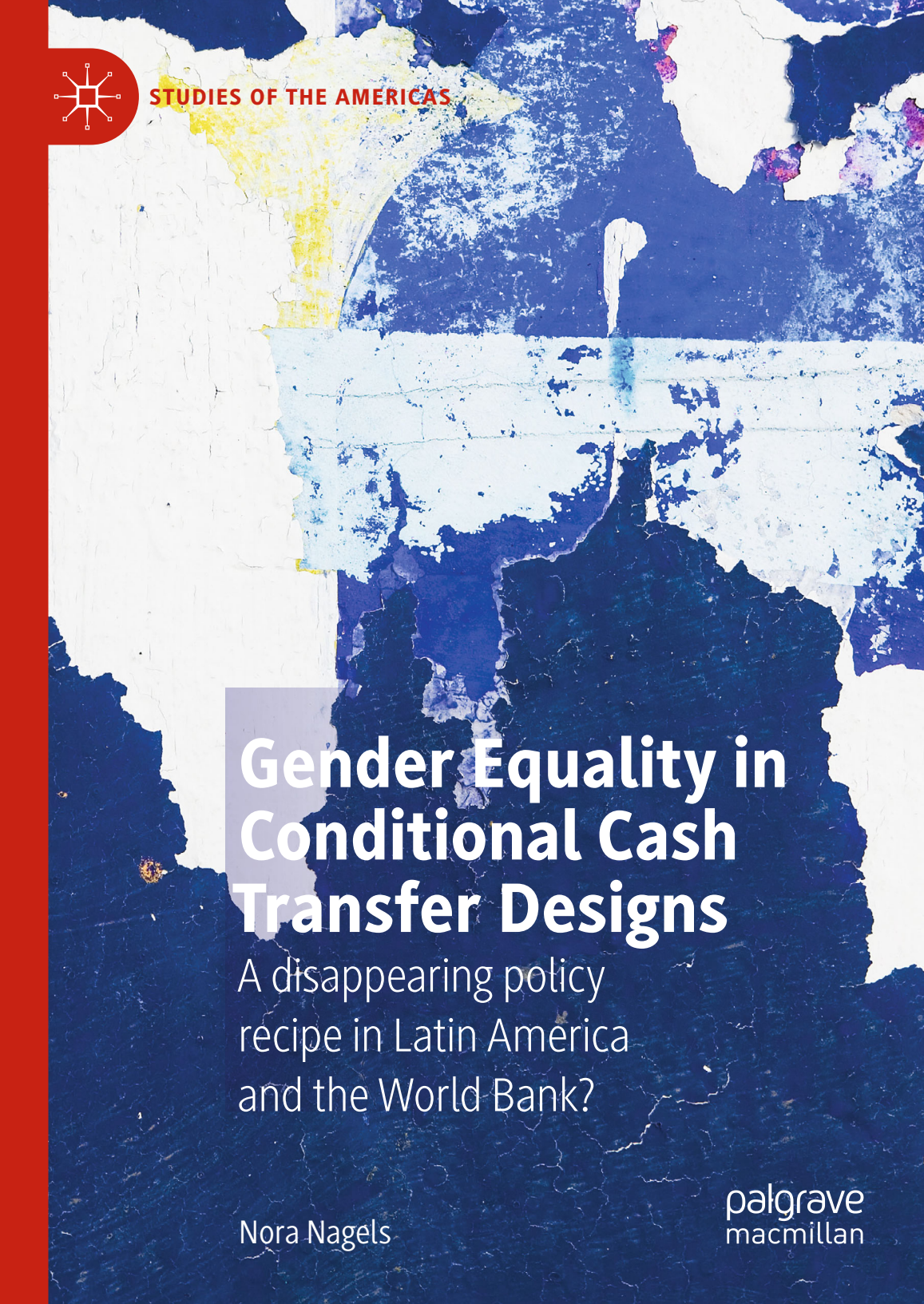
STUDIES OF THE AMERICAS
Gender Equality in Conditional Cash Transfer Designs
A disappearing policy recipe in Latin America and the World Bank?
Nora Nagels
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For Davy, Inès, and Elias
And for Jane, much more than my mentor

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Contents

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Few aspects of social policy have been more controversial than the effects of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) on gender relations and policy outcomes on gender relations are linked to policy designs. Development and social policy communities have recognized gender equality as a cornerstone of development and social progress. Nonetheless, designing policy to integrate gender equality goals into social policies is rendered that much more complicated as and when these policies travel. In Mexico in 1997, the first CCT, *Progresa*, looked quite different than CCTs look today. Embedded in the design was Affirmative Action geared toward girls, as was a clearly enunciated concern about the program's effects on female empowerment. For the 2005 Peruvian CCT, Juntos, the story was very different. Its design did not include any gender equality goals and it reproduced long-standing social policy legacies of gendered exclusions. Therefore, this book is about the alteration of Conditional Cash Transfer designs in relation to gender equality goals as they have made their way through Latin America as well as through the World Bank. This book aims to account for "the fading goal of gender equality" (Jenson, 2015) across time as part of this regional trajectory. In short, it tracks the how and the why of this trajectory in relation to gender equality goals.

CCTs are anti-poverty policies that transfer resources—in cash and not in kind—to poor families. They contain conditions linked to health and

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education. In the short term, they aim to alleviate poverty in families by increasing their cash resources, while in the long term, their objective is to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty with social investments in the human capital of future generations. With these objectives, they provide subsidies to poor families, channeled through mothers, on condition that they seek medical care during pregnancy, enroll their children in school, and take them for health check-ups. Starting in the mid-1990s and in just over a decade, CCTs spread spectacularly quickly to nearly all countries in Latin America, including the four analyzed in this book—*Progresa*[1] (1997) in Mexico; *Bolsa Família* (2003) in Brazil; *Juntos* (2005) in Peru; and the *Bono Juancito Pinto* (2006) and the *Bono Juana Azurduy* (2009) in Bolivia. CCTs became the flagships of Latin American social policies for more than 25 years from the mid-1990s when states returned to "doing" social policy after the lost decade during neoliberalism. By 2019, such policies reached 21% of the whole Latin American population.

In a social investment logic, CCTs are anti-poverty policies targeting children through the behavior of their mothers. Seeking to shape and even control the actions of women, the CCTs are designed with assumptions and intentions regarding gender relations. They will thus affect gender relations but not always in favor of more equality. This book analyzes CCT design and their commitment, or lack thereof toward gender equality. Are particular CCTs designed with a view to achieving gender equality? A measure of this goal is the following. Those that include gender equality goals aim to empower women and grant them financial autonomy. By contrast, those that give money to women because they are mothers and better spenders on behalf of their children reproduce traditional gender roles.

The fading goal of gender equality constitutes a puzzle because, throughout the period in question, all four countries analyzed in this book had the necessary institutional machinery for advancing gender equality in place within their state apparatuses, while the World Bank, which has promoted CCTs since 2004, has an official mandate to promote gender equality and gender machinery within the institution. Why did the institutional arrangements and policy commitments fail in some cases to ensure

[1] Vincente Fox's administration (2000–2006) changed the name to *Oportunidades* and the Peña Nieto administration (2006–2012) renamed it *Prospera*. López Obrador's administration canceled *Prospera* and transformed it into universal scholarship grants.

that an innovative social policy targeting poor children and their mothers would also empower the latter?

Analyzing this difference reveals a complex story. While some Latin American countries did introduce gender equality goals into their CCT designs, others did not. The CCT pioneers—Mexico's *Progresa* (1997) and Brazil's *Bolsa Família* (2003)—explicitly or implicitly articulated gender equality goals. *Progresa* integrated the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women into its original design and *Bolsa Família* followed a design implicitly sensitive to gender equality. However, *Juntos* (2005) in Peru and the two *Bonos* (2006, 2009) in Bolivia did not pay any attention to gender equality and are coercive instruments that reinforce gender and racial inequalities. The book aims to understand this heterogeneity across countries. The book will also map the World Bank's influence because it is impossible to understand how these policies and their design traveled without taking into account the role played by this international organization. The World Bank was a central actor promoting and diffusing CCTs.

Therefore, this book asks and answers one simple question: Why did attention to gender inequalities and the promotion of gender equality become sidelined and then disappear as CCTs traveled through the region? More specifically, for the four cases, it asks: Why did Mexico design a CCT with an explicit goal of gender equality while Brazil designed one that demonstrated some awareness of the dangers of gender inequalities? How is it that both Peru and Bolivia were seemingly unconcerned about gender equality as they designed and implemented their programs? Additionally, the book scrutinizes the World Bank's influence on these choices compared to the national political configurations.

To respond to these questions and understand the fading goal of gender equality as CCTs made their way through Latin America, the book argues that gendered social policy legacies, strategic (gender equality) entrepreneurs, and knowledge about gender matter. While some CCT designers—embedded in gender-friendly institutions—became true strategic gender equality entrepreneurs and could insert their ideas linking gender inequalities to poverty into CCTs, others were not quite so successful. They could not overthrow social policy legacies that reproduced a long-held unconcern for gender equality. In addition, the World Bank itself a bank of knowledge, championed CCTs without any gender equality goals.

This analysis is essential because while the research has documented most elements about CCTs, including their elaboration, implementation, outcomes, and diffusion, the story about their design in relation to gender equality goals as they traveled through time and space has yet to be told. This book tells this story.

The introduction presents the study, establishes the importance of the puzzle, and sets up the organization of the book. First, I document the CCT designs as they vary in their gender equality goals across the four cases analyzed in the book. Second, I locate the study within the body of research on CCTs, gender, diffusion, and the World Bank. Third, I point to gaps in this research by proposing an innovative multiscale methodology to empirically understand CCT designs and their gender equality goals based on fieldwork in four countries—Mexico, Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia—and in one international development organization—the World Bank. Finally, the chapter briefly explains the case selection process and the data analysis and sets up the structure of the book.

CCT Designs Variations in Relation to Gender Equality Goals

Existing research recognizes that CCT designs vary widely in Latin America (e.g., Borges, 2022; De la O, 2015), ranging from few conditions and extensive coverage offered by the *Bono Juancito Pinto* in Bolivia to the strict conditions and limited coverage of the *Progresa* in Mexico. However, the literature does not offer sustained and systematic analysis of the variations in gender equality goals or how these variations are linked to coverage, conditions, and generosity.

Gender Equality in CCT Designs

As shown in Fig. 1.1, and as are all CCTs in Latin America, the four analyzed in this book are intended to be investments in children by way of families' investment in their education and health. Official and unofficial documents that establish and enforce CCTs such as laws, supreme decrees, operational rules, and so on, stipulate that mothers of these

children must receive the cash (CEPAL, 2018).[2] However, only a few CCT designs explicitly include gender equality goals. It is the case of *Progresa*'s operational law that included affirmative action, transferring cash to mothers to promote women's empowerment, with more of that money available to girls than boys as an incentive to educating them (DOF, 1999). *Bolsa Família*'s design (2003) also included gender equality goals in its decision to transfer cash to mothers. While the designers did not make this commitment explicit in any official document, they nonetheless sought to empower mothers by contributing to their financial autonomy and thus altering intra-household relationships (Sugiyama & Hunter, 2020). By contrast, latecomers, *Juntos* (2005) in Peru and the *Bonos* (2006, 2009) in Bolivia, did not pay any attention to gender equality in their CCT designs, leaving plenty of space for long-standing social policy legacies that already contained gender inequalities. Indeed, in Peru and Bolivia the rationale behind cash transfers to mothers was built upon narrow definitions of motherhood and femininity, thus reinforcing traditional gender roles.

	Name	Cash recipients	Gender equality goals	Gender differentialism	Selection criteria	Coverage	Generosity	Conditions	Extra-conditions
Mexico	Progresa (1997)	Mother	Explicit	No	Extreme poor	Low	Low	Strict	No
Brazil	Bolsa Familia (2003)	Mother	Implicit	No	Poor	High	High	Soft	No
Peru	Juntos (2005)	Mother	No	Yes	Extreme poor	Low	High	Strict	Yes
Bolivia	Bono Juancito Pinto (2006); Bono Juana Azurduy (2009)	Mother	No	Yes	Universal	High	Low	Soft	Yes

Fig. 1.1 Variation in CCT designs (Author's construction)

[2] See Non-contributory Social Protection Programmes Database: https://dds.cepal.org/bpsnc/cct, accessed in December 2023, for CCT official national documents in Latin American countries. The only exception to mothers as recipients is when they are absent or cannot receive the payment.

Selection Criteria, Generosity, and Conditions

Social policy design characteristics linked to selection criteria, generosity, and conditions can have consequences for gender equality (Nagels, 2018; Orloff, 1993, 2009; Sainsbury, 2008; Siim, 1994). Therefore, it is important to differentiate CCT designs according to these characteristics. In Mexico, *Progresa* was a narrowly targeted program. Its selection criteria were means-tested on individuals experiencing extreme poverty, first in rural areas and after 2000, with *Oportunidades*, in the urban zone (De la O, 2015: 30). Consequently, the coverage was high in relation to the extreme poverty population but low in relation to the entire population—about 16% in 2001 (Borges, 2022: 87). In the same vein, *Juntos* in Peru targeted only rural and Indigenous persons experiencing extreme poverty based on national census and survey. Its coverage was then low (around 8% in 2019) and excluded a high percentage of persons experiencing poverty (CEPAL, 2018). By contrast, in Brazil and Bolivia, selection criteria were based on the idea of basic income or universalism (Borges, 2022). *Bolsa Família*'s selection criteria were based on self-declaration to minimize errors of exclusion, whereas Mexico and Peru's programs prioritized minimizing errors of inclusion. Therefore, from the outset coverage in the program was high. By 2009, the number of *Bolsa Família* beneficiaries surpassed the number of Brazilian poor people, and in 2019 one in five Brazilians accessed *Bolsa Família* (Borges, 2022: 87). Similarly, in Bolivia, where the selection criteria were based on universalism, all children enrolled in public school under 21 years of age accessed the *Bono Juancito Pinto* (BJP) and all pregnant women or mothers of children under 5 without private health insurance had access to the *Bono Juana Azurduy* (BJA) (CEPAL, 2018). Therefore, coverage of the entire population was high even in the first years of the Bonos (CEPAL, 2018). The *Bono Juancito Pinto* "has the broadest scope of any program in the region—by 2014 it covered essentially all public-school students or about one in five Bolivians—and is, in practice, unconditional" (Borges, 2022: 145). I will demonstrate in the empirical chapters that the Brazilian and Bolivian CCT designers linked the generous selection criteria to the improvement of gender equality by enhancing feelings of belonging to the national community for those women experiencing poverty.

CCT generosity varied in the four cases. A more generous stipend might be expected to better women's financial autonomy. While the Mexican and the Bolivian CCTs transferred small amounts of cash to

the recipients in terms of average income for the poor, the Brazilian and Peruvian CCT monthly or bimonthly stipends were high (CEPAL, 2018). *Progresa* transferred "approximately thirty-five U.S. dollars per month, which represents around 25% of the average income for the poor" (De la O, 2015: 29). The Bonos were around 285 US$ per year (around 26 for the BJP and 260 for the BJA) representing around 20% of the average annual income (Marco Navarro, 2012: 9) but the amounts have remained nearly unchanged since the program's adoption despite declining purchasing power (Borges, 2022: 152). By contrast, the stipend average of *Bolsa Família* and *Juntos* per family in 2008 corresponded to 102% in Brazil and 60% in Peru of the monthly income of poor families (CEPAL, 2018).

The conditions that mothers must fulfill to receive the stipend differ widely from one case to another. While they were strict in Peru and Mexico, conditions were softer in Bolivia and Brazil. *Progresa*'s conditions concerned health check-ups for all household members, 85% school attendance, and participation in workshops and communitarian work. Mothers could lose the cash transfer for a variety of reasons such as the non-respect of conditions or if it was not possible to collect socioeconomic and demographic information for reasons attributable to the family (CEPAL, 2018). Therefore, *Progresa* was the "clearest example of a CCT with a 'sanctioning' approach. […] The design clearly highlights the importance of conditionalities (monitoring and sanctioning) as the main instrument to overcome poverty. Sanctions are carefully established, with stringent rules in cases of noncompliance" (Rossel et al., 2022: 12). *Juntos* used protocols similar to those of *Progresa* (De La O, 2015: 33) sanctioning the household if one of the conditions was not fulfilled (Arroyo, 2010).

In Mexico and Peru, not fulfilling the conditions led to expulsion from the program while in Brazil, this was interpreted as a sign of vulnerability requiring social assistance to intervene, helping a particular household to respect the conditions in health and education. In Bolivia as in Brazil, conditions for the *Bono Juancito Pinto* were soft and not monitored (Borges, 2022: 65). In Bolivia, children must be enrolled in public school, but Morales's administration did not monitor their mandatory 80% presence in the classroom (CEPAL, 2018). According to Rossel et al. (2022: 6), Bolivia's *Bono Juancito Pinto* included conditions as a formality in the design. However, in the case of the *Bono Juana Azurduy*, the conditions were stricter. Women were expected to respect health check-ups during pregnancy and during the first five years of their children's lives to