation of Auxílio Emergencial forced Congress to explicitly reckon with the various shortcomings of Bolsa Família in these areas—which later served to also shape the bargaining process over Auxílio Brasil.

In terms of expanding benefit coverage, the creation of Auxílio Emergencial pushed Congress to think more seriously about who the current safety net was and was not reaching. In particular, it introduced a discussion of economic vulnerability beyond poverty and drew attention to the group that existed in the gap between those covered by Bolsa Família (limited by current poverty and extreme poverty thresholds) and those covered by social insurance (limited by formal employment status). This was the group that the government repeatedly referred to as the "invisibles"—often referred to more broadly in social protection circles as "the missing middle" (people who are doubly excluded from

national social protection systems due to their employment in the informal economy—see, for example, ILO (2017)). What the creation of Auxílio Emergencial did was to force the government to actually define who was a part of this group—giving new categories of workers and economically vulnerable groups a legal claim on the state. While the government would later go on to assert with pride that they "discovered" over 38 million "invisibles," the political battle over the definition of this group (and thus its size) was a highly contested one.[45] Ultimately, the well-being of millions was legislated through a series of editorial amendments and veto decisions regarding technical aspects of informal work definitions (Aidar 2020; Câmara dos Deputados 2020). As one informant put it, "by changing a few commas and revising a word here or there [the editorial amendment to the Auxílio Brasil law made by Senator Alessandro Viera] managed to greatly expand its reach to cover more types of informal workers" (Interview Congress 2021). In contrast, the veto decision issued by President Bolsonaro on the legislation sought to curb the limits of these expansions by adding exclusions for specific sub-sets of informal workers. Either way, the pressures of the pandemic to pass this legislation quickly ushered in a new era of legal recognition and categorization of informal workers

This experience went on to inform the government's discourse about the future of Bolsa Família. At various points, public announcements about its post-pandemic policy trajectory explicitly mentioned the intention to expand coverage to this new group of informal workers (see, for example, in Guedes's June 8, 2020 announcement about Renda Brasil). This marks a clear break with the administration's pre-pandemic approach. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the period leading up to COVID-19 Bolsa Família's coverage was steadily shrinking from around 14 to around 13 million families alongside

[45] As de Souza Santos (2022, 201) argues, during the pandemic in Brazil, "looking at informality across different scales of power and assessing who defines legality and deservedness became essential." The creation of the Auxílio Emergencial program marked a shift in which the Brazilian state's definition of "informality" turned from one that had previously "led to stigma, relocation, and prohibition…." toward one that "led to financial benefits" (de Souza Santos 2022, 198).

a growing waiting list of over a million families. Moreover, the administration's public discourse focused on the need to further reduce the size of the program, by removing the millions of "fraudulent" families who they claimed received benefits but did not really need them. As discussed, a large share of the families "caught" in the government's pente-fino data verification efforts actually fell in the small margin just above the program's (outdated) poverty eligibility thresholds. In contrast, these same families comprised part of the "invisibles" groups which the government now legally recognized and held up as deserving of social protection. While the design of Auxílio Brasil failed to actually follow through on the government's early promises of expanding coverage to the "invisibles" (which would have represented a major shift toward a more universal approach to social protection), it did at least result in an effective expansion of program coverage to a record high of over 20 million families (as of August 2022) through the revision the poverty eligibility thresholds and the "zeroing" of the waiting list in a context of rising poverty. While the pandemic failed to provoke a consensus around extending social protection to cover the missing middle, it did at least push Congress members to reconsider the boundaries of economic vulnerability. As one informant reflected:

> I think that there's been a huge change over the last few months. I think that there has been an evolution in discussions – moving away from talking about a program that is very focused on the poor and extremely poor and toward a program that serves more people with higher benefit amounts.…What Auxílio Emergencial ended up showing is that the poverty thresholds for Bolsa Família are too low to serve everyone who is actually vulnerable. (Interview Congress 2021)

However, while the poverty thresholds were updated in November 2021 and the waiting list was zeroed at various points in 2022, no legal provisions were made to guarantee the continuation of these actions in the future—an issue discussed further in the following sub-section.

In parallel with the emergence of new pressures to expand Bolsa Família's coverage in the wake of Auxílio Emergencial, there were also mounting pressures to expand the generosity of Bolsa Família's benefits. Several factors were behind this shift. First, when designing Auxílio Emergencial, legislators

had to decide on a benefit value. This bargaining process drew attention to how low the current value of Bolsa Família benefits were. While Bolsonaro's government initially proposed an emergency benefit value of R$ 200 per person, Congress members strongly pushed back (supported by a broad coalition of civil society actors) to demand a higher value. As one informant explained:

> When we were approving the Auxílio Emergencial program in Congress, I don't remember anyone who opposed it—even the government's own leadership within the Congress. When the [executive] government proposed an amount of R$ 200, people said "*No, that is absurd - that is the value of the Bolsa Família. This has to be much higher*." (Interview Congress 2021).

In the face of a united Congress demanding a value of R$ 500, Bolsonaro's government responded to the new political incentives by actually further *raising* the proposed value to R$ 600—arguably in a last-ditch effort to gain political credit for the higher amount. The massive gap between AE's benefit amount of R$ 600 (at least initially) and Bolsa Família's average benefit amount of R$ 190 put an actual number on how "inadequate" existing Bolsa Família benefits were in comparison to what the government was now considering to be a reasonable amount to provide for assistance. While the goals of the two programs were different (one responding to an emergency situation of economic vulnerability and the other responding to a structural situation of economic poverty), the value required by that latter should arguably be even higher than that required by the former. The success of Auxílio Emergencial even led Paulo Guedes to remark on the inadequacy of the Bolsa Família benefit values—stating that he wanted to "publicly denounce" this low amount, claiming that it "is an absurdity that we have to discover in the middle of a pandemic that the best way to eradicate poverty is to give money to the poor" (Rodrigues 2021). In the new legislation of Auxílio Brasil, these pressures effectively translated into an increase in the benefit values relative to Bolsa Família (though they remained well below the levels provided for in AE and offered no guarantees for future increases—an issue discussed further in the following sub-section).

Furthermore, the experience of Auxílio Emergencial reshaped the way the government discussed the calculation of benefit values—introducing a new "minimum value" framing. Historically, the calculation of benefit values in Bolsa Família was poorly understood by the public. While the "average" Bolsa Família benefit was around R$ 190, the actual amount received by families varied drastically depending on their income level (poor or extremely poor) and their household composition (how many children, how many adolescents, etc). While this was a precise amount defined to best allocate resources based on the family's profile, it was a technical calculation that was confusing to many bolsista families. One of the most common questions state actors claimed to receive from bolsistas was regarding their benefit amounts (for example, "Why do I receive R$ X, while my neighbor who is poorer/less poor receives R$ Y?"). Auxílio Emergencial, on the other hand, was designed with fixed values in mind (i.e. R$ 600) with minor variations in the total benefit amount depending on family composition (i.e. R$ 1200 for single mothers). From a political standpoint, this shifted the way that people thought about benefit values: What would the future value of Bolsa Família look like in comparison to the value of AE? In an effort to provide a compelling answer this question, the Ministry of Citizenship announced in October 2021 that in Auxílio Brasil no family would receive less than R$ 400 (note that this announcement came before the legislation of Auxílio Brasil had been finalized). While the individual calculation of benefits in Auxílio Brasil ended up remaining similar to that of Bolsa Família (with a few minor changes in benefit structure), the government took a parallel legal action to instate a minimum value of R$ 400, later increased to R$ 600. While this benefit top-up solution did serve to increase the overall amount of cash received by bolsistas, it was a temporary policy extendable only through the end of 2022 (an issue discussed further in the following sub-section) and was arguably less equitable in its distribution (given that floor did not consider household composition).

One consequence of the increased attention on the monetary value of benefit during this period was an increasingly singular focus on the "cash" aspect rather than the "conditional" aspect of CCTs. From the perspective of citizenship, increasing the value of the cash payment transferred to bolsistas carries vast potential for expanding citizenship in new directions based on realizing a right to income. However, as discussed above, while the benefit values were indeed increased during this time—it was only by a marginal amount and fell far short of this type of loftier aspiration. As discussed in the Expansion chapter, a primary way in which Bolsa Família succeeded in expanding citizenship (despite its low monetary value and limited success in delivering on a right to income) was through its conditionality structure that served (or at least was designed to serve) as a means of holding the state accountable for promoting access to other rights such as education, health, and social assistance. While this conditionally structure was ultimately maintained in Auxílio Brasil, it lost its place as a central organizing logic in a shifting post-Auxílio Emergencial legislative context. As one informant explained:

> Throughout the period of Auxílio Emergencial, legislators started to look at the discussion of cash transfers much more from the perspective of how much cash was being transferred, in terms of a number value – and much less from the perspective of an inter-sectoral network of support (as was the logic behind Bolsa Família). This was very much lost throughout Auxílio Emergencial, and now it has been lost in the context of Auxílio Brasil. It was not present in the original MP text. However, the bill's sponsor signaled that it was important to maintain the logic of inter-sectoriality and of conditionality – *not* as mechanisms of punishment but as guarantees of the supply of state services for vulnerable families. The conditionalities are more for the state to know if it is fulfilling its obligations in the areas of health and education than for it to know if parents are sending their kids to school. But this discussion has been lost. The opposition has been fighting to keep it, because if it is lost then this program risks becoming just a cash transfer, and not an integrated public policy. (Interview Congress 2021)

While the primary focus on cash made sense in the context of Auxílio Emergencial (a generous short-term response to an emergency situation) it carries different implications in the context of Auxílio Brasil (a far less generous longer-term solution operating in a context where ensuring access to quality services remains a challenge for marginalized populations). Moreover, the new provision allowing for Auxílio Brasil benefits to function as consigned credit risks deepening the program's tendency toward

"financialization" and the potential for increasing the indebtedness of bolsistas (see Lavinas 2017; Lavinas et al 2022; de Sordi 2022)

Refusing guarantees: The lost battle over indexed values, waiting lists, and sustainable funding

While the pandemic opened new policy space that enabled the effective expansion of Bolsa Família's program coverage and an increase in benefit values, this policy space was insufficient to actually enact the stronger legislative changes required to overcome the program's inherent weaknesses with regard to longer-term guarantees. As discussed in the opening of this section, the government's discretionary power to decide on benefit values, eligibility thresholds, and budget allocations fundamentally render the program uniquely vulnerable to retrenchment and undermine its position from a rights-based perspective. It is critically linked to the idea of guaranteeing a right to income for the poorest in a way that is not dependent on the "goodwill" of the state to decide to update these values or to "zero" waiting lists. The post-Auxílio Emergencial pressures to expand Bolsa Família and increase its benefit values re-introduced these discussions into Congress, though they ultimately failed in provoking significant legislative changes in this direction (at least at this time). However, as the fierce debates over the design of Auxílio Brasil revealed, there is a strong (if not yet strong enough) contingent of support in favor of strengthening these legal foundations.

In terms of the issue of adjusting the values of benefit amounts and poverty eligibility thresholds, when the Auxílio Brasil MP was first sent to the Chamber of Deputies it included no information on how the potential value of the benefits and the poverty lines would be calculated. Historically, in the case of Bolsa Família these decisions had been left at the discretion of the federal government with no rules for ensuring that they keep up with inflation. As a result, there has been a deep erosion in the value of Bolsa Família's benefits and poverty thresholds in recent years. As calculated by Arretche et

al (2021, 9), "in early 2020, the real average monthly benefit was 15–20% lower than at its 2014 peak. The fall in eligibility thresholds was even starker: both poverty lines used to target benefits are at their lowest levels ever, and the lower eligibility threshold is now 40% below the international benchmark of PPP$ 1.90/day." Since then, inflation has only continued to rise further, increasing the cost of living both quickly and steadily. Thus, with the introduction of the Auxílio Brasil legislation, whether or not to index benefit values and poverty thresholds became a central topic for debate. Notably, the MP's sponsor, Marcelo Aro (PP-MG), fought to include provisions that would ensure that these values were continually adjusted for inflation. However, he faced such strong pushback from Bolsonaro's political base that he ultimately had to remove this provision from the text before it reached the Chamber floor (Fernandes 2021b; 2021a; Pinotti and Farfan 2021). In the end, while the MP stipulated an increase in the values of the benefits and the poverty thresholds compared to Bolsa Família, these values were fixed, and thus did not solve the first order issue of protecting against their future erosion. Moreover, the parallel legislation passed to increase the Auxílio Brasil benefit value to a minimum of R$ 400 (and then R$ 600) was designed as a complementary bonus amount for December 2021 that was extendable on a monthly basis by the executive power through December 2022. It left no guidance or guarantee for what would happen after 2022 (and prompted concerns for distorted voter incentives in the 2022 election). As one informant put it, the proposal's lack of clarity about the future was a key concern of lawmakers: "they are talking about giving R$ 400 just in 2022, and then 'going back.' But going back to what? No one knows!" (Interview Congress 2021).

The debate over Auxílio Brasil also resurfaced the longstanding issue of guaranteeing sufficient resources to ensure that all eligible families are able to access benefits without having to enter onto a waiting list. In its first round of Congressional discussions in the Chamber of Deputies, legislators succeeded in guaranteeing that the program's budget allocation would "be sufficient enough to grant

benefits to every eligible family" (in effect, getting rid of the waiting list). From a rights-based perspective, this was a major victory—as it would have ensured that all those who have a right to the program would have a legal basis to claim it from the state. Unfortunately, however, this victory was short-lived. When the text was passed on to the Senate, this guarantee was undermined through the addition of an editorial amendment that contained language allowing the government "to match the number of beneficiaries to the program's available budget" (S. Resende 2021).[46] This backward turn was further cemented when the MP (in the form of a Conversion Bill) reached President Bolsonaro to be sanctioned into law, at which point he used his power to veto the Chamber's language requiring sufficient resources for all eligible families to receive benefits—thereby removing any doubt over the government's ability to create waiting lists. Bolsonaro justified his veto by arguing that it would "go against the public interest" given the potential related public expenditure increases (Congresso Nacional 2021b).

Directly related to the issue of the waiting list is a broader issue of budget guarantees (given that the number of available program spaces currently depends on the amount of resources allocated to the program). Historically, the budget for Bolsa Família has been part of the state's discretionary spending—able to be expanded or contracted by political decisions. This resulted in no guarantee that there would be sufficient financing to meet actual demand, and, moreover, that allocated resources were prone to following pro-cyclical patterns (which is particularly concerning for a program that would likely need to be expanded rather than contacted when economic conditions worsen). The relevance of this latter concern grew increasingly apparent in the context of the pandemic, given declining economic growth alongside rising poverty. While, as the previous chapters have detailed, political pressures ensured that the program's budget never faced too serious of a cut, it was always

[46] https://legis.senado.leg.br/sdleg-getter/documento?dm=9048343&ts=1642193338916&disposition=inline

vulnerable to one. These design flaws were not only carried over into Auxílio Brasil, but the new program gained additional sources of financing uncertainty given the government's chosen solution to open fiscal space to fund the program by postponing precatório payments. This was a stopgap solution that left the question of program financing in the long-term unanswered.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, a key consequence of limited guarantees over the future of the program is the constant strain of uncertainty it places on bolsistas. Arguably, the turbulent transition during the pandemic from Bolsa Família to Auxílio Brasil—punctuated by a period of Auxílio Emergencial—deepened these pre-existing uncertainties. There was heightened confusion over questions such as what would happen if Bolsa Família ended, what the new program would look like, who would be eligible for it, what they would need to do to apply, how much could they expect to receive, and for how long they could expect to receive it. This was evidenced, for example, in the endless lines of people at registration sites seeking to resolve these questions and update their registration information accordingly. In some places, lines reached over 200 people, stretching around blocks with families sleeping in line overnight (Globo News 2021). It was also evidenced in statements made by bolsistas to reporters, in which interviewees noted that they "don't know what to expect tomorrow" (Carrança 2021b). As one bolsista (who had previously received Bolsa Família and then Auxílio Emergencial) explained, while Bolsa Família may have been imperfect, at least people understood how it worked: "Whether it was a little or a lot, you knew what you were going to get [with Bolsa Família]. After it started to change, I have no idea anymore…Every hour they say something different…." (Arlete Vitório in Carrança 2021). This gains additional significance if we consider that bolsistas are people who are already living in situations of extreme economic vulnerability and thus have a limited window of tolerance for further financial uncertainty. As one specialist on the issue put it in a media interview (referring to the early legislation proposed for Auxílio Brasil): "we have a paradoxical problem: an income transfer program with the objective of guaranteeing income

security for the most vulnerable population has instead become a well of insecurity" (Letícia Bartholo in Trisotto 2021).

Reshaping the landscape: New coalitions and legal precedents backing the fight for basic income

While the current institutional environment did not allow for the enactment of stronger legislative foundations for Auxílio Brasil, the broader political and legal landscape did change in important ways during this time that suggest that formal citizenship is perhaps more entrenched than expected. In particular, the Crisis period instigated a shift in terms of fostering new political coalitions in support of more expansive, generous, and long-term cash transfer approaches as well as new legal precedents in the Supreme Court and in the Constitution which reframed the government's commitment to delivering a on a citizen's income. In this way, the Crisis period introduced new "levels" [47] of rules (going beyond the policy legislation itself) that hold potential to shape future legal pathways.

The pandemic acted as a trigger to rally new coalitions of actors in support of basic income approaches both across civil society organizations and across political parties. Notably, these groups explicitly framed their basic income objectives in terms of advancing "citizenship." While these groups primarily emerged in response to the need to institute an income support policy in the wake of the pandemic, they have continued on and reoriented their goals toward advancing broader basic income legislation in Brazil. In terms of civil society, a coalition of more than 160 organizations and social movements organized itself around a call for "the basic income that we want" (*A Renda Básica que Queremos)* (A Renda Básica que Queremos 2022). This group was critical in pushing the government to raise the original proposed amount of the Auxílio Emergencial benefit beyond R$ 200 as well as fighting for

[47] As put forth by Acunã and Tommasi (1999), rules can classified into three "levels" (R1, R2, and R3) based on their institutional domain—ranging from R1 (related to specific policies) to R2 (related to organizational forms) to R3 (related to "rules about making rules"). See also World Bank (2017) for an extended discussion.

its continued extension throughout the pandemic. Following the end of AE, the group has committed to continue playing a role in the fight for basic income by closely monitoring the government's compliance with the Supreme Court's April 2021 decision (discussed later in this section) regarding the implementation of the national citizen's income law, in order to, as the group's website puts it, "guarantee the creation of a policy that actually supports the quest for equity and citizenship rights" in Brazil.

In addition to the new civil society coalition, a new political front was formed: the Mixed Parliamentary Front in Defense of Basic Income (*Frente Parlamentar Mista em Defesa da Renda Básic*a). This group comprises 217 parliamentarians from 23 of the 24 political parties represented in Congress, alongside various civil society organizations and leaders in the area of basic income policy. The diverse membership of this group across left, center, and right leaning parties reinforces the notion that addressing the shortcomings of the Brazilian welfare state (and in particular, its approach to providing income support) was an issue that was both gaining urgency as well as support in the wake of the pandemic. As the group's manifesto states, "the time has come to address this issue head on, to put aside our differences and build an effective and urgent movement that guarantees Brazilians the conditions to live with a minimum of citizenship" (Frente da Renda Básica 2021). While Congress members still hold different views of the ideal policy model, there is agreement that moving Bolsa Família in the direction of basic income would require changes "such as expanding its coverage and value of benefit, transforming it into a social right, and working to ensure the increasing expansion of beneficiaries' access to services and social rights" (Frente da Renda Básica 2021).

Beyond the emergence of new coalitions, highly relevant new legal precedents emerged during this period. In April 2021, the Supreme Federal Court ruled unanimously that beginning in 2022, the government would need to uphold the implementation of Brazil's 17-year-old Citizen's Income law

and begin to pay a basic income to all those who were considered poor or extremely poor (MI 7300[48]). This ruling was the result of a case brought on behalf of a man living in a situation of homelessness in Porto Alegre who was unable to meet his basic needs with the monthly income of R$ 91 that he received from Bolsa Família. Notably, the judgements issued by the court's justices discussed the importance of adopting administrative or legislative measures to update benefit values and to adopt official poverty thresholds. Moreover, their discussion of these issues explicitly emphasized the links between cash transfers and citizenship. For example, Supreme Court justice Minister Marco Aurélio argues in his judgment that the government's failure to implement this law directly harms citizenship—stating that "citizenship is not limited to the right to vote and be voted for….[those who] are dispossessed of the existential minimum, unable to engage in political life and the enjoyment of the fundamental rights to life, security, well-being and dignity, live in subhuman conditions, deprived of their citizenship status."[49] This ruling reveals how the future of cash transfers and formal citizenship will not only shaped by the legislative branch, but also critically by their interaction with the judicial branch.

Additionally, during this period Congress passed Constitutional Amendment 114. This was of one the amendments that enabled the government to circumvent the spending ceiling and use the fiscal space created by delayed precatório payments in order to fund Auxílio Brasil. In its final form, however, the amendment included an important clause regarding citizens' right to a basic income. It states that "every Brazilian in a situation of vulnerability will have the right to a basic family income, guaranteed by the state through a permanent cash transfer program, whose rules and requirements for access will be determined by law, in accordance with fiscal and budgetary legislation." This language raises

[48] https://portal.stf.jus.br/processos/detalhe.asp?incidente=5886456
[49] https://www.conjur.com.br/dl/voto-mi-7300.pdf

questions about the constitutionality of waiting lists for cash transfer programs, in contrast with the current legislation for Auxílio Brasil which allows for them (as discussed above). As Couri (2022) argues, whether or not this can be used to supra-cede the legislation for Auxílio Brasil ultimately hinges on the interpretation of the phrase "in accordance with fiscal and budgetary legislation." However, what it does do is create a constitutional basis for advancing this point—which may be of critical relevance in the future if waiting lists return in a context of rising poverty and reduced fiscal space, once Auxílio Brasil's short-term funding solution comes to an end.

Summarizing the argument: Formal citizenship during the Crisis

In sum, we see that in the context of formal citizenship, the Crisis period was a period of intensive policy debate around cash transfers with various levels of rules (from policies to judicial rulings to constitutional amendments) being revisited. The new expectations generated by the experience of Auxílio Emergencial pushed Congress to increase Bolsa Família program coverage and raise benefit values in the transition to Auxílio Emergencial. Moreover, deeper legislative questions about addressing Bolsa Família's longstanding weaknesses related to fixed values, waiting lists, and discretionary budget allocations were revisited. Unfortunately, there was insufficient political support to enact these changes and program weaknesses ended up being carried over into the design of Auxílio Brasil—with consequences for deepening uncertainty regarding the program. Thus, while a window of opportunity opened during the Crisis period to radically change how "the state as law" committed to offering protection for poor citizens, this was met in actuality by modest changes that reinforced a status quo where political decisions could dominate legal assurances. However, while the Crisis period did not see the legislative gains needed to move cash transfer programs in a more rights-based direction, it did see a broader reshaping of the political landscape—including new coalitions and legal precedents—that could have implications for advancing formal citizenship in the future.

6.3 Substantive citizenship: State-distancing

While a battle over cash transfers was taking place in the legal arena, an important shift was also taking place in the bureaucratic arena with implications for substantive citizenship. Considering "the state as a set of bureaucracies," the Crisis period introduced a move toward what I refer to as "state-distancing." In direct opposition to what occurred during the Expansion period (in which the state actively invested in building infrastructure and processes to get closer to bolsistas), the pandemic sparked a transition that resulted in both passive distancing (which took place through the breakdown of existing tools, relationships, and systems) as well as active distancing (which took place through shifts in decision making structures as well as a move toward adopting new digital tools). While it is still unclear what the longer-term legacies and consequences of these passive and active distancing processes will be, they do reveal an underlying shift in both bureaucratic capacity and bureaucratic logic that has potential implications for the state's relationship with bolsistas in practice in a post-pandemic context. The following sub sections explore these issues in greater depth.

After the storm: Resuming operations with out-of-date information and out-of-touch relationships

In the context of Bolsa Família, very early on in the pandemic (in March 2020) the Ministry of Citizenship took action to suspend certain operational and management practices that would typically result in the blockage, cancellation, or suspension of benefits. During this period, families would not face sanctions for things such as inconsistencies discovered in their registry data, outdated registry data, or noncompliance with conditionality requirements (common reasons for blockages, as discussed in the previous chapter). As the legal ordinance acknowledges, this was necessary because the implementation of the program, particularly at the municipal level, was fundamentally hindered "by situations such as the suspension of classes in schools, the redirection of health centers to care for COVID-19 patients, and the closing of Social Assistance Reference Centers and other registration

sites" (Ministério da Cidadania 2020). As one informant explained, "All this was done with the understanding of not further harming vulnerable families at such a complicated time—during which, for example, they may have been unable to contest a benefit blockage or unable to acquire the necessary documentation to update their registry" (Interview SEDESE 2021). This was of course necessary during the pandemic when stringent stay-at-home measures were in place. However, one of the consequences of this was that when "normal" operations eventually resumed, the families were left having been disconnected from services for an extended period of time and the social assistance bureaucracy was left with very outdated information about families.

According to one informant, approximately 30-40% of the Cadastro Único registries in his state were out-of-date the last time he checked (Interview SEDESE 2021). In addition, monitoring data on school attendance and health check-ups were also out of date (given, of course, that during this time schools were closed and health centers were focused on providing COVID-19 care). This kind of data has historically served as a key link for bringing the state "closer" to families. For example, the need to keep one's Cadastro Único registry up to date helped to ensure that the state (and specifically, frontline social assistance workers) knew about families' economic conditions as well as their broader social conditions—and, accordingly, the various state benefits and services that they may be eligible for. Moreover, due to a combination of a new Cadastro Único app (discussed later in this section) allowing families to update their information with just a "click" (resulting in many cases in outdated information being incorrectly confirmed) alongside the new R$ 400 / R$ 600 minimum payment amount per family (creating an incentive for people living in the same household to register as separate families[50]) there is a growing risk that the quality of the data in the Cadastro Único database is slowly

[50]Note that since in the period between October 2021 (when Auxílio Brasil began) and August 20211, the number of single person families who receive the benefit doubled from 2.2 million to 4.9 million. In the month of August, when the R$ 600 minimum payment was instituted, 2.2 million new families were added to the program—of these, more than half were single person families (Madeiro 2022).

being eroded—comprising the ability of the state to use this tool to effectively "know and include" families. As an article authored by multiple former directors of the Cadastro Único warned, this type of "distortion of its data is terrible for effective targeting of income transfers and it entirely compromises the ability of the Cadastro Único to function as a poverty map that can guide the delivery of social programs" (Bartholo et al. 2022). In the context of conditionality monitoring data, information on noncompliance with conditionalities traditionally serves as a "flag" through which these social assistance workers can identify and reach out to at-risk families (helping them to overcome barriers and achieve their rights to social assistance, education, and health—a key principle of the program, as discussed in Chapter 4). However, as this real-time data disappeared, so too did a primary base of the state's ongoing engagement with many families.

State-bolsista relationships were additionally strained throughout the pandemic as the social assistance bureaucracy found itself overloaded with work in response to a massive influx of demand for social assistance benefits. This was due to demands for Bolsa Família and Auxílio Emergencial as well as rising demands for other benefits. Given legislation that created fiscal restrictions preventing states and municipalities from hiring additional personnel (with the exception of certain sectors such as health) during the pandemic, this resulted in a social assistance sector that was already increasingly insufficiently resourced (as discussed in the Backlash chapter) finding itself in an even more precarious position. The implication of this at the local level was that CRAS centers were dealing with an enormous volume of work that diverted their attention from working with families to simply keeping up with benefit applications. As one informant explained:

> Auxílio Emergencial was designed with the idea that it would be something that would be handled by Caixa—it was not supposed to be something that would go through CRAS centers (and thus it would not have an impact on municipal social assistance resources). But in reality, this is not what happened. In reality, people started coming all the time to CRAS centers to ask questions, to clear up doubts, to understand why they were receiving benefits or why they were not receiving benefits, to contest decisions about their benefit status, etc. This led to an *enormous* volume of work for CRAS centers, because they ended up not only serving their

> regular Bolsa Família families, but now they were also serving families that had never been to CRAS centers before – whether it was because they now lost their job or because they heard that the people there could somehow help them get access to Auxílio Emergencial. Beyond this, there was also an increase in demand for other benefits that weren't Bolsa Família or Auxílio Emergencial from the part of population that wasn't able to access either one. The CRAS centers have been reporting that it's been very difficult for them in this sense. The main thing that I hear from them is that, unfortunately, they have essentially become a team that just issues benefits. They have been unable to actually work with families to provide social support services because they are so overloaded with these other demands. (Interview SEDESE 2021)

In addition to having less time to devote to working with families, the pandemic necessitated a scale back of in-person services as well as the need to maintain social distancing where person-to-person interactions did occur. It is not surprising then, that a consequence of the pandemic has been a deterioration in the "closeness" of state-bolsista relationships. Indeed, results from a 2020 study found that over 87% of frontline social workers indicated that the pandemic has changed the way that they relate to citizens—citing specific changes related to increased physical, social, and emotional distance in the relationships (Fernanda Lima-Silva et al. 2020).

While registration and monitoring activities have resumed, rebuilding the relationships that were weakened during this period could take time. At this point, it is unclear the degree to which these challenges will persist into the future—but the current scenario suggests that it will not be a quick remedy. For example, as of August 2022, lines still remained enormous ("days long") at Cadastro Único enrollment centers—reflecting the reality of the "line to get in line" (*a fila da fila)* (with people lining up overnight in order to enter the registration center before they run out of available interview slots that day) given the extensive backlog of demand and limited staff available to serve the public (Trisotto 2022; Jornal Nacional 2022; Folha de S.Paulo 2022). Moreover, as mentioned in the previous section, the transition to Auxílio Brasil reflected increasing attention to the monetary aspect of the benefit with less attention focused on the role of the program as a mechanism to integrate bolsista families into a broader network of state services and benefits. As long as CRAS centers remain

overloaded and underfinanced, and social assistance staff have insufficient resources to conduct active outreach to families—the role of the program in focusing state attention and resources on incorporating bolsistas remains severely limited. Thus, as the state emerges from the pandemic, it is arguably more "distant" from bolsistas than it was prior to the pandemic. Recovering this distance will require active investment and resources—not only in supporting Cadastro Único or Bolsa Família programming, but also more fundamentally in the integrated networks (i.e. SUAS, Education, Health) that it is linked to. This is particularly urgent, given that elevated demands for social assistance support will likely continue in a context of increasing socioeconomic vulnerability as will elevated demands for additional health and education support in the context of delayed health-seeking behaviors, learning losses from at-home schooling, or increases in school dropout rates. Without this type of additional investment (liking requiring resources that actually exceed pre-pandemic levels), there is a risk that the type of strain on state-bolsista relationships that was experienced during the height of the pandemic could persist well beyond this period.

Top-down economics: The shifting locus of technocratic decision-making

During the Crisis period, a shift also took place in terms of the underlying bureaucratic power structure that shaped the design and implementation of cash transfer programs. As the Expansion chapter explained in detail, the bureaucratic backbone of Bolsa Família took the form of a multi-level network comprised of management actors at the federal level (led by SENARC within the Ministry of Citizenship), coordination actors at the state-level, and implementation actors at the local level. As the Backlash chapter discussed, in recent years these bureaucratic structures have faced significant political and fiscal pressures, but resistance on the part of "progressive technocrats" at the federal level and frontline social assistance workers at the municipal and local level were critical in pushing back against potential retrenchment outcomes. With the arrival of the pandemic, however, the de-facto

constellation of power among the bureaucratic actors involved in cash transfer programs shifted in two notable directions (even if the de-jure organizational structures remained in place). First, power shifted away from the Ministry of Citizenship toward the Ministry of Economy; and second, it shifted away from a multi-level governance structure to a top-down approach.

Indeed, when asking informants about the changes that took place in cash transfer programs during this period, they repeatedly mentioned a new actor: the Ministry of Economy. In almost all of their accounts, the Ministry of Economy played "a very large role," eclipsing the Ministry of Citizenship as the main protagonist in the creation of Auxílio Brasil. Indeed, SENARC informants confirmed that it is now the Ministry Economy that they must defer to for the answers to the majority of their questions about the program. As one SENARC informant reflected, a possible reason behind this shift was a political context in which "the current government had a lot of difficulty in trusting the team that was in place here" (Interview SENARC 2021). As discussed in the previous chapter, this was a team largely comprised of career public servants who had been working on CCTs since the onset of Bolsa Família and who largely resisted the types of changes that Guedes and Bolsonaro were pushing for prior to the pandemic. More broadly, this shift in power was likely empowered by Guedes's close ties to Bolsonaro's administration in combination with a new interest from the Ministry of Economy in leading this agenda given its central role in delivering the popular Auxílio Emergencial program as well as a new necessity for it to engage given the complicated fiscal problems involved with implementing a new (more expansive and generous) cash transfer program "within" the existing spending ceiling. Given that the Ministry of Economy is arguably a more "powerful" ministry than the Ministry of Citizenship, this shift carries the potential to strengthen the bureaucratic foundations behind the cash transfer program. This is particularly relevant given critical concerns over the program's long-term financial sustainability. Unfortunately, however, the shift to the Ministry of

Economy does not seem to have helped resolve this question in any sort of consequential way (as discussed previously in this chapter). Instead, this shift has primarily resulted in the distancing of bureaucratic decision making from the state actors who have the most technical knowledge about the design and delivery of CCTs as well those who have the most intimate knowledge about local implementation contexts.

At the federal level, this materialized in the sidelining of SENARC. As one informant bluntly put it: "all of a sudden, some six or seven 'enlightened' guys from the Ministry of Economy thought that they knew better than the entire technical team in the Ministry of Citizenship" (Interview Congress 2021). Despite SENARC's extensive technical expertise in this area, they did not feel as though they were meaningfully included in the process of designing the replacement for Bolsa Família. As one team member explained to me:

> SENARC, despite playing a central role in cash transfers program, has had very little space to contribute to the discussion [of Auxílio Brasil]. In the little space that we did have, we were not listened to, not even within our own Ministry. We tried to give technical feedback on the design of the new program, based on our knowledge from working on this program for almost twenty years, but the Ministry's leadership didn't even pass along our ideas…and now, [laughing] we are the ones who have to implement this program. (Interview SENARC 2021)

Based on accounts from SENARC informants, the team was consulted in the very beginning stages of developing the proposal for Auxílio Brasil but after this initial period the text stayed within the Ministry of Economy and the Civil House of the Presidency until it went public. This meant that bureaucrats in SENARC were left in the dark about what the final text would say until it was publicly released as an MP. Moreover, not only was SENARC sidelined, but so too were Bolsa Família's sub-national implementing agencies—resulting in lost potential to improve the new program by tapping into local knowledge about what could work better (note that this is again in direct opposition to the trend that occurred during the Expansion period, in which the federal government explicitly invested

in learning about and scaling up local program implementation successes). As one state-level informant told me:

> For us [in sub-national governments], it is especially difficult because Auxílio Brasil is being designed without consulting the state or municipal governments. It is being done mostly at the federal level by a small group that doesn't even include people from the Ministry of Citizenship. It seems like the discussion is taking place entirely within a small group in the Ministry of Economy. There was never a moment where they turned to us and asked, "Hey, State governments, what do you think should change?" The process of creating this new program has not been a collective one, it has not been a participatory one. It has been an extremely centralized process. (Interview SEDESE 2021)

Just as with the SENARC, these sub-national agencies ultimately did not find out about the new Auxílio Brasil program until after it was made public. As one informant reflected: "We only found out about Auxílio Brasil when the announcement was published in the newspaper. We learned about it alongside the rest of the world" (Interview SEDESE 2021).

In the context of substantive citizenship, this has important knock-on consequences for the ability of the bureaucratic state to effectively serve citizens. Last-minute unidirectional flows of information from the Ministry of Economy to the Ministry of Citizenship made it difficult for the implementing agencies to adequately prepare for the timely delivery of benefits and to clearly communicate expected changes to bolsistas. For example, as one SENARC informant explained: "until practically the night before [Auxílio Brasil was supposed to begin], we did not have information about what the value of the new benefit would be. They still had not decided on this. And it's not a simple thing for us to implement quickly, because we have to calculate the benefit amount individually for each family based on their unique income and family composition profile" (Interview SENARC 2021). This lack of information has reverberated across the program's decentralized structure. Without more information, SENARC was unable to inform state governments of expected changes, who were in turn unable to support municipal governments in preparing to implement those changes. As one state-level manager explained to me:

> The role of the state-level government [in Bolsa Família] is precisely to pass along information to the municipalities and to help them to improve their implementation of the program. But the problem is that we don't have any information. The federal government doesn't give us any answers. They tell us "When things change, you will be informed." The municipalities are extremely anxious and curious, wanting to know what is going to change, when it is going to change, why it is going to change, and so on. The keep asking us, but we don't know. We literally do not know. So, this role has been horrible, because we have been meeting with them, and they have an expectation that we will arrive with new information – but no new information is coming. (Interview SEDESE 2021)

Ultimately, this carries consequences for bolsistas, given that local agencies were left unable to answer bolsistas' (many and often desperate) questions about what was going to happen with their benefits. In a context of swirling misinformation and confusion sparked by headlines announcing that "Bolsa Família is ending," Bolsa Família's own bureaucracy was left guessing about the future of the program alongside bolsistas.

Digital transformation and the state: (Dis)junctures between digital technologies and social technologies

Another important change that took place during the pandemic that carried the potential to reshape the relationship between citizens and state bureaucracies in the context of cash transfers programs was the push to adopt new digital technologies. Just as in other sectors, COVID-19 prompted the acceleration of digital transformation within the public sector. In order to enable access to Auxílio Emergencial benefits, the government quickly launched a large-scale digital registration platform in the form of the mobile app "Caixa Auxílio Emergencial." [51] The success of this experience prompted the government to rethink its existing registration platform (the Cadastro Único) for Bolsa Família/Auxílio Brasil. As one informant explained:

> One of the important things that changed during the pandemic, was that people were able to directly apply for Auxílio Emergencial through an app…It was really easy. People didn't need

[51] Note that in addition to the Auxílio Emergencial app, Caixa launched the App "Caixa Tem" that enabled people to easily open and operate a digital social savings account. In 2020, the bank opened over 105 million digital social savings accounts, including for over 35 million people who had never previously had a bank account (Caixa Notícias 2021). In this case, the interaction of digital technology with the benefit system led to financial inclusion on an unprecedented scale in Brazil.

> to go anywhere. The government became fascinated with this possibility and it ended up motivating the discussion of moving the Cadastro Único to an app" (Interview Congress 2021).

As another informant reflected, this carried broader conceptual consequences for how the government thought about the role of the state in the context of cash transfers:

> [The executive government] associated [the use of an app for registration] with the idea of autonomy, of not needing to depend on anyone, of not needing to depend on the local government. This ended up motivating a lot of the discussion framing Auxílio Basil as a benefit that "won't depend on the government." (Interview SEDESE 2021)

This fascination reached the highest levels, with Bolsonaro himself publicly promising the delivery of such an emancipatory app and eventually presiding over the app's launch event in March 2022. However, as this section will discuss, given that the day-to-day context in which the Cadastro Único operates is very different than the context in which Auxílio Emergencial operated (a context which required digitalization given the need to provide emergency assistance to millions during a pandemic where physical presence posed a public health risk), the potential benefits and potential risks of digitalization for state-bolsista relationships are also very different.

On one hand, this type of digital change to the Cadastro Único presented a potential opportunity to bring the state "closer" to bolsistas by reducing certain access barriers to registration that arise because of the need for in-person interviews (for the initial registration as well as in-person visits to keep existing registrations up-to-date). As explained in the Expansion chapter, physically going to registration centers can present a challenge for marginalized populations with limited access to transportation, limited budget for transportation costs, or limited time to make long journeys, which has often resulted in their de facto exclusion (in addition to creating stressful or shameful experiences for interviewees if they need to provide sensitive information in a context where other people may see or overhear them). These types of barriers have likely resulted in outdated registry information for many bolsistas, which can ultimately result in the blockage of their benefits. In this way, digitizing

access could solve for the same problem that the Auxílio Emergencial app solved for during the pandemic period: the issue of requiring physical presence. However, given that the target population for the Cadastro Único is poor and vulnerable families, there is the additional consideration that moving online may not actually resolve (but in fact exacerbate) access barriers if families also have limited access to digital tools and/or digital skills. As one informant explained to me, this challenge was made apparent during Auxílio Emergencial. Municipal governments had been complaining to him that "as much as you people in federal government talk about creating an app, many bolsistas don't even know how to download an app. They come here to the CRAS center to ask us to help them download it and register on it - essentially for us to do the same thing that were already doing anyway" (Interview Congress 2021). Further complicating the issue of access is the fact that the current questionnaire behind the Cadastro Único is far lengthier and more complex than the simple series of questions used to register for the Auxílio Emergencial—typically requiring over an hour of time from a trained interviewer familiar with specific technical concepts. The shift to a self-reported app-based registry risks not only deepening exclusion for those that may be unable to complete this questionnaire on their own, but also compromising the quality of the data for those that do complete it (if complex questions are incorrectly understood or answered). As this registration data is the primary means through which the social assistance bureaucracy is able to "see" (and thus, serve) vulnerable citizens, poor quality data could fundamentally undermine the basis of this relationship—potentially leaving millions without the assistance that they are entitled to.

On the other hand, this type of digital change poses a potential danger of moving the state much "further" away from bolsistas, if the digital technologies implemented end up bypassing or replacing the "actual" state all together. As discussed at length in the Expansion chapter, the Cadastro Único was designed as a "social technology" that enables the welfare state "to know" low-income citizens

"in order to include" them. Unlike the registration for Auxílio Emergencial which aimed to quickly identify citizens' eligibility for a discrete series of emergency cash payments, the Cadastro Único serves as an open gateway to a much larger unified social assistance system. As discussed in the Expansion chapter, the building up of the social assistance network—and in particular, the network of local CRAS centers—throughout Brazil's vast territory has been a critical factor in building a state for the poor where none had existed previously. This has given the "state as bureaucracy" a human face—one that is able to able to actively find, see, and serve the local population based on their specific (and potentially complex) needs. For example, a face-to-face interaction between a bolsista a social assistance worker in the context of Bolsa Família registration or monitoring may also result in the detection of other situations that require state support—such as domestic violence. From this perspective, there is a risk that turning the Cadastro Único into an app could erode the role of these frontline workers and replace this human face of the state with a robotic one. Indeed, as a network of local governments argued in their letter of vehement rejection to an early digitalization proposal: "to replace this personalized and professional service with a digital tool is to remove the humanity from the activities of State…" (Frente Nacional de Prefeitos 2021). Several technical experts involved in the Bolsa Família program have also advanced a similar argument, affirming the potential underlying disjuncture between the social technology of the Cadastro Único and the digital technology of a registration app (if it were to materialize in a form similar to that of the Auxílio Emergencial app, which effectively replaced rather than complemented the physical state):

> The government is forgetting that families are not simply going to register. They enter a CRAS center, which is the gateway to the state, which will assess the family's needs, including housing difficulties and situations of violence. Turning everything into an app is to going to end up further distancing the state from the poorest population. (Letícia Bartholo in Gullino and Almeida 2021).

> Technology is a secondary issue. If it can be improved, it has to be done. But CadÚnico's great social technology is not an app. It is the way that it is builds a relationship with a social worker or technical specialist who can work to understand the needs of that person, who may not even know what [benefits or services] they need (Tereza Campello in Mello 2021).

After over a year of internal planning and a highly contested public debate, the Cadastro Único app ("*Meu CadÚnico*" / My Cadastro Único) was finally released in late March 2022. While it is still too early to know how the app will change things in practice, it is notable how the app in its final form is very different from that which was envisioned in early leaked documents from the Ministry of Citizenship[52] as well as in early public statements from Bolsonaro himself. In terms of the app's functionality, while early versions appeared to consider the app as a replacement for the entire registration process (similar to the Auxílio Emergencial app), the final version ensures at least one introductory interaction with the physical state (for example, while existing registration data can be updated in the app, new registrations require an in-person visit—though this can be streamlined by filling out "pre-registration" data in the app). The political discourse surrounding the app has also notably shifted. For example, in May 2021 Bolsonaro heralded how the upcoming app would eliminate the need for local governments in the process of registering for Bolsa Família and therefore "free the most humble people from the yoke of whoever it is" [in the local government that is mediating access]" (Presidência da República 2021). However, by the time of the actual app launch in March 2022, this discourse had been reframed in terms of bringing citizens "closer" to the state rather than "freeing" them from the state. For example, in his official remarks, Minister of Citizenship João Roma stated that "with this new tool, the contact with the citizen will be even more direct, because that is their right" (Governo Federal 2022). In the context of this thesis, it is also notable that the promotional materials launched with the Cadastró Único app explicitly framed this digitalization project in terms of its potential for promoting "citizenship." For example, the government's public video introducing the app ends with a reflection that: "All of this is to guarantee more citizenship for the families that need it most in our country. It is the federal government investing in modernity,

[52] See for example the documents revealed in Mello (2021)

transparency, and technology for the effective exercise of citizenship through the single registry for social programs" (Ministério da Cidadania 2022).

Summarizing the argument: Substantive citizenship during the Crisis

In sum, we see that in the context of substantive citizenship, the Crisis period raises questions about the potential legacy of the pandemic on increasing the bureaucratic distance of the state from citizens in the context of cash transfers. The necessary suspension of certain operational and management practices during the pandemic has fostered both out-of-date information systems about bolsistas and out-of-touch relationships with bolsistas. While these practices have since resumed, it will require active investment to recover from the distance lost during this time. While this distancing took place "passively" in the background, more "active" distancing processes were also underway—such as the shift in de facto decision-making power toward a more top-down approach led by the Ministry of Economy and the accelerated push for digital transformation of the Cadastro Único. These processes introduced changes which carried risks for the ability of frontline workers to effectively serve citizens during this uncertain and trying time and pointed toward an underlying shift in political logic about not only the size but also the shape of the welfare state.

6.4 Cohesive citizenship: Beyond "the poor"?

In the context of cohesive citizenship, the Crisis period also opened a new window of opportunity for the state to shift the way that it functions as "a focus of collective identity" in the context of cash transfers. The impacts of the pandemic and the experience of the Auxílio Emergencial program made both poverty and informality newly visible to the state and to society. This prompted a public re-imagining of the precarious socioeconomic reality of Brazil and a recognition of the limitations of existing social programs (such as Bolsa Família) to address it. While this carried the potential to foster greater social cohesion and coalesce a broader base of support for more universal social protection, it

was competing with concurrent narratives about poverty and austerity that valorized a politics of individualism over a politics of solidarity. For example, during this period the government promoted messaging that framed poverty as an individual economic problem best solved through formal work incentives and meritocratic rewards rather than as a structural multidimensional problem requiring coordinated state intervention. While this was a narrative that was already in play prior to the pandemic, it gained a larger audience during Auxílio Emergencial and it solidified its footing in the transition to Auxílio Brasil. Additionally, in the wake of the pandemic, Brazil (like many countries in the world) faced the challenge of meeting rising poverty in a context of shrinking fiscal space. This nurtured new narratives about "fiscal responsibility" that focused disproportionately on the costs of programs (rather than the comparative benefits) and on how to reallocate existing resources between groups (rather than reconsider the deeper underlying progressivity of the fiscal system). This served to foster tensions between the potential beneficiaries of competing social programs rather than build support for a more equitable fiscal and social contract. The following sub-sections explore these issues in greater depth.

Re-imagined communities: Poverty, informality, and the new politics of (in)visibility

In his classic 1983 text *Imagined Communities,* Benedict Anderson argues for the merit of conceptualizing the nation as "an imagined political community" (Anderson 1983, 6). While he primarily uses this idea as a means to refine the way that we understand nationalism, the idea is also useful more broadly for understanding how people think about the societies to which they belong. For its part, the pandemic played a powerful role in disrupting the traditional imaginary of "Brazil" that many people held in their mind's eye. The multiple crises of COVID-19 made visible not only the structural weaknesses behind the nation's politics and policies, but it also made visible the people on the other end of those structural weaknesses. It gave both poverty and informality a human face, alerting the nation to the

urgency and ubiquity of these challenges alongside the failings of the current social protection architecture to address them. In this way, it raised broader questions about economic vulnerability and promoted people to think beyond the historically artificial and divisive boundary of "poor" and "non-poor" that Bolsa Família had constructed and calcified over the years (as discussed in previous chapters).

The pandemic's implications for "visibilizing" these challenges manifested differently for poverty than it did for informality. In the context of poverty, the pandemic seemed to bring a greater awareness to political actors and to society about how much poverty there really was in Brazil and the associated structural challenges that people living in poverty faced. Brazil is a notoriously unequal country, marked by high a spatial segregation of income groups. This is acutely true in the context of Brazil's large urban centers, where the gap in living standards between wealthy neighborhoods replete with luxury condominiums and low-income neighborhoods densely packed with precarious informal housing is extreme. Despite living in close physical proximity, the social distance between the people in these different neighborhoods is vast and often uni-directional. For example, while people in low-income neighborhoods may enter their wealthy neighbors' homes to work in service positions (such as domestic workers or gardeners), the reverse is not true. People from wealthy neighborhoods may only see the life of their neighbors through the lens of the media—which often highlights stories of violence and drug-trafficking. While people may have previously not seen, or have chosen to look past, the multi-faceted and difficult reality facing people living in situations of poverty or vulnerability to poverty—the pandemic made this impossible to ignore. For example, as one favela community leader in Rio noted in an interview:

> People often don't want to see [the day-to-day difficulties faced by people in the favelas], or they only see the favelas from the point of view of armed violence. With this crisis, they began to see beyond this….People who only saw favelas through a lens of violence, began to see them through the lens of coronavirus. (Eliana Sousa Silva in Betim 2020)

The media played a critical role in this regard, giving the cascading crisis a human face. One of the most notable examples is a series of photos taken by Domingo Peixoto, published on the front cover of Rio's Globo Extra Newspaper in September 2021 (Figure 6.7). These photos showed people scavenging through discarded animal carcasses in the back of a truck in search of bones to pick over for meat scraps. The scraps left on these carcasses had been deemed unfit for sale by supermarkets and were thus in transit to factories to be turned into products like soap or dog food. An interview with the driver of the so-called "bone truck" in the photo revealed that while this was not a new scene in Brazil, it was a definitely one that had worsened during the pandemic: "Before, people would come and ask for a bit of bone to give to the dogs. Today, they beg for bones to make food. Before, it was 2 or 3 homeless people that would come by and take some. Now, there are some days where 15 people come by" (Nascimento de Souza and Sabóia 2021). These shocking photos and the stories behind them circulated rapidly around the country (and around the world), sparking a public outcry about the acute crisis of poverty and food insecurity in the country—and planting these issues (and the people facing them) firmly within the national consciousness.



Figure 6.7 "The Pain of Hunger": Viral cover of Globo's Extra newspaper
Source: Globo Extra Digital Archive. Cover of September 29, 2021 issue.

As people began to "see" this reality in sharper relief, they also began to see Brazil's existing policies to address it in a new light. As one informant explained:

> We have an expression in Brazil: "*males que vem para o bem*" [roughly translated as "every cloud has a silver lining"]. In this case, the pandemic was something bad that ended up exposing the huge number of poor and vulnerable people that we have in Brazil who live at the margins of an employment-based social protection system. I think that before, a lot of people didn't see how much poverty and misery there was here. While some people pretended they didn't see it, there were a lot of others that I think actually didn't know that it existed. I think that the pandemic exposed this and changed the view of many people who previously held prejudices against cash transfer programs. (Interview Congress 2021)

Specifically in the context of Bolsa Família, it began to break down a few of the stereotypes that the public had held about bolsistas. For example, the very public discussion over the design of Auxílio Emergencial brought with it greater awareness about some of the more technical aspects of Bolsa

Família. In particular, it revealed how low the benefit amounts received by families were as well as how low the poverty eligibility thresholds were. As one informant reflected:

> Before, people had no idea how much money Bolsa Família beneficiaries actually received… People would commonly say things like "people are getting rich from Bolsa Família" or "people want to have more children just so they can get Bolsa Família." I think people had the idea that beneficiaries were receiving something like R$ 1000 or R$ 2000. But during the pandemic people started to find out that the basic Bolsa Família benefit was actually around R$ 90, with a variable benefit of around R$ 40 per child. People started to say "Wow, but that's not much at all. You can't live on that." People started to realize that we have to find a better way to improve people's lives. (Interview SEDESE 2021)

In the context of informality, the discussion about the pre-pandemic invisibility of informal workers was even more explicit than it was in the context of poverty—given that the government actually used the term "invisibles" to describe them. The use of this term, however, faced some public controversy given that while these individuals were not "visible" in formal state social protection databases, they were also not exactly "invisible."[53] In contrast to the actual bureaucratic invisibility of the so-called "hidden poor" who may not even have access to identity documentation (a key group historically targeted by Bolsa Família outreach efforts, as discussed in the Expansion chapter), informal workers had simply been rendered invisible by a residual welfare model that denied them entry. The state knew they existed (for example, if they had birth certificates and identification numbers), but simply offered no safety net for them within a formal labor-market based social protection system. For many informal workers, Auxílio Emergencial was their first experience receiving any kind of state-sponsored social protection. As one such "invisible" AE recipient put it in a media interview: "[Prior to AE], I never had any kind of help, I had never received anything before this benefit. We feel forgotten, you know? There is no way for us not to feel disgusted that the government treats us like this. Just look at the conditions in which we are living, it's a very difficult life" (Maria Daniela in Marchesan et al. 2020a).

[53] As sociologist and former senior SENARC official Letícia Bartholo has argued, many of these individuals were in fact very visible to both the state and the public. As she pointed out, "these [so-called] 'invisibles' take the bus every day. It is the gardener, the day laborer. They are right in front of our eyes every day" (Letícia Bartholo in Marchesan et al. 2020).

While the "discovery" of this vulnerable group has repeatedly featured in the public rhetoric during the pandemic as a key success of AE, there does not yet appear to be any deeper political consensus behind their longer-term incorporation into the welfare state. Despite early promises from Guedes that the replacement program for Bolsa Família would expand its reach to this group, the actual design of Auxílio Brasil remained narrowly focused on the poor (as discussed in section 6.2, the current political arrangements failed to achieve a broader expansion of coverage). Moreover, beyond Auxílio Brasil itself, the broader mandate (and the underlying bureaucratic tools and systems) of the Ministry of Citizenship have not yet been adapted to ensure that other relevant benefits or services will reach this group. This interacts with the discussion in section 6.3 on the shift in bureaucratic control over cash transfers toward the Ministry of Economy during this time. For example, when I asked about the Ministry of Citizenship's plans for incorporating the "invisibles" after the end of AE, one SENARC informant explained to me that:

> This discussion [about what will happen to the informal workers receiving AE benefits when the program ends] isn't taking place within Ministry of Citizenship. It is all within the Ministry of Economy. So, I can't tell you what will happen to them. The Ministry of Citizenship does not even have the registration records of these families, as they registered for AE using the Caixa app. They are not in the Cadastro Único, and their income does not fall within the income range that we currently serve. If this income range were to change, then this group could be included in the suite of services offered by our Ministry. But that is a discussion that goes beyond the Ministry of Citizenship itself. And we have been left to learn about it in the newspapers, on TV, along with everyone else. From what I can tell, there is no consensus about what will happen, because we hear something new every day—and usually it is something different from the day before. (Interview SENARC 2021)

Ultimately, following the end to the AE benefits (first temporarily in January 2021 and then permanently in November 2021 with the start of Auxílio Brasil), this group was abruptly left without any form of targeted state support. In the public discourse, they transitioned from the "invisibles" (os "*invisíveis"*) to the "left with nothings" (os "*sem nada*")—the "orphans" of Auxílio Emergencial (os "*órfãos do auxílio emergencial*") (Lo Prete 2021; Campbell et al 2021). In other words, while the pandemic

rendered this group visible, being seen was not enough to secure change—instead, they found themselves abandoned in the wide chasm between state legibility and state protection.

"Freeing" citizens from the state: Landing narratives of individual effort and market incorporation in Auxílio Brasil

Importantly, this social re-imagining of poverty and informality was taking place alongside a political reframing of these issues. Rather than focusing on the need to expand the state to support previously excluded citizens, this political framing instead focused on the need to "free" citizens from their dependency on the state. This narrative touted market incorporation as the primary pathway to achieve this and emphasized "individual effort" as the pathway to achieve said market incorporation. This was a narrative that was already being promoted by the Bolsonaro administration prior to the pandemic (as discussed in the Backlash Chapter), but it gained new salience and inertia during this period. When Auxílio Emergencial was first being conceptualized in March 2021, Bolsonaro quickly framed the debate over expanding cash transfers as one about increasing dependency. In his public remarks, he warned that "the more people are forced to live off of State favors, the more dominated these people become" (Jair M. Bolsonaro 2021). While an expansive AE passed anyway, the government held tight to this narrative in its promotion of what an AE "success story" looked like. This was story in which cash transfers served as micro-loans to enable entrepreneurs to start businesses (that in turn could eliminate their need to receive cash transfers) rather than as a lifeline for the poorest to meet their basic needs. See for example, the language used in a promotional video shared by Bolsonaro on his social media channels in January 2021 about the story of Mr. Jhow, an AE recipient who used his money to open a barbershop (Figure 6.8). Following the end of Auxílio Emergencial, this type of language was carried over and concretized within the legislation of Auxílio Brasil (as discussed in the next paragraph). Notably, however, in contrast with Auxílio Emergencial (an emergency relief program), Auxílio Brasil (a poverty relief program) provides even less money to even poorer people

than Auxílio Emergencial did—further complicating the ability of bolsistas to use this cash as a means to overcome "insurmountable obstacles" (i.e. structural poverty) simply by "striving for excellence," like Mr. Jhow did.



//Translation//

Jhow is an example that, for those who strive for excellence, insurmountable obstacles can turn into small hurdles.

Mr. Jhow arrived in Brasília in 1993. Tractor driver, bricklayer, hairdresser. He was impacted by the "lock down everything" approaches imposed by governors and mayors, but, with the Auxílio Emergencial from the Federal Government, Jhow not only maintained dignity and hope, but was also able to build something new, opening his barbershop.

Auxílio Emergencial reached more than 65 million Brazilians.

Ministry of Citizenship / Government of Brazil

Figure 6.8 Overcoming insurmountable obstacles by "striving for excellence": Telegram post from President Jair Bolsonaro
Source: Jair Bolsonaro (2021).

Auxílio Brasil became an opportunity for the government to formally anchor this new narrative. The language of personal achievement and market-based pathways out of poverty was abundant and explicit in the legislative text. It appears, for example, in Article 2 of the law which references the program's overarching aim to incentivize "individual effort" and "productive rural and urban inclusion, with the aim of citizen emancipation." The five new ancillary benefits that were added to the program's core set of benefits focus on rewarding bolsistas' meritocratic performance and formal market incorporation and are explicitly categorized in the law as "incentives for individual effort and productive emancipation." Finally, even where some rules remained similar to those in Bolsa Família,

they were rebranded using this new language. For example, in Bolsa Família there was a "permanence rule" that allowed families to remain in the program if their income surpassed the poverty threshold (framed as a means to ensure continued protection for vulnerable families that may have more volatile income flows); in Auxílio Brasil, this was re-baptized as the "emancipation rule" (and ostensibly reframed as a means to avoid discouraging families from seeking more "emancipatory" forms of income generation, such as market incorporation). Not only was this language used in the actual law itself, but it was also emphasized in the government's promotional materials for the program. For example, in his tweet launching the new program, Minister of Citizenship João Roma emphasized the point that Auxílio Brasil reflects the Brazilian government's "commitment to freedom and the emancipation of citizens" (Figure 6.9).



//Translation//

Today we present #AuxílioBrasil, a historic milestone of the government of @jairbolsonaro. The new program, executed by the @mincidadania, will go far beyond a policy of social assistance and support, reflecting the commitment of the @govbr to freedom and the emancipation of citizens.

Figure 6.9 Auxílio Brasil reflects the government's "commitment to freedom and the emancipation of citizens": Twitter post from Minister of Citizenship João Roma
Source: João Roma (2021).

This new framing fundamentally reimagines the logic behind the program is several key ways. First, in terms of who the program aims to protect—shifting its focus away from prioritizing those who have been excluded from the labor market (and thus have no reliable source of income) to those who have

access to the labor marker (and thus have more reliable sources of income). This is most apparent in the design of new the "productive inclusion" bonus, as one informant explained:

> Auxílio Brasil created these ancillary benefits within the program – that despite being quite small in terms of the number of people that they reach (for example 10,000 or 100,000 families is very small compared to 14 million families), they have generated a lot of a noise and confusion….and they changed the logic of a few things. For example, Auxílio Brasil has a component that rewards families that are able to get jobs. This is very different from Bolsa Família—in the sense that as a targeted cash transfer to low-income groups, it focused on reaching families that were unprotected in relation to their income. In order words, it prioritized families who have unstable incomes. In contrast, Auxílio Brasil gives a special bonus to families who have stable incomes. (Interview SENARC 2021).

Second, it changes the logic of what is required to overcome conditions of poverty. It lays the responsibility on the citizen, and it contends that the pathway out of poverty is greater individual effort (without considering the broader structural context in which that individual is exerting such effort). For example, as one informant explained in relation to the new school sports and academic achievement bonuses:

> The idea is this: a family whose children perform well in school or sports will receive a cash bonus. But for vulnerable families, this kind of meritocratic logic may not be the most appropriate. Often children are not able to do better in schools precisely *because* their families do not have the necessary financial conditions to support them doing better. (Interview SEDESE 2021)

Bolsa Família was grounded in a view that chronic and intergenerational poverty was the result of structural conditions of exclusion, and thus requires integrated state action to promote citizens' access to social rights. In contrast, Auxílio Brasil is grounded in a view that poverty is an individual problem of insufficient income, and thus requires that people work harder so they can earn more money in the labor market. A key consequence of this conceptual shift is its implications for a morality-based politics of individualism rather than a rights-based politics of solidarity. This is particularly concerning in the wake of the pandemic, which has further aggravated many of the structural challenges the nation was already facing. As Brazilian social policy researcher and historian Denise De Sordi put it: "there is no such thing as enough 'individual effort' to overcome the unemployment, famine, and poverty

that results from political-economic choices to undermine access to social rights" (De Sordi 2021a). More specifically, she has argued that:

> In Auxílio Brasil, the blaming of impoverished workers for their own situation is totally detached from the broader context of economic, political and health crisis, and from the lack of a government plan to create formal jobs in the wake of the recent labor reform. [Auxílio Brasil] is more than a technical change from one program to another, it is not only the end of Bolsa Família, but also the end of social cohesion around forms of combatting poverty and extreme poverty in [Brazil]. (De Sordi 2021b)

Fighting over crumbs: Fiscal constraints, false trade-offs, and distributional tensions

The combination of economic recession and costly government interventions during the pandemic left Brazil, like many countries in the world, in a fiscally challenging position. In Brazil, this shrinking fiscal space interacted with previous policies of austerity (most notably the spending ceiling instituted under Temer) to constrain the scope of potential government spending. Thus, the discussion about the future of Bolsa Família was also intimately intertwined with a discussion about how much it would cost and how it would be paid for. Indeed, as one informant summarized it, this debate became a tug-of-war between social and fiscal pressures:

> There is strong social pressure for [the more expansive income support measures] to continue, but there is also strong financial pressure for them not to. So, these two fronts are fighting. I don't know who will win, but our history shows that it is the fiscal front who tends to win in these discussions. (Interview SEDESE 2021)

As he predicted, the Crisis period has not marked a radical departure from the nation's historical trajectory. Rather than prompting a deeper look at the progressivity of the country's fiscal system (i.e. rethinking the recipe for the metaphorical "pie" and how it is divided among different income groups), this discussion over cash transfers was framed in narrow terms of competing social budgets (i.e. which vulnerable groups should get more or less of the pie's remaining crumbs). Ultimately, from the perspective of cohesive citizenship—this approach served to provoke tensions between the groups at the bottom of the income distribution competing for the same budget, rather than to foster forms of social cohesion that could support broader cross-class coalitions.

One important way in which this fiscal narrative was crafted was a concerted emphasis on the short-term "costs" of the program (note that Bolsa Família has historically cost around 0.5% of GDP) without also discussing the value of its long-term benefits (or even more notably, in a context of widespread socioeconomic crisis, the costs of *not* implementing the program). For example, the voluminous body of research on the impacts of Bolsa Família has shown a plethora of benefits in areas ranging from health to education to gender equity to violence to macroeconomics. From this perspective, the "cost" of Bolsa Família could instead be thought of as an "investment"—or at least as a "cost-savings" in other areas. As former Minister of Social Development Tereza Campello explained, this view fundamentally shifts how we think about notions of "austerity" and "fiscal responsibility":

> If we think about the health budget, for example, the ideal would be to reduce costs through preventative measures. We know that everything that is detected early can have a huge impact on medium- and long-term cost reduction. In the case of Bolsa Família, research studies have shown its impact on the early detection of diseases such as leprosy… We need to discuss the idea of "austerity" from the point of view of the efficiency of public spending. While something may be efficient in the short-term, it may make no sense in the medium- or long-term if you look at its broader set of impacts. (Interview Tereza Campello 2018)

While the rhetoric of "fiscal responsibility" was a starring character in the debate over the future of cash transfers, the government focused this discussion within the narrow frame of the program's short-term costs—and, accordingly, proposed short-term financing solutions.

Instead of debating alternative longer-term solutions such as passing more progressive taxation reforms,[54] establishing a sovereign wealth fund, or revisiting the spending ceiling amendment, the political debate around financing Auxílio Brasil (or its various proposed predecessors, Renda Brasil and Renda Cidadã) was consistently focused on makeshift budget maneuverers. As laid out in Section

[54] For example, a study by researchers at the Center for Research on Macroeconomics and Inequality at the University of São Paulo found that a monthly cash transfer of R$125 to the poorest 30% of society financed by taxes on the richest 1% could generate a positive impact of 2.4% on GDP through consumption multiplier effects (Toneto, Ribas, and Carvalho 2021).

6.1, the different financing proposals made by Guedes generally framed the financing of this program as a trade-off between existing social expenditures—suggesting that it could only be financed by reallocating money from sources such other social protection benefits or the country's basic education fund. This provoked such public criticism that Bolsonaro ended up issuing his video response (see Figure 6.6) disavowing the proposal on the grounds that he "would never take money from the poor to give it to the very poor." However, the other financing solution that Guedes proposed, and Congress eventually approved, was to postpone the government's precatório debt payments. This too was framed as a false trade-off, with the government pushing Auxílio Brasil through Congress based on a premise of "précatorios or nothing." As Bartholo et al (2021), put it, it became "a weird budget debate, in which the financing of income transfers to the poorest was more like blackmail (if you want Auxílio Brasil, you have to approve the PEC de Precatórios) rather a policy objective." As one informant explained to me, this framing explicitly bypassed a broader discussion on the distributional implications of the country's fiscal system, stating that:

> We understand that this government is strongly concerned about fiscal spending and we accept that there are budgetary restrictions—but we have to discuss the budget in a responsible way. It makes no sense for us to continue giving fiscal incentives to lucrative agrobusiness industries, for example, while having to default on precatório payments to teachers—with the excuse that this is the only way we can finance the new income transfer program. (Interview Congress 2021).

The Crisis thus reflects a missed opportunity to rebuild the fiscal architecture underlying Brazil's social protection system in such a way that it would more equitably redistribute its burdens and benefits and allow for expansion in more universal directions. This is particularly relevant in the context of cohesive citizenship, given that the fiscal system (via revenue collection and expenditure) is a central means through which citizens' "responsibilities" and citizens' "rights" are both directly and collectively linked. Writing during the pandemic on the emergent debates over the financing and the reach of social protection systems, economist Pedro Fernando Nery drew attention to the fallacy inherent in the popular critique of the Brazilian Constitution that it grants too many rights without enough

responsibilities; arguing that if we consider distributional differences, we actually see that the problem is not that the poor have "too many rights," but rather that the rich that have "too few responsibilities" (Nery 2021). However, in the context of Auxílio Brasil, instead of rethinking the role of the rich in financing more universal systems (and accordingly, potentially fostering greater solidarity among income groups), the government instead focused its attention on shifting around existing resources among various competing lower-income groups.

Summarizing the argument: Cohesive citizenship during the Crisis

In sum, we see that in the context of cohesive citizenship, the Crisis period was a time of social re-imagining and policy re-branding. The pandemic opened many Brazilians' eyes to the population's widespread socioeconomic vulnerability alongside the failures of the nation's current policy architecture to protect them. However, "seeing" this reality did not translate into a new politics of solidarity or support for a more robust welfare state. Instead, the debate over the design of cash transfers reinforced a politics of individualism (playing into old ideological and moral divisions), cloaking Auxílio Brail in a language of individual effort and meritocratic rewards while advocating for the "freedom" of citizens from the state. Moreover, the parallel debate over the financing of cash transfers failed to engage with broader distributional questions about the fiscal system and instead served to forge new divisions between "the poor" and "the very poor" as they competed for scarce budgetary resources.

6.5 Conclusion: Opportunity without change

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has served as a test. It has tested the limits of our immune systems, our health systems, our economic systems, and our social protection systems. It exposed many of the cracks in our institutions that we had previously either failed to see or failed to fix—

cracks that let those who were already the most vulnerable fall first and fall furthest. It prompted various attempts to cover these cracks with band aids to stop the worst of the bleeding as the pandemic kept us at home. As a result, it also gave us the chance to collectively pause and reflect on what we will do when the band aids come off: will we return to our broken systems or will we repair the cracks? As Lavers (2020) astutely noted early on in the pandemic:

> [While] there is indeed the possibility that the legacy of Covid-19 will be an expansion of provision and, perhaps, a move beyond the limited forms of social protection that have been prioritised to date…this silver lining is far from inevitable….The future of social protection will, ultimately, be a political battle between the pressure to return to it as an option of last resort and the more expansive possibilities suggested by the response so far, with states taking greater responsibility for the welfare of their citizens.

This chapter followed the tumultuous trajectory of the Bolsa Família program during the period of crisis that emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It explained how this shock served as a "focusing event" that created a unique window of opportunity for social policy change and acted as a temporary "short-circuit" to the reigning politics of Bolsonarismo (as acknowledged in the opening epigraph of this chapter from Laura Carvalho). The government's foray into more expansionary approaches to cash transfers during this state of emergency prompted a resurgent debate over the future of social protection and potential pathways towards implementing its 2003 Citizen's Income law. However, as this chapter detailed, this narrative arc of opportunity did not end in transformational change. While the pandemic did prompt new societal expectations, political coalitions, legal precedents, and social imaginaries that pushed in this direction—this was counteracted by a prevailing political economy in which the distribution of power and resources still favored a more minimal version of the welfare state.

While the failure of the pandemic to prompt a "critical juncture" type of change is perhaps disappointing, given the abundance of hopeful echoes for "a new normal" that ricocheted around the world, it is not necessarily surprising. While crises can open up space for change, past studies of how

crises interact with established welfare states have shown that major changes are in fact quite rare and that patterns of path dependency can be remarkably resilient (see for example Starke et al 2013; Castles 2010). As Castles (2010, 91) put it: "welfare states are like 'elephants on the move', rarely significantly thrown off course by particular events." COVID-19 does not appear to be an exception in this regard. While there has been limited paradigmatic change to Brazil's social policy architecture as a result of the pandemic thus far, we have yet to see how this will eventually play out in the longer-term. As the distribution of power and the socioeconomic reality of Brazil continues to change in the future, it is possible that some of the expansionary momentum gained during this time will come to delayed fruition as new political windows open. Notably, the pandemic has also ushered in a new era of uncertainty in which the future economic and social landscape is still highly tenuous. As one informant noted:

> There's a lot of uncertainty and it's the kind where we just have to wait for time to pass. Because everything is new. And when I say "everything" I'm not just talking about changing the program [from Bolsa Família to Auxílio Brasil]– I'm talking about the fact that we're in a global pandemic. It's been two years already, and we still don't know what the consequences will be in—in education, in health, in the economy. So, I think we have no idea what kind of challenge we are facing ahead—and not just Brazil, the whole world. (Interview SENARC 2021).

Depending on the nature of these challenges, this may serve to re-open windows of opportunity for more significant policy change further down the road.

CHAPTER 7 | CONCLUSION

"I think that Bolsa Família will be around for a long time—maybe forever. But that's not to say that it will be what it is today. In truth, I think we have hit a limit with the design of the program in its current form. Going forward, more fundamental things need to change—perhaps thinking from a much longer-term perspective."
-Interview, SENARC (2018)

Bolsa Família originated from a vision of social protection that sought to go beyond the limits of the corporatist model instituted during the Vargas era. It was one small piece of a larger promise from a newly democratic Brazilian state to expand and deepen citizenship by rethinking who the state was for and what it owed to different populations. In the context of the welfare state, this was a promise to make "outsiders" into "insiders" (using the language of Garay (2021)) or to make "pre-citizens" into citizens (using the language of Santos (1979)). Cash transfers (alongside many other programs and policies) were one of the fundamental tools that the welfare state used to stretch its historically truncated shape beyond the limits of its sharp occupational boundaries. In this way, they were about more than income distribution; they were also fundamentally about incorporation. For millions of poor Brazilians, Bolsa Família was the first time that they were recipients of a programmatic state-led social protection policy, grounded in a rights-based approach. To this day, it is still one of the most visible and direct policy links between Brazil's state and its poorest citizens. Since the program was created 19 years ago, it has grown from linking the state with 3.6 million families to linking it with over 20 million families—or one in every four Brazilians.

However, this has not been a linear trajectory. Bolsa Família has had a front row seat on the rollercoaster that has been (and continues to be) Brazil's changing social, economic, and political landscape in recent decades—climbing steadily upward in a context of democratic consolidation and inclusionary social policy, riding the economic highs of the commodity boom; dropping precipitously in a context of increasingly polarized politics, unmet social expectations, and receding economic

prospects; and curving sharply in the context of the multiple shockwaves of crisis that reverberated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this dissertation, I explored how the Bolsa Família program has shaped and reshaped the state's relationship with poor populations during this undulating period of change. I took both a multidimensional and a dynamic perspective to answering this question, analyzing changes across three different dimensions of citizenship (formal, substantive, and cohesive) and three stylized periods of time (the Expansion, the Backlash, and the Crisis). In this way, I sought to contribute both conceptually and empirically to the existing literature exploring links between cash transfer programs and citizenship in Brazil—bringing a differentiated lens and a contemporary perspective to this growing body of work. In this concluding chapter, I briefly summarize the main findings that emerge from my analysis, consider their broader lessons for long-term social policy trajectories alongside implications for future research, and close with a reflection on the present moment in Brazil.

Summary of the main findings

Overall, I found that progress has been both partial and uneven across the three different dimensions of citizenship examined here. This is consistent with the reality that a society cannot resolve 500 years of structural exclusion with a single program—as well as the fact that Bolsa Família was never designed to do this (despite the actuality that it has become one of the only layers of state-led social protection available to millions of Brazilian households). In this sense, we can think of Bolsa Família as a necessary "first step" towards extending citizenship; however, taking the "second step" will require deeper structural changes to the program (and its surrounding policy environment) foregrounding principles of long-term sustainability, cross-sectoral integration, and social solidarity. While my overarching conclusions are discussed below, Table 7.1 (at the end of this section) provides a more detailed summary matrix of the key findings distinguished by citizenship type and by time period.

In terms of *formal citizenship,* I found that while Bolsa Família has been fundamental in restructuring the relationship between the state and a large sub-set of "the poor" toward a more rights-based engagement than in the past, it has fallen short in terms of delivering longer-term guarantees (it is still not a right, as access is not determined based on principles of citizen entitlement—for example, the program's continuity remains dependent on governments' political will, benefits and eligibility thresholds remain vulnerable to erosion through inflation, waiting lists persist, and funding remains discretionary and pro-cyclical). However, despite the program's lack of codification as formal "right", it has proven surprisingly rigid over time. While this has protected it against backsliding in the face of potential retrenchment, it has also limited its potential to adapt in more transformative ways as economic conditions and population needs change. The "stickiness" of the program over time is much more robust that would have been expected based on its origins in the 2003 MP.

In terms of *substantive citizenship,* I found that while Bolsa Família has fostered the development of a strong and capable welfare state characterized by more inclusive forms of state capacity (through the creation of new instruments, administrative logics, and decentralized approaches), it was not enough to institutionalize Bolsa Família itself. The success of Bolsa Família fundamentally depends on its embeddedness within a broader intersectoral network. The continuity of Bolsa Família's powerful and insulated technocratic backbone (across multiple levels of governance)—linked to broader an epistemic policy community—has proven critical in ensuring the resilience of the program over time. However, its protection did not extend to its broader network. Advancing progress requires complementary capacities and commitments across sectors (i.e. education, health, social assistance, Ministry of Economy, Caixa, etc.). The link between CCTs and the integrated provision of universal services and benefits is absolutely fundamental if CCTs are to advance beyond a logic of inclusion through income and actually work toward promoting broader and deeper forms of incorporation.

In terms of *cohesive citizenship*, I found that while Bola Família has used transparent and impersonal targeting criteria to effectively transfer cash to millions of the lowest-income families in Brazil, the program continues to operate within a logic which reinforces the identity of beneficiaries as "poor families" rather than "equal citizens"—placing them in a residual individualized category that interacts with prevailing moral views, ideological beliefs, and public narratives to reinforce a politics of division rather than of solidarity. Thus, in many ways the program has actually ended up increasing the social distance between "the poor" and the non-poor (and even among the poor) rather than closing it—fundamentally undermining the potential for type of collective action needed to advance social protection in more robust and universal directions in the long-term. This finding points to a potential paradox of Bolsa Família (and other CCTs) that are traditionally evaluated as "successful."

Table 7.1 Summary matrix of key findings

	The Expansion *Inclusion without equity*	**The Backlash** *Backlash without backsliding*	**The Crisis** *Opportunity without change*
Formal Citizenship *The state as law*	*A new generation of rights* • Framed within a "rights-based" approach based on the Constitution and LOAS with conditionality requirements that emphasized inclusion over punishment • Built on an extensive rules-based architecture that sought to ensure a consistent, transparent, and impersonal standard of program operation • However, the program was not actually guaranteed as a right on paper nor fully ingrained as a right in the public's perception (as historical views of social benefits as a "favor" remained sticky)	*Alternations in power and the durability of rights* • Rigid legal foundations made it difficult to enact change over time—both preventing potential expansion but also protecting against potential retrenmcent • High political cost of removing benefits has served as a powerful disincentive to politicians potenitally intersted in pursuing legal rollbacks • However, the lack of codification of program as an actual "right" cultivated a high degree of uncertanity about its future (and the future of those who depend on it) in a context of changing political circumstances	*Revisiting the right to income* • Pandemic induced political pressures linked to resurgent basic income debates prompted legal changes to increase program coverage and benefit generosity in the short-term • However, legal changes were minimal and failed to address more fundamental flaws in program design and instead allowed for the continuation of discretionary practices • Shifts in the broader policymaking environment (such as the emergence of new political and social coalitions of actors and new legal precedents in the Constitution and the Supreme Court) introduced new factors that could shape future legal pathways
Substantive Citizenship *The state as a set of bureaucracies*	*Building a state for the poor* • Increased state capacity to deliver benefits and services to the poor across the territory through targeted investment in the welfare state's human, physical, and social capital • Enhanced ability of state to "know" and "include" marginalized families through Cadastro Único reforms and active searching approaches • Incentivized "pro-poor" universalization of public services and benefits through conditionality monitoring mechanisms and the priority inclusion of bolsistas into existing networks (though expansion of access was not necessarily met by improvements in quality)	*A technocratic state in a divided democracy* • Subtle retrenchment pressures through operational changes such as intensified audits of program data reduced program access, reinforced narratives of fraud, and propagated a paradigm of distrust • At the federal level, the program's technocratic central bureaucracy served as a key internal protective constituency that defended the operational integrity of the program • At the municipal and local levels, frontline social assistance providers served as an open gateway to (re)connect bolsistas with benefits and services, despite broader pressures of underfinancing and dis-articulation	*State-distancing* • Pandemic induced changes to program operations resulted in a scale-back of existing tools, relationships, and systems in a context of scaled-up demand for benefits and services • Auxílio Emergencial prompted broader shifts in de-facto decision making power over cash transfer programs toward a more top-down approach with increasing influence from the Ministry of Economy • Pandemic accelerated digital transformation in cash transfer registration platforms introduced new concerns about the tensions between digital technologies and social technologies if the physical state were to be replaced by a digital state
Cohesive Citizenship *The state as a focus of collective identity*	*Drawing a line* • Strict "impersonal" targeting criteria that categorized bolsistas as "poor" and "extremely poor" promoted a new politics of personal identity • The prominence of the program in the public eye strengthened mechanisms for social control but also ended up cultivating a stigmatizing environment of social judgement/surveillance • Individualized targeting and implementation approaches hindered the potential for greater collective action and solidarity both among bolsistas and between bolsistas and non-bolsistas	*Caught in the crossfire* • Moral and ideological divides about who "deserves" to receive benefits intensified in a context of resurgent narratives of fraud, dependency, and austerity • This intertwined with a widening class divide between the poor and the middle classes in a context of economic recession and rising vulnerability • It also interacted with an increasingly widening identity divide among the poor, in a context of shifting narratives focused on individual responsibility and meritocracy (rather than solidarity and social rights)	*Beyond "the poor"?* • Increased visibility of poverty and informality during the pandemic prompted new public consciousness about the scale of economic precarity and the limits of existing policies • The narrative messaging around Auxílio Brasil endorsed a view of poverty as an individual problem best solved through formal work incentives and meritocratic rewards • This combined with narratives about austerity to stoked distributional tensions and short-term thinking (as reform discussions focused on budgetary trade-offs rather than the underlying progressivity and sustainability of the fiscal system)

Lessons for the long-term and directions for future research

While the specific findings in this study are not intended to be generalizable to settings outside of the one studied here, they can offer broader lessons that may be applicable to other contexts. These lessons may be particularly relevant for those countries who chose to follow a similar approach to cash transfer programs as Brazil. As many policymakers around the world intentionally modeled their own CCTs after Bolsa Família, this case provides a uniquely long-term perspective on a very specific and prolific type of policy design. These lessons may also be particularly relevant for those countries who are confronting similar changes in their social, economic, and political environments. Brazil's recent history of deepening political polarization alongside deteriorating economic circumstances is an increasingly familiar story to many nations around the world today. Moreover, these lessons may be particularly timely in the current context of pandemic recovery, as many countries around the world are reckoning with a new politics of expectation generated by global and domestic discussions about "building back better" that centered the need for more comprehensive social protection reform. This section reflects on some of the broader lessons that emerge from this dissertation's findings, with an emphasis on long-term policy trajectories in the context of pathways to universalism through targeting.

One key lesson that emerges from this study is about the importance of *dynamic* policy design. As this study revealed, targeted programs like Bolsa Família can face significant pressures for retrenchment in contexts of changing political agendas. In cases of targeted social assistance where program participants tend to be dispersed and have relatively limited political power, building in a dynamic capacity for resilience requires thinking more broadly about how to build protective constituencies as well as how to build sufficiently robust legal foundations. In the case of Bolsa Família, we saw the powerful role of a decentralized technocratic bureaucracy alongside multiple layers of legal scaffolding in preventing programmatic backsliding. In this way, this thesis shows the fundamental importance of

factors that can push for continuity in the face of potential change. Despite a confluence of events in Brazil in recent years that could have precipitated a major crisis for Bolsa Família, we saw that the program remained largely unaffected. However, as this study also revealed—this type of stability is not enough to ensure continued effectiveness in contexts of changing circumstances (i.e. avoiding significant policy drift or enabling more comprehensive reform). Designing policies from a more dynamic perspective means thinking not only about how to resist retrenchment but also about how to ensure sufficient flexibility to adjust or expand. If policies are too rigid, they may grow increasingly inadequate in the face of new challenges—as we saw in the context of the pandemic and now in the context of rising inflation. This means thinking about policy adaptability within a broader framework of long-term state commitment (reflected, for example, in design aspects such as indexed monetary values or counter-cyclical program financing, etc).

A second key lesson that emerges is about the importance of *integrated* policy design. This lesson comes directly from the interlocutors whose voices fill these pages. Across multiple state levels (from federal ministers to local frontline bureaucrats) and multiple state sectors (from social assistance workers to education coordinators), almost all of the actors I spoke with underscored the critical point that Bolsa Família does not have success as an isolated program: that it requires delivering both benefits and services; that it requires coordinated state action; that it requires a multidimensional understanding of families' complex realities. From this perspective, pathways to universalism in a context of targeted cash transfer programs must go beyond discussions of universal basic income (UBI) to also fundamentally center discussions of universal basic services (UBS). In the context of Brazil, Ferreira (2020) identified two dominant paradigms for thinking about the expansion of Bolsa Família in more universal directions: an "incremental additive logic" (referring to steadily increasing coverage and benefit generosity) and a "logic of universal transfer expansion with intersectoral integration" (referring to the role of cash transfers policies in linking citizens with universal services). During the

Crisis period, the former paradigm seems to have gained increasing traction (as evidenced in the growing focus of policy discussions in the context of Auxílio Emergencial and the Auxílio Brasil on amount of cash being transferred and the number of families being reach, rather than the intersectoral network of support underlying the program—as was the case in Bolsa Família). However, I would argue that the findings from this thesis point to the fact the transfer of cash alone is not enough in contexts where public services are still not universal (in terms not only of access but also of quality). This underscores the reality that replicating or transplanting CCT programs from one context to another is not as simple as copying and pasting the program's design. While many representatives of foreign governments and international situations have flown to Brazil to study this successful example of a CCT—the findings from this dissertation suggest that looking at only Bolsa Família misses the broader point. The program's efficacy is not as a singular program on its own, but rather it must be understood for how it is linked with the multiple layers of other services, benefits, and instruments at local, municipal, state, and national levels.

A final key lesson that emerges is about the importance of policy design that *bridges divides*. Targeting can be a critical tool for reaching the most marginalized populations and incorporating them into more universal systems. However, as Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea (2016, 210-216) have noted, while "targeted measures may contribute to universalism…[if] they are used to incorporate beneficiaries to the same entitlements available to everyone else…. segregated incorporation of the poor may lead to segmented outputs over the medium and long run." In contexts where targeting instead leads to segmentation, this can reinforce existing social divides and hinder the possible formation of the type of broader cross-class coalitions that would be needed to push for more comprehensive social protection reform—to move beyond "easy" types of redistributive policies (such as cash transfer programs) toward the "harder" types (such as investments in high quality universal public services or fiscal reform) needed to promote further inequality reduction (see Holland

and Schneider (2017) for a longer discussion on easy and hard redistribution in Latin America). This is an increasingly urgent challenge in countries around the world, as inequality is a problem than can become self-reinforcing in contexts where economic power maps on to political power. Thus, when thinking about policy design for targeted programs, it is critical to think not only about the implications for the program for the population that is being targeted but also about the implications for the population that is *not* being targeted—and how this intervention may alter the social distance between these groups.

Considering these lessons, I would argue that the future directions for research broadly remain the same as those suggested by Sánchez-Ancochea and Mattei in their 2011 paper on the political and economic effects of Bolsa Família in the short- and the long-run. As they astutely noted:

> Future research and debate thus needs to move beyond debates on the short-term effects of Bolsa Família – and most other CCT programmes for that matter – and consider the way they overlap with the rest of the social policy regime. We must explore the extent to which the programmes are consolidating residual social systems in some instances while contributing to the expansion of universal services in others. The ultimate impact of CCTs will not only depend on their specific design but, more significantly, on the way they influence the political behaviour of the poor and the opportunities for broader and more encompassing social coalitions. (Sánchez-Ancochea and Mattei 2011, 313)

As CCT programs are growing older, we are now able to take a longer-term look at their different trajectories and the varying implications of those trajectories. It will be particularly enlightening to understand these patterns from a comparative perspective, understanding how these dynamics have evolved differently in countries undergoing similar processes of endogenous change (such as political polarization or economic stagnation) or facing similar exogenous shocks (such as the COVID-19 crisis). One particularly important dimension to explore, that emerges from the results of this thesis, will be to unpack how programs' varying design and implementation structures (such as "hard" vs "soft" conditionalities, conditional vs unconditional design, decentralized vs centralized implementation, integrated vs non-integrated management) shapes the potential for programs to act are more than vehicles to simply transfer income and to actually function as mechanisms to promote

incorporation (thinking about the role of CCTs as instruments to advance the universalization of benefits and services). What could be done to produce better outcomes, both in Brazil and in other contexts, remains an open research question. Moreover, contemporary issues such as the role of technology in delivering cash transfer programs will be an increasingly relevant part of understanding the potential of these programs to serve as a mechanism for linking citizens and the state. As the case of Brazil examined here suggests, digital tools can lead to many different types of outcomes depending on the complementarities or tensions between digital and social technologies, and between the "digital state" and the actual state. This is an area that will demand greater research in the future to understand how these dynamics work in practice in different settings. Finally, the results here suggest a need to also explore issues related to social communications and social cohesion in greater depth—unpacking the links between public narratives, public perceptions, and public support for policies such as CCTs. This is critical both for issues of policy legitimacy as well as for cross-class coalition building—central elements that shape the potential long-term prospects for redistributive policies. These issues are particularly relevant in the current era marked by pervasive and rapid mis- and dis-information. Research agendas are still nascent on the interplay of these issues in the contemporary information environment.

The road ahead

Where Brazil's future trajectory will lead remains an open question. Writing in 2007, Hunter and Power presciently speculated that "like Social Security in the United States or the National Health Service in Britain, the Bolsa Familia may indeed become the 'third rail' of Brazilian politics, a political totem that self-styled reformers can touch only at their own peril" (Hunter and Power 2007, 24). Fifteen years later, in the lead up to the 2022 presidential election, it is clear that no candidate would dare to put an end to Bolsa Família/Auxílio Brasil. Instead, across party lines candidates have not only committed

to the program's continuity but have campaigned with their own branded set of proposed "improvements." The candidates' official government proposals reveal a broad range of ideas—including the creation of a new minimum income program (Ciro), promises to maintain the R$ 600 Auxílio Brasil payment (Bolsonaro), or plans to return to an expanded and redesigned Bolsa Família (Lula) (TSE 2022).

However, underlying these proposals is a very different policy logic. The difference in logics between CCTs as mechanisms for cash delivery versus mechanisms for integrated service provision is starkly evident in the campaign commercials for Bolsonaro and Lula. While the messaging in Bolsonaro's ads (see, for example, Poder360 (2022a)) emphasizes the amount of money Auxílio Brasil provides (comparing the new minimum floor of $R 400 to Bolsa Família's previous median value of R$192), the messaging in Lula's (see, for example, Poder360 (2022b)) centers on the notion that providing a cash transfer itself is not enough ("*não basta dar o auxílio*"). The broader vision of the incoming administration will be critical for setting the tone for the next stage of social protection in Brazil. Not only in determining whether Bolsa Família will finally advance beyond its "first step," but more broadly in determining whether Brazil will finally advance toward a "third moment" of incorporation in terms of its social protection agenda (following a "first moment" in the 1930s and a "second moment" in the 1990s). As Levy and Cruces (2021, 156) recently argued:

> Without a vision, social protection is little else than the inertia of long-dated policies and programs and a continuous addition of new ones, sometimes in reaction to immediate needs, sometimes in compliance to the whims of the president in charge, sometimes in imitation of policies in more advanced countries with very different realities, and sometimes in response to the latest fad in academic or international policy forums, with little coherence between them.

The chapters in this thesis have taken the reader on a journey through time. Together, we have traveled over thirty years, exploring the changing shape of the welfare state in Brazil from the late 1980s until the present day through the lens of Bolsa Família. In some ways, Brazil today feels like it is

experiencing a moment of déjà vu. Lula is once again running for president—complete with a revival of his 1989 campaign jingle (Lula 2022). Indicators of food insecurity and hunger have returned to levels last seen in the early 2000s (Rede PENSSAN 2022). Economists are warning of another "lost decade" of development in Latin America (Ocampo 2021). Electoral promises of a new (or the revival of an old) cash transfer program abound. However, despite a reemerging chorus of "Lula lá" and familiar echoes of concern about Brazil's place on the FAO's "hunger map," it is important to recognize that the Brazil of today is very much not the same as the Brazil of thirty years ago. The next elected administration will be inheriting a welfare state that looks vastly different from the one that it inherited in the wake of the previous lost decade during the nation's return to democracy. While still far from universal, the welfare state of today is also far from truncated. It comprises an institutionalized social assistance network that is built on consolidated legal and bureaucratic foundations, with the capacity to reach across a deeply heterogenous territory and serve an equally heterogenous population. However, despite these major gains, it still remains a highly fragmented system—characterized in many ways by parallel states for poor and non-poor populations. This is further heightened in a contemporary context where investments in the integrated provision of services and benefits to poor are increasingly being scaled back. Importantly, however, the citizens that the welfare serves also look fundamentally different today than they did thirty years ago—they comprise a much broader share of the population, they hold different expectations of the state alongside different aspirations for their society, and they are embedded in broader global dialogues. Ultimately, they are the ones who will shape the future trajectory of Brazil's pathway toward (or away from) universal social protection through the democratic exercise of their individual voice on election ballots and their collective voice on the streets.

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