

ZERO HUNGER: THE POLITICS OF ANTI-HUNGER POLICY IN BRAZIL

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## ABSTRACT

Russell Bither-Terry: Zero Hunger: The Politics of anti-Hunger Policy in Brazil  
(Under the direction of Evelyne Huber)

In 2003 Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) announced a nationwide Zero Hunger Program (*Programa Fome Zero*) and created the Special Ministry for Food Security (MESA), headed by José Graziano, to integrate a wide range initiatives to eliminate the “vicious cycle” of hunger. Within a year President Lula had merged MESA's Food Card program with three other cash transfers to form a conditional cash transfer (CCT) called *Bolsa Família* (Family Allowance). He also merged MESA into the new Ministry of Social Development headed by Patrus Ananias.

This dissertation asks (1) why anti-hunger policies ultimately took the form they did and (2) how well they have worked to reduce poverty and hunger. Regarding the first question, it argues that program implementation initially failed in 2003 because the design was too complex and did not engage constructively with policy legacies from the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government. In contrast to the Food Card, *Bolsa Família* represented a simpler program that built on those legacies. The dissertation supports this assessment with evidence from government documents, media reports, and interviews fieldwork in Brazil (October 2010-July 2011).

Regarding poverty, previous studies find that *Bolsa Família* is directly responsible for a reduction in headcount poverty (H) of only 1-2 percentage points. This

dissertation uses the income gap (I), intensity (HI), and ordinal poverty (O) measures to analyze Brazil's National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) and demonstrates that the program led to a much more substantial reduction in the severity of poverty than in headcount poverty.

Regarding hunger, malnutrition had already declined sharply before President Lula took office, but food insecurity declined by about a third from 2004-2009. The dissertation provides evidence that *Bolsa Família* contributed to this decline, showing that the increase in food security strongly correlates with the expansion of *Bolsa Família* at the state level.

In memory of Bob Dash.

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*"I think back through my life to everybody that I owe, I mean the ones that I can remember in person. Of course I know that I owe these folks and they owe some other people and these are in debt to others and all of us owe everybody, but the amount that we owe is all that we have."*

--Woody Guthrie "People I Owe," as read by Peter Glazer on "Til We Outnumber 'Em"

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMI	Body Mass Index
CAISAN	Inter-Ministerial Assembly for Food and Nutritional Security
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CONSEA	National Council on Food and Nutrition Security
CUT	Unified Workers' Central
EDA	Economic Development Administration
EMBRAPA	Brazilian Agricultural Research Company
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GIS	Geographic information system
IBASE	The Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis
IBGE	Brazilian Institute for Geography and Economics
IPEA	Institute for Applied Economic Research
LIS	Luxembourg Income Study
MDA	Ministry of Agrarian Development
MESA	Special Ministry for Food Security
MDS	Ministry for Social Development and [the] Fight Against Hunger
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
PBF	<i>Programa Bolsa Família</i>
PDT	Brazilian Labor Party



PNAD	National Household Sample Survey
PSDB	Brazilian Social Democratic Party
PT	Workers' Party
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
TCU	Supreme Court of Audit
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

To understand what Brazil's Zero Hunger Program (*Programa Fome Zero*) reveals about the politics of designing and implementing new pro-poor social policies, we must begin with the inauguration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, known simply as Lula. It was in his inaugural address that he announced to the world that Zero Hunger would be his government's flagship program.

Two hundred thousand people from all over Brazil assembled on the National Mall. Many waved Brazilian flags or Workers' Party (PT) flags. It was January 1, 2003 and they were there to witness—and celebrate—a turning point in history.

For decades being a Brazilian leftist had meant getting used to losing. In 1964, the military deposed leftist President João Goulart in a coup because he threatened elite economic interests. The late 1960's saw increasing repression of leftists through censorship, torture, imprisonment, and "disappearances." Though the "Brazilian Miracle" brought rapid economic growth, inequality increased and the economy left many of the weakest and poorest behind. After the return of democracy, Lula—running as the major left-wing candidate—lost three elections in a row: 1989, 1994, and 1998 before his election in 2002. Being a Brazilian leftist had meant losing, but now a leftist had just won the presidency.

The above mostly focuses on the negative, but being a Brazilian leftist also meant incremental hard-fought gains. In 1978-1980 a series of massive strikes paralyzed the industrial center of São Paulo, and showed that it was possible to go up against the military government and win. Lula was their young, charismatic leader, representing a new kind of unionism. In 1980, (after the military government legalized the formation of political parties beyond the two official sanctioned parties), the labor movement, the progressive church, and leftist intellectuals came together to organize the Worker's Party. In 1983, millions filled the streets demanding direct presidential elections. In stark contrast to the region's dominant neoliberalism, the new Brazilian Constitution of 1988 included extensive social and economic rights.

Workers' Party (PT) candidates ran for office and some won. In the 1990's the party gained a reputation for "the PT way of governing:" honest, pragmatic, and progressive. In Porto Alegre the PT government enacted an innovative system of participatory budgeting which allowed citizens to debate and decide spending priorities for their communities (Wampler 2007). The PT Governor of The Federal District, Cristovam Buarque, enacted a program called School Allowance which paid small amounts of money to poor families provided they sent their children to school; education would be the pathway out of poverty (Aguilar and Araújo 2002). The government of Belo Horizonte declared food a human right and worked to integrate the actions of the city and civil society, earning it the attention of prominent food activists (Lappé and Lappé 2002).

Lula's election did not come out of nowhere. It was the product of decades of sustained organizing. The hope was that, as President, Lula would be able to enact nationwide the kinds of policies PT governments had enacted at the state and local levels.

The newly elected president recognized that hope when, after the standard formality of listing those present, Lula began his actual address:

“Change”: this is the key word. It was the great message from Brazilian society in the October elections. Hope finally overcame fear, and Brazilian society decided that it was the hour to take a new path (da Silva 2003, my translation).

The magazine *Veja* reported that he used the word “change” (*mudança*) fourteen times in the speech.<sup>1</sup> It was clearly the central theme. He spoke of the long struggle that had brought him to this point and of the need for change “with courage and care, with humility and boldness.” He then narrowed the focus:

In a country with so much fertile land and so many people who want to work, there is no reason whatsoever to talk about hunger. Nevertheless, millions of Brazilians, in the countryside and the city, in the most forsaken rural areas and in the urban outskirts, are, at this very moment, without food. They survive miraculously under the poverty line, when they don’t die of misery, begging for a piece of bread.

It is an old story. Brazil experienced the riches of the mills and sugarcane plantations in the early colonial times, but it did not overcome hunger; it proclaimed national independence and abolished slavery, but it did not overcome hunger; it experienced the riches of the gold deposits in Minas Gerais, and in coffee production in the Valley of Paraíba, but it did not overcome hunger; it industrialized and forged a notable and diverse industrial park, but it did not overcome hunger. It cannot continue like this.

As long as there is a Brazilian brother or a Brazilian sister going hungry, we have more than enough reason to be ashamed.

For this reason, I set among the priorities of my government a food security program called “Zero Hunger.” As I said in my first pronouncement after the election, if, at the end of my term, all Brazilians can eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner, I will have completed my life’s mission (my translation).

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<sup>1</sup> Brasil, Sandra. January 8, 2003. “Ele falou em mudar 14 vezes.” *Veja*. Chapter 3 relies on many news articles with no byline. Since parenthetical citations to those sources—a long list of full titles in the middle of a paragraph—would make that chapter difficult to read, I decided that consistently citing news periodicals in footnotes is the least bad option.

This dissertation is about the subsequent attempts to make good on this promise. Specifically, it asks (1) why Brazil implemented the anti-hunger policies it did and (2) how well they worked at reducing poverty and hunger. It argues that the need for continuity with existing policies and for a simplified approach that limited the number of possible roadblocks were two key factors that led the Lula Government to ultimately adopt the conditional cash transfer program *Bolsa Família*<sup>2</sup> and that this approach has been effective in reducing poverty and hunger. More generally, it argues that this experience contributes to our understanding of how continuity and complexity shape the success of policies aimed to fight poverty and hunger.

### **Defining the Object of Study**

The idea for a Zero Hunger program had been sketched in a 2001 proposal from The Citizenship Institute (*Instituto Cidadania*), a think tank directed by Lula and charged with sketching out concrete alternatives to existing policies (Citizenship Institute 2001: 13-39). Zero Hunger was to be a broad initiative aimed at social transformation. While emergency measures would meet the immediate needs of an estimated 44 million hungry Brazilians, the larger goal was to create “a new economic development model” to replace Brazil’s “perverse growth model,” which was based on a “vicious cycle” of under-consumption and under-production of food (Citizenship Institute 2001: 17-19; see Figure 1.1). Thus they sought to combat this through both supply-side and demand-side policies

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I adopt the practice of using English names for programs and ministries in order to make the findings accessible to as wide an audience as possible. The exception is *Bolsa Família*, which is well known and is more commonly referred to in English texts by its Portuguese name than by English translations such as “Family Allowance” or “Family Grant.”

(see Figure 1.2). As president Lula would now have the opportunity to put Zero Hunger into practice.

Ten years after Zero Hunger's launch, there is still disagreement over how well the program worked. A 2013 column in *The Hindu* by Anurodh Lalit Jain offers Zero Hunger as a model for the world's largest democracy:

...countries like Brazil have made significant leaps in overcoming hunger by providing food security to the citizens. Brazil's Fome Zero or Zero Hunger programme was initiated by the government in 2003. Based on the pillars of conditional cash transfer, school meals and strengthening family agriculture, Fome Zero has been able to reduce poverty, provide food security and reduce hunger. Within five years, Brazil's child mortality rate was reduced by 13 points and 20 million people came above the poverty line. Although India and China demonstrated better economic growth than Brazil in the last decade, Brazil surpassed both countries in reducing poverty and increasing food security for its citizens.<sup>3</sup>

Yet Brazilian Journalist Eliane Cantanhêde writes: "...in practice, Zero Hunger never existed. It was a pretty name, a piece of marketing, an empty package [author's translation]."<sup>4</sup>

So, Lalit Jain thinks India should copy Zero Hunger, but Cantanhêde—who covered the program in 2003—says there is nothing to copy. During my fieldwork (October 2010 to July 2011), I encountered a similar divide during the many informal conversations I had with Brazilians about my research. This divide was particularly evident in the choice of tense used to describe the program: some spoke of the program as being over, others as still going on. It is impossible to have a productive discussion, be it

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<sup>3</sup> Jain, Anurodh Lalit. "Lessons from Brazil's Zero Hunger." June 16, 2013. *The Hindu*. Available at: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/lessons-from-brazils-zero-hunger/article4817950.ece> (Accessed November 16, 2013)

<sup>4</sup> Cantanhêde, Eliane. "Fome de vitórias." June 28, 2011. *Folha de São Paulo*. Available at: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/opiniao/fz2806201104.htm>

normative or empirical, about “Zero Hunger” if we do not even agree on what the phrase means.

The problem is that people use the phrase in at least two different ways. Some, like Cantanhêde, limit Zero Hunger to the initial program design, when José Graziano led a new Special Ministry for Food Security (MESA) and the Food Card, a program modeled after the U.S. Food Stamp (now called SNAP), was its major initiative. It is easy to see how someone with this limited definition of the program would deem it a failure. On January 23, 2004 José Graziano and Minister of Social Assistance Benedita da Silva left their posts, and their ministries were combined into the new Ministry of Social Development (MDS), headed by Patrus Ananias.<sup>5</sup> A few months earlier, in September 2003, the government had announced a new conditional cash transfer called *Bolsa Família* combining MESA’s Food Card with three transfers inherited from President Cardoso.<sup>6</sup> It soon became clear that the new program was going to be the government’s major anti-poverty initiative. *Bolsa Família* initially fell under its own Executive Secretary (Takagi 2006: 5), but was moved to MDS with the new ministry’s creation.

If we think of Zero Hunger as MESA and the Food Card, clearly it was not successful because the program ended after one year. Officially, however, Zero Hunger continued through Lula’s two terms in office, with *Bolsa Família* as one of its major components. MDS’s full name is the Ministry for Social Development and the Fight Against Hunger, and it includes a Secretariat for Food Security. The organizational

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<sup>5</sup> Athias, Gabriela and Eduardo Scolese. February 4, 2004. “Lula Aponta Erro e Atrela Fome Zero a Crescimento Econômico.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>6</sup> Athias, Gabriela. September 19, 2003. “Bolsa-Família Vai Unificar Quatro Programas Sociais.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

framework for food policy includes participation from civil society through the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) and coordination across ministries through the Inter-ministerial Assembly for Food Security and Nutrition (CAISAN).

During my time in Brasilia at the end of Lula's second term and the start of Dilma Rousseff's presidency, I encountered the Zero Hunger logo on many official publications and event banners. The government clearly maintained the brand, even though it emphasized Zero Hunger much less than it did in 2003. Both media and scholarship refer to this as an "umbrella program" approach: a variety of initiatives spread throughout the government with a common goal.

It's their program; they can define it as they wish, and programs evolve over time. For instance, the U.S. Secret Service was created after the U.S. Civil War primarily to combat counterfeiting, but in the early twentieth century protecting the President became its most important job. A 2003 restructuring moved it under the Department of Homeland Security (United States Secret Service 2007). No reasonable person would say that it is not "really" the Secret Service because it changed its mission and structure, but rather that the Secret Service had changed over time. The interesting questions are why Zero Hunger ended up becoming an umbrella program and what impact the program had, as well as what lessons this offers for theories of social policy.

The 2001 proposal outlined a wide range of initiatives, but in 2003 the Food Card took up two thirds of MESA's budget (Takagi 2006: 87) and the bulk of the program's public attention. Given a limited budget and pressure to demonstrate results quickly, it is not surprising that the new government focused on emergency measures, but why did Brazil abandon MESA in favor of MDS and the Food Card in favor of *Bolsa Familia*? In



the most general terms, the programs look similar: they both give money to the poorest to let them buy food. However, MESA tried to set the Food Card apart from existing cash transfers by creating it as a new, independent program and incorporating a participatory process for selecting beneficiaries that made for an incredibly complex and fragile implementation process. In contrast, *Bolsa Família* built on Cardoso's approach and simplified it by combining the existing cash transfers into one program. The streamlined process for enrolling new beneficiaries relies on full-time social service professionals instead of volunteers. Put simply, they went with *Bolsa Família* because it works, and it works because of this simple approach that built on policy legacies.

### **Theoretical Frame**

Policy legacies are a common theme in much of the literature on the politics of social policy. It seems reasonable to assume that policymakers will generally work within the constraints of these legacies. However, Zero Hunger's first year (2003) is an object lesson in what happens when those designing and implementing a program attempt to ignore policy legacies. By making a new ministry for hunger and a new cash transfer to combat it, even though existing ministries already worked in this area and there were existing cash transfers (including one called Food Allowance in the Ministry of Health), the new government undermined its own chance of success.

Another theme found in public policy literature is that complexity can undermine a program's chance of successful implementation because the more necessary components a program has, the more places it can break down. Yet the initial approach to Zero Hunger was an attempt to incorporate many different elements of anti-hunger policy

into a complex program, both out of commitment to participatory government and because of a belief that inter-connected problems require inter-connected solutions.

Though Zero Hunger officially included a wide range of initiatives, *Bolsa Família* was the largest new initiative after the shift to the “umbrella approach,” and for this reason is the focus of much of this dissertation. To ask if *Bolsa Família* works is to ask if it had a significant impact on poverty and hunger. Given that poverty was the primary cause of hunger in Brazil, it made sense to combat hunger by combating poverty and it makes intuitive sense that direct income support for the poorest should do this. Posing things this way outlines the following theory and hypotheses to test:



This is deceptively simple. As with the earlier discussion of differing definitions of “Zero Hunger,” the problem is that people mean different things by “poverty” and “hunger.” Different concepts of poverty and hunger lead to different measures of them, which in turn lead to radically different conclusions about program effectiveness. This is not to imply that all concepts and measures are equally valid, but it does mean that the first step in answering the “How well did it work?” question must be to argue that it is more useful to think of a problem in a particular way and to adopt a corresponding measure.

If we think of poverty as the number of people falling under a poverty line, then *Bolsa Família* has had a minimal impact on poverty. However, if we think that the program deserves “partial credit” for improving the lot of those under a given poverty

line, the program made impressive gains considering the small size of the benefit. Likewise, if we think of hunger in terms of malnutrition—measured by how many children are underweight—then hunger had already declined sharply before Lula’s presidency to a level that was comparatively low for a developing country. On the other hand, if we think of hunger as food security, which means having access to enough food, then hunger remained a problem when Lula took office and declined significantly while he was in office. Chapters 4 and 5 engage with these choices in greater detail.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

The rest of this dissertation expands upon these central arguments. Chapter 2 reviews the literature to see what we already know about this dissertation’s research questions and, on the basis of this knowledge, looks for some likely answers. For the “Why these policies?” question, it begins by framing hunger as a political problem and explaining the kinds of policies likely to successfully combat it. Next, it looks at how these policies are shaped by politics, drawing on work on the welfare state and on Brazilian politics. This work does not fully answer my questions because many of the variables it posits as being important do not vary between the Food Card and *Bolsa Família*. However, work on the importance of continuity with policy legacies and on the complexity of program design helps form hypotheses about likely causes of this difference. It then reviews studies of *Bolsa Família*’s impact on poverty and hunger, outlining some specific places where additional evaluations would be useful.

Chapter 3 takes up the question of why Zero Hunger took the form it did. In hindsight, the failure of MESA and the Food Card was likely overdetermined. Still, this

case illustrates several important principles of policy implementation. The first of these is continuity with policy legacies. The initial approach to Zero Hunger attempted to create a new institution (MESA) to carry out a new cash transfer (the Food Card), while *Bolsa Família* opted to build on existing cash transfers by combining them. Second, the initial approach was incredibly complex, requiring “clearance” from a great number of parties to succeed. This was especially evident in the decision to charge local Management Committees, with a majority of members from civil society, with selecting beneficiaries.

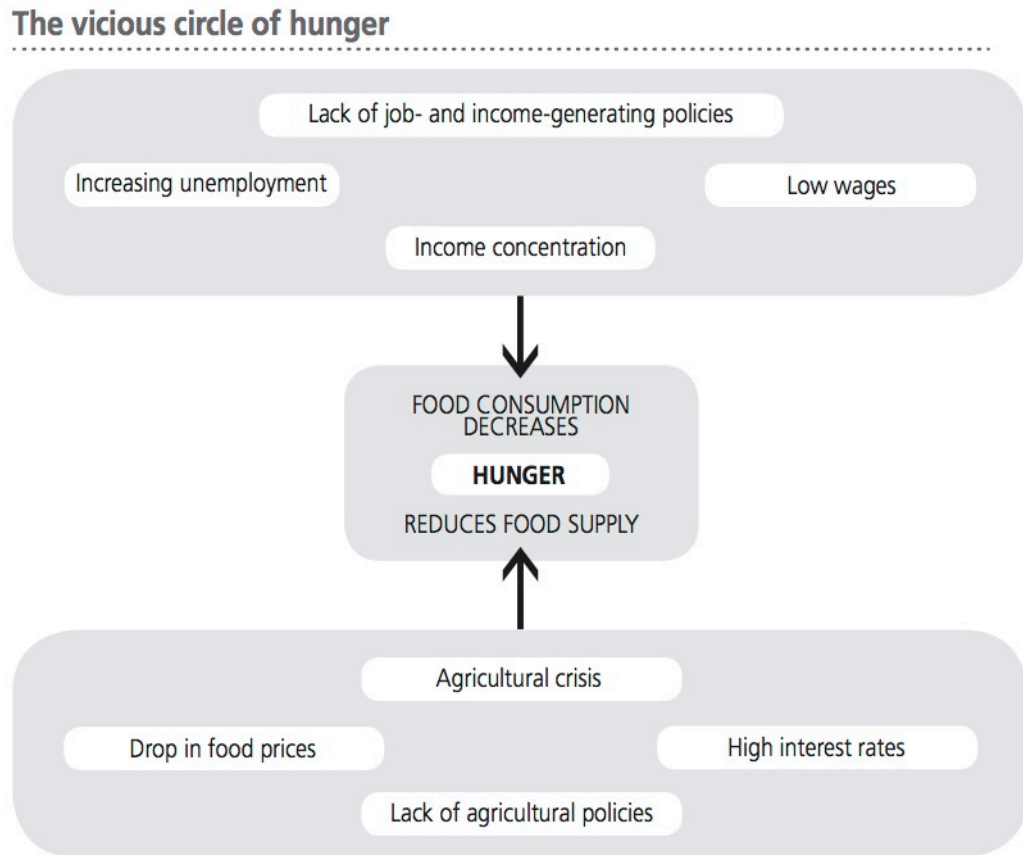
Chapter 4 examines *Bolsa Família*'s impact on poverty. The program recently finished its first decade, so it has clearly been successful from the standpoint of durability. But has it actually reduced poverty? The traditional approach to poverty measurement is to count the number of people with incomes under a given poverty line. This approach consistently finds that the program brought very few people out of poverty. However, there is also a long tradition of thinking of poverty as a continuous variable and developing measures to capture this. These measures demonstrate that *Bolsa Família* has played an important role in lessening poverty intensity.

Chapter 5 turns to *Bolsa Família*'s impact on hunger. Given the role it played in lessening poverty intensity, it seems reasonable to expect *Bolsa Família* to have lessened hunger as well. Here again, concepts shape results. I argue that framing Zero Hunger's goal as “three meals a day” and focusing on access to food mean that the program should be assessed according to its impact on food security—households reporting that they are able to buy food of sufficient quantity and quality. Looking at hunger this way, it is clear that the overall “umbrella approach”—that is, the sum total of all of the government's policies— contributed to a reduction in food insecurity. Figuring out how much credit

*Bolsa Familia* deserves is more challenging, but I combine several approaches to looking at the data, all of which strongly suggest that the program made a significant contribution to combatting food insecurity.

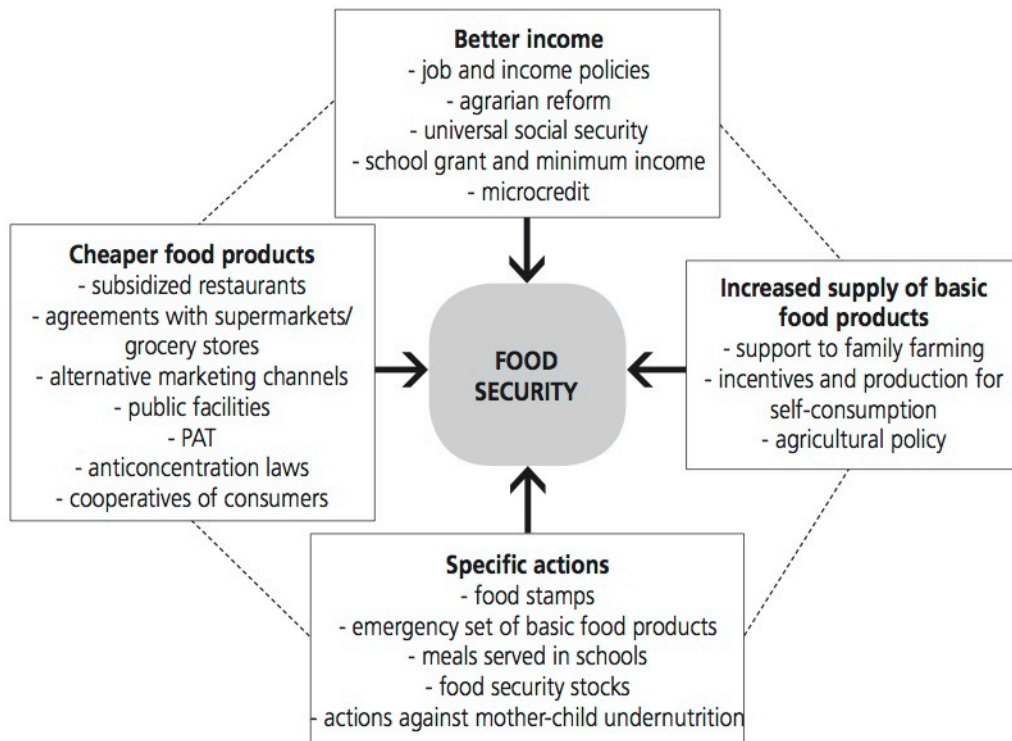
Chapter 6 reflects on Zero Hunger's lessons for anti-hunger policy more generally. Several countries have been designing Zero Hunger programs of their own and there is also a United Nations campaign by the same name. Given that Brazil is the explicit model for these programs, it is vital that policymakers understand what the program actually was, how it changed over time, what parts might be copied and, just as importantly, what mistakes to avoid. This chapter will also draw on the theoretical contribution my study makes to our understanding of pro-poor policies in developing countries.

**Figure 1.1: The problem.**



From Graziano da Silva et al. 2011 p. 20.

**Figure 1.2: The solution.**



From Graziano da Silva et al. 2011 p. 21

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

The introduction sketched this dissertation's key arguments. To restate, continuity with policies from the Cardoso Government and a relatively simple design explain why *Bolsa Familia* emerged as Lula's most prominent social policy initiative and why his government merged MESA into MDS. This simplified approach should be effective at combating poverty and hunger. This chapter grounds this argument in several literatures and outlines the places where the next three chapters will make contributions.

### Hunger

We begin with research on hunger, outlining why it exists, and what policies can address it. Drèze and Sen (1989: 7) emphasize the importance of distinguishing between famine ("acute starvation and a sharp increase of mortality") and chronic hunger ("sustained nutritional deprivation on a persistent basis"). While famines may receive more attention, "most hunger-related deaths do not occur in famines" (Leathers and Foster 2009: 2).<sup>7</sup> In the case of Brazil and Latin America, the problem is one of chronic hunger and not famine, and thus I focus on what the literature has to say about this problem.

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<sup>7</sup>There is much overlap in Sen's analysis of the two: "Even in analyzing endemic undernourishment and persistent, long-run deprivation later on in this study I shall draw on some of the concepts that the study of famines will yield" (Sen 1999)



## Hunger as a Political Problem

While one intuitive cause of hunger is an aggregate shortage of food in the world, this does not hold up to careful analysis. Sen's *Poverty and Famines* (1981) rejects this explanation both at the theoretical level and in the examination of four specific famines. For example, he demonstrates that there was actually more food present in Bengal during the 1943 Bengal Famine than in 1941, but that hoarding led to prices many could not afford. He summarizes this perspective in *Development as Freedom*:

A person may be forced into starvation even where there is plenty of food around if he loses his ability to buy food in the market, through a loss of income (for example, due to unemployment or the collapse of the market for goods that he produces and sells to earn a living). On the other side, even when food supply falls sharply in a country or a region, everyone can be saved from starvation by a better sharing of the available food... The focus has to be on the economic power and substantive freedom of individuals and families to buy enough food, and not just on the quantum of food in the country in question (Sen 1999, 161).

This is not to say that food supply is irrelevant, since it impacts prices as well as the income of small farmers. This can be especially true in countries that consume more food than they produce.

Drèze and Sen (1989) emphasize the political and social nature of the choices that leave people hungry:

In each social structure, given the prevailing legal, political, and economic arrangements, a person can establish command over some alternative commodity bundles (any one bundle of which he or she can choose to consume). (9)

The set of rules governing ownership and exchange—i.e. who is entitled to what—is a society's "entitlement framework."<sup>8</sup> When someone is unable to exchange what she has (money, labor, assets, etc.) for what she needs (food) this is a case of "entitlement

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<sup>8</sup>This usage of the term entitlement is distinct from the popular usage of the word to simply refer to welfare programs, which are only one source of entitlement in this framework.

failure.” In other words, people go hungry because society’s rules about who gets what leave people unable to exchange what they have for what they need.

They remark, “If politics is ‘the art of the possible’ then conquering world hunger has become a political issue in a way it could not have been in the past” (1989:4). The modern era is distinct from much of human history in that advances in production mean that the capacity to provide enough food to everyone exists (1989: 3). That is, it is technically possible; the challenge to doing so is organizing societies to meet this objective, which is to say politics. “Political pressure plays a major part in determining actions undertaken by governments...” (1989: 19) and “...the forms that public action can take will undoubtedly depend on...political and social parameters” (1989: 17). Before looking at how politics shapes policy, we need to look at what policies are effective at combating hunger.

### **Policy options**

Leathers and Foster (2009) survey a number of possible policy strategies to combat hunger. In a market economy the price of food and the quantity produced will be determined, like that of any good, by supply and demand. Approaches basically fall into two categories: supply side (making food cheaper) and demand side (increasing the ability of people to buy food). Economic growth and/or redistribution can raise the incomes of the poor and increase their ability to buy food (273-289); direct cash transfers like *Bolsa Família* and the Food Card would fall into this category. They argue that consumption subsidies (for example, paying farmers the difference between the market price and a guaranteed minimum price) are inefficient and expensive (305-322). Policies

to combat urban bias, such as investing in rural infrastructure, can decrease food prices by decreasing costs of production and transportation (336-341). Lastly, public investment in technology to increase food supply can reduce food costs. A greater food supply means the poor require less of an increase in income to meet their food needs.

Cash transfers, as well as many of the other ideas in the 2001 proposal fall into the categories just outlined, so Leathers and Foster's work helps understand why the Food Card and *Bolsa Família* might be expected to work. Drèze and Sen argue that such policy responses will be the result of politics. However, "political pressure" is a vague phrase; the study of how those pressures and parameters play out constitutes a good portion of the field of political science. Fortunately, other literatures provide a detailed treatment of the process of policy formation and implementation.

## **Politics**

### **Politics of the Welfare State**

What kinds of governments are more likely to carry out these kinds of policies? Given that poverty is a key cause of hunger, the political determinants of effective anti-hunger policies are likely to be similar to those of effective anti-poverty policies. A theory called power resource theory holds that "the balance of class power is the primary determinant of variations through time and across countries in welfare state effort, particularly the distributive outcomes effected by social policy" (Huber and Stephens 2001: 3). In Latin America this balance is primarily the product of two things: (1) democracy creating the possibility for historically excluded classes to win elections and

(2) well-organized left parties actually doing so (Pribble et al. 2009; Huber and Stephens 2012).

Sen and Drèze already highlighted the importance of democracy for responding to public pressure. Power resource theory is more specific in that it posits the actors behind that pressure:

Democracy has helped underprivileged sectors in Latin America by providing a setting within which these groups could organize and mobilize demands for better protection. Moreover, the existence of political competition provides incentives to politicians to be responsive to such demands. (Pribble et. al. 2009)

Simply put, democracy does not ensure the creation of a welfare state, but makes it a possibility.<sup>9</sup>

Huber and Stephens (2001) find that left-wing government leads to more generous welfare programs in advanced industrial democracies. The extension of this research agenda to Latin America finds that democracy and left government are associated with lower poverty and lower inequality there (Huber et al. 2006; Pribble et al. 2009; Huber and Stephens 2012) The focus is on how much left government there is over a long period of time (Huber and Stephens 2001, 2012), because a social welfare regime is the product of a decades-long political process and generally not something that may be quickly established. What has this process looked like in Brazil?

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<sup>9</sup> There are, of course, a few examples of non-democratic governments pursuing progressive social policies in Latin America—most notably post revolutionary Cuba and the Peruvian military government of the late 1960s. However, both of these governments came to power during a different era and both overthrew non-democratic governments.

## **Brazilian Politics**

The specific context of Brazilian policies provides particular challenges for a programmatic left. In *Democracy Without Equity*, Weyland (1996) argues that the failure of social reform in the first decade of democracy in Brazil was due to the fragmentation of society. This kept the majority, who should theoretically be for reform, from joining together to achieve this. The fragmentation also meant that narrow status quo interests could block reform in their particular area. Ames (2001) argues that Brazil suffers from “an excess of veto players” (12) leading to “deadlock.” Hagopian (1996) finds that traditional clientelistic politics is very much alive in rural Brazil and that the same rural elites maintained local power during the military government and democratization. All of this might have led one to predict Lula would have a tough time expanding Brazil’s welfare state in a pro-poor direction.

One counterbalance to these challenges is a presidency vested with extensive formal powers, including the ability to legislate by decree. These provisional measures expire if congress does not approve them, but Mainwaring (1997: 63) notes that “...presidents have regularly reissued these decrees after they expired.” Presumably a successful, popular program will be more likely to eventually win congressional approval and become permanent law. Indeed, in the case of *Bolsa Família* the president has made alterations to the program, such as increasing the benefit, through provisional measures that congress later converted into law (see Soares 2012).

The problem with everything discussed so far is that it applies to both the Food Card and *Bolsa Família*. They were both programs to transfer money directly to the poorest to increase their ability to buy food, which the literature on hunger says can be an

effective strategy. Both were federal programs enacted within less than a year of each other by the same government. Both were the products of a left government committed to redistribution and to fighting poverty, and both faced the same institutional obstacles. Neither power resource theory nor the literature on Brazilian politics can explain why one failed and the other became a global model for effective social policy. This is not really a shortcoming; it is merely that asking why one failed and the other succeeded goes beyond the scope of these literatures. To understand the difference in outcome we must look at the differences in (1) the way a program design dealt with policy legacies and (2) implementation.

### **Legacies and continuity**

One key decision in program design is how a program positions itself relative to policy legacies. A television advertisement for Agnelo Queiroz (PT), elected governor of the Federal District in 2010, illustrates this idea well. The advertisement uses a simple metaphor: government programs are like stacks of blocks. It begins with a building made out of Duplo blocks (or the Brazilian equivalent). A narrator says, “It’s always the same story: when the government changes, the new government changes everything the previous government did...and starts everything from scratch.” During the description of the process, hands disassemble the tower and then build a new one. Then Agnelo addresses the viewer, stating: “I’m going to do things differently. My promise is to review all the works of the previous government. What was good we’ll continue. What was bad we’ll change. This is the new path for our city” (my translation).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Compromisso de Agnelo*. 2010. Available at:

By saying “it’s always the same story” Agnelo implies that leftists do this, too, and that this needs to change. The visual illustration of hands taking apart the old tower and building a new one underscores the unstated point: this work takes time and money. Thus, if what the previous government left was good, or at least a decent starting point, this amounts to wasted effort. The message is clear: build on what you inherit.

Having to build on what you inherit is a major theme in some important works on the welfare state. Discussing the New Deal in the United States, Weir and Scopol (1985: 119) sum up the role of policy legacies as follows: “state structures and policy legacies affected the possibilities for new economic ideas to be formulated and applied to innovative government policies and influenced the political orientations and capacities of conflicting parties and coalitions of social groups.” In his study of the welfare state in the U.S. and the U.K., Pierson (1994:171) writes, “When Reagan and Thatcher began to seek cutbacks in social programs, the legacies of previous decision makers profoundly influenced their prospects for success.” We should likewise expect challenges to an government trying to expand the welfare state. Policy legacies have also been incorporated into the power resource approach (Huber and Stephens 2001).

Pribble (2013: 27) argues that policy legacies matter for two reasons. First, they “structure the sorts of problems that exist.” To use an example from the present project, Lula had to decide what to do about the fractured nature of cash transfers because Cardoso ended his term with three separate programs in three separate ministries. Second, policy legacies “...influence the reform process by structuring the distribution of power within the policy sector—in other words, emboldening some groups while weakening

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wt4jizg6ykI&>. Accessed January 13, 2013. [If the link fails I downloaded a copy].

others.” So, in the case of cash transfers in Brazil, we should expect those within the state benefiting from the pre-Lula status quo to resist encroachment onto their “turf.” Indeed, in Chapter 3 we see precisely this response from mayors and people in older ministries.

It is important not to overstate the impact of policy legacies. Dion (2010: 5) advises that “...we should not assume that policy legacies, or feedback effects, are automatic or predetermined; actors always play important roles in shaping institutional outcomes.” While I agree, I contend that one key to actors’ success is whether they understand these legacies and work within the limits they provide, or ignore them. If someone in a leadership position overestimates the possibility of a critical juncture, this can lead to attempts to enact overambitious policies and, ultimately, failure. On the other hand, the literature argues that an accurate assessment of present possibilities that accepts these legacies as the necessary point of departure is more likely to yield real, and sustainable, gains. Chapter 3 illustrates how the different approaches taken to policy legacies help explain why *Bolsa Familia* succeeded and the Food Card failed.

### **Implementation and its challenges**

Cristovam Buarque, former governor of the Federal District and currently one of its federal senators, remarked about MESA, “The program with many components rarely succeeds.”<sup>11</sup> As it happens, this is the thesis of the book commonly credited with launching policy implementation as an area of study.<sup>12</sup> The full title of Pressman and

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with author, Brasilia, Brazil. June 29, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Saetren (2005) points out that it actually was not the first but that it is understandable that the authors did not know about previous studies, given the research tools available at the time.



Wildavsky's book, originally published in 1973, is *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; Or Why It's Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All, This being a Saga of the Economic Development Administration as Told by Two Sympathetic Observers Who Seek to Build Morals on a Foundation of Ruined Hopes*. The study chronicles the efforts of the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to enact infrastructure projects in a way that will generate employment for African Americans. The EDA's key projects were a new airport hanger and a new port, but it also included small business loans and a health center. A reader of their book familiar with *Zero Hunger* in 2003 would likely find many familiar themes, particularly the unexpected problems that complicate and delay progress. This can happen even in the case of something that all relevant actors theoretically support, be it generating minority employment in Oakland or feeding hungry people in Piauí.<sup>13</sup> To use language from scholarship that came later (Tsebelis 2002), even when there is no veto player trying to kill something, it can still fail.

For Pressman and Wildavsky the culprit is "the complexity of joint action." A complex program such as what the EDA in Oakland inherently brings together many different "participants" who are needed at different "decision points." This is all the more true in a federal system like the U.S. or Brazil. The authors calculate that even if each step has high probability of success, it takes surprisingly few steps to bring the joint probability of success, and hence the probability of success for the program, below one in two (Table 8: p. 107). They chronicle the number of "clearances" required to enact the EDA's policies, finding a total that exceeds this 50-50 chance threshold.

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<sup>13</sup> The northeastern state where *Zero Hunger* began its first programs in 2003.

The intuitive appeal of this explanation is doubtless part of the reason for the book's success. Returning to the imagery of Agenlo's advertisement, imagine two children playing with blocks (this time the primitive wooden kind that do not interconnect). The first builds a tower a few blocks high. The second uses many more blocks to build one tall, complex tower. We know from experience that the tall tower will be the less stable of the two creations. If another child wants to knock it over, all it will take is a flick of the finger to any supporting block. A breeze or someone walking by could also knock it over. In addition, no block is perfect and no block is perfectly positioned above the block below it. The more blocks in a structure, the more likely it is that these tiny imperfections will add up to instability of the whole creation and it may fall even without anything knocking it over.

Policies are not block towers, but they share the characteristic of having pieces that must fit together to form a whole, and, like blocks, the consequence of a block being out of place depends on how the blocks are put together. Indeed, this dissertation could easily be understood in these terms, leading to a tale of "Zero Hunger: how great expectations in Brasília are dashed in Piauí." Tempting though that may be, doing so would ignore key problems with Pressman and Wildavsky's argument.

This expectation that federal programs should rarely succeed is at odds with many everyday experiences, earning it the name "the Pressman-Wildavsky Paradox." Bowen (1982) agrees that probability theory can be a useful tool when those attempting to implement a policy are playing, in the language of game theory, "a game against nature" because they have no opponents actively trying to stop a program. She offers four addendums which result in a much more optimistic outlook. The first is persistence.

Those implementing a policy often get more than one opportunity to pass a particular clearance (if your block tower falls down you can build it again). The second is packaging clearances together to get everybody on board for a set of clearances (you can glue your blocks together so that they are more stable). The third is bandwagons, with earlier successes increasing the probability of later ones. She argues all three of these are reasonable descriptions of many policy implementation processes.

The fourth addendum is program reduction, which recognizes the difference “between program activities and program goals” (12). She writes:

If events in Oakland were looked at in this way, the likely conclusion would be that most program activities were eventually implemented but that, unfortunately if not surprisingly, the goal of increasing minority employment was not achieved. This version of the Oakland episode would be recorded as a *program design failure* rather than an implementation failure [my emphasis].

If the important thing is to achieve a goal and there are several different ways the goal might be met, then it makes sense to think of a program as a collection of independent component policies, which increases the likelihood that something will succeed. For each of these assumptions Bowen shows how they change Pressman and Wildavsky’s results, leading to a much greater expectation of successful (or partially successful) implementation.

Taken together, these yield insights for policy makers’ strategic decisions:

...let us imagine a hypothetical implementer with limited resources such that he or she can only enter into negotiations for twenty clearances. The implementer is confronted by three options: (1) he or she can attempt to implement a relatively complex program requiring twenty independent clearances, (2) he or she can attempt implementation of two smaller independent programs, each requiring ten clearances, or (3) he or she can ruthlessly establish priorities and attempt implementation of one small program requiring ten clearances. Only this third option reserves sufficient resources for persistence in the attempt to gain clearances (15).

In other words: be careful not to spread efforts too thin or everything will probably fail.

While Bowen works from Pressman and Wildavsky's assumptions, Alexander (1989) questions them. He starts with the simple observation that countless complex activities succeed every day but "are noticed only when interrupted" (452). He argues that the ways Bowen and other scholars have proposed modifying the approach "...are just special cases of a more general procedure of modifying the original independence assumption of the model. In both cases the mathematical form and numerical scale of the modification are essentially arbitrary" (455). While he is correct to question the "point-predictions" from these models (to again borrow language from game theory) which estimate specific probabilities of failure, we can restate the claim in terms of relative, rather than specific, probability. Namely, given a particular implementation scenario, adding an additional clearance is one more place for things to go wrong, and thus decreases the chance of success.<sup>14</sup> This is similar to the argument regarding policy formation that each additional veto player reduces the space of possible policy outcomes (Tsebelis 2002).

Pressman, Wildavsky, and the responses just surveyed are examples of top-down models. The other dominant approach, has been bottom-up. Matland (1995: 146-148) explains that where top-down models "see implementation as concern with the degree to which the actions of implementing officials and target groups coincide with the goals embodied in an authoritative decision," proponents of bottom-up models "argue that a more realistic understanding of implementation can be gained by looking at policy from the view of the target population and the service deliverers." For example, Berman (1980:

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<sup>14</sup> Though it might be possible for the addition of an "easy win" to aid in a bandwagon effect or packaging of clearances.

206) argues, “A context-free theory of implementation is unlikely to produce a powerful explanation or accurate predictions” and that different situations will require different strategies. This suggests that understanding the problems with the Food Card will require looking at the politics in the particular municipalities where it was first implemented. Chapter 3 shows that, in the case of one of Zero Hunger’s pilot municipalities, this was indeed this case.

For all the debates about which variables, out of hundreds, have explanatory power, there is at least one point of consensus: resources matter. O’Toole (2004: 317)) writes:

The theoretical and empirical scholarship, virtually without exception, supports the propositions that more resources increase prospects of implementation success (almost no matter what one means by that latter notion); that resources are often not liquid, so that funding sometimes cannot be converted easily into (for instance) skilled staff, or vice versa; that therefore multiple kinds of resources may be critical; and that what matters for implementation is resources for the implementation tasks themselves, not simply size of budget or extent of subsidy to clients.

While not a surprising finding, it means that resources should always be part of any implementation analysis. Returning to Bowen’s earlier point, additional resources can provide the opportunity to make multiple attempts at getting past a given step in the process or to package clearances together.

All of this suggests that the following is a useful approach to analyzing the implementation of a policy. First, consider how the resources allocated to a program compare with the mission assigned to it. Second, pay particular attention to the role of policy legacies, expecting that continuity with them, rather than a sharp break, should lead to a greater likelihood of success. Last, all else equal, a more complex program is

more likely to encounter problems, and one of the places programs can encounter complexity is in the specific context “on the ground.”

## **Zero Hunger**

There are two Brazilian dissertations about Zero Hunger, both written a few years after the end of MESA, by authors with direct involvement with the program. Understanding their backgrounds is vital to understanding their perspectives.

Takagi (2006) worked closely with Special Minister José Graziano at MESA, and he served as the second reader on her dissertation committee. Her dissertation, “The implementation of food security and nutrition policy in Brazil: its limits and challenges,”<sup>15</sup> is a detailed account of Zero Hunger’s early years and she writes with the authority of someone deeply involved with MESA. However, this closeness also eclipses opportunities for constructive criticism.

For Takagi, the proponents of food security policy ultimately “overcame the challenges to its implementation as a permanent policy in the country” (p. v, my translation). This is true, in that Brazil has an official framework for food security policy including participation from civil society through the National Nutrition and Food Security Council (CONSEA) and coordination between ministries through the Interministerial Chamber for Food Security and Nutrition (CAISAN). However, the approach ultimately taken differed greatly from that originally proposed. Her chapter on 2003 does not provide a full explanation for why Lula replaced The Food Card with

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<sup>15</sup> Original Portuguese title: *A Implantação da Política de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional no Brasil: seus limites e desafios*.

*Bolsa Família* and merged MESA into MDS. The conceptual framework from the literature just surveyed may be able to help explain why events played out as they did.

Takagi also contends that it is necessary to take a “multi-sector” approach to food security policy, and one of the problems faced was an excessive division of policy into sectors (*setorialização*) and the use of a vertical structure (*verticalização*). However, as just discussed, one of the potential advantages of multiple independent initiatives aimed at a shared goal is that some can succeed while others fail. This is not to argue that there are not advantages to cooperation among sectors—indeed there may often be no viable alternative, but such coordination likely complicates policy and policymakers must take this into account.

Gomes (2007) also writes as someone directly involved with Zero Hunger in its early stage. Having worked in food policy for decades, he agreed to serve in MESA but quickly left in frustration. He provides a detailed account of decades of food policy, and roots his analysis in a normative literature on basic human needs. His central claim is that the state has a duty to meet people’s basic needs and that these needs are inherently interconnected. In other words, it is impossible to separate them from each other. He criticizes the cash transfer approach for making people consumers, but not citizens.

While I agree that the reality of the human condition means that basic needs are interconnected, I do not think this means that policies cannot target particular needs first. Take food and healthcare. Illness can lead to secondary malnutrition, meaning that even those with access to sufficient food may be malnourished. Similarly, if people only have access to healthcare but not enough food, going hungry will weaken their immune systems and limit the effectiveness of that care. Clearly, it would be absurd for the state

to make a goal of meeting some needs but not others. However, the reality of resource constraints and program implementation may mean that some needs are more easily met than others. So, from an administrative standpoint it may be useful to think of them as separate, even though this is not the actual lived reality.

The most well known account of Zero Hunger in English is likely Hall's (2006) article, "From *Fome Zero* to *Bolsa Familia*: Social Policies and Poverty Alleviation under Lula." He writes, "Fome Zero was in practice an umbrella programme for initiatives already developed under the FHC [Cardoso] administration" (694). While this ignores some of the new, smaller-scale initiatives, such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) which buys food from small producers and distributes it to the poor, the idea of an "umbrella program" is useful for understanding the program's evolution, particularly after the end of MESA, and the term was also used in Brazilian media accounts.

McCann (2008) describes things somewhat differently, writing, "Lula beat a hasty retreat from Fome Zero and invested in social programs similar to Cardoso's, increasing their resources" (40). This agrees with Hall on the substance of ultimately deciding to build upon Cardoso's policies, but is a sharp contrast in labeling.

In his biography of Lula, Goertzel (2011) devotes an entire chapter to Zero Hunger and *Bolsa Familia*. Regarding Zero Hunger in its first year, he writes that "Organizationally, it was a mess" (72) and that "In the case of food security programs, resolving the bureaucratic problems required reorganization to concentrate responsibility in the hands of a skilled administrator" (76), and hence the 2004 merger of MESA into the newly formed MDS. His account details shortcomings in Graziano's leadership,



Graziano's conflict with Frei Betto, the left-wing priest in charge of social mobilization, over what the program should look like, and the challenges of limited funding. I agree that poor leadership and limited funds were major problems with the program. The next chapter looks at this in greater detail, but it also explains why these are insufficient explanations for the program's problems. Part of the reason that Zero Hunger was "a mess" was that it was a new, complicated program.

## **Bolsa Família**

Chapters 4 and 5 look at *Bolsa Família's* impact on poverty and hunger, respectively. What do we already know about how well the program works? First, research finds it to be largely immune to political manipulation. Fenwick (2009) argues that its success was due to the federal government "avoiding governors" and working directly with municipalities, thereby avoiding the corruption associated with the state level. She also tests the claim that Lula channeled funds for *Bolsa Família* to particular regions for political reasons, finding that the allocation of funds almost exactly maps how money theoretically should be divided on the basis of need. In his data analysis Fried (2012) finds no evidence of political targeting. Sugiyama and Hunter (Forthcoming) conducted focus groups in communities with long legacies of clientelism and found that politicians did not use the benefit to buy votes. Second, the program is well targeted. An impact study for 2004 and 2006 found that just under sixty percent of benefits go to the poorest 20 percent of the population, and just over eighty percent went to the poorest 40 percent ([Sergei] Soares 2012: 15). Likewise, Fábio Soares and colleagues (2010) also find the program to be well targeted.

None of this is surprising given the program's design. Municipal social assistance officials interview applicants, but MDS officials in Brasilia process the applications and determine eligibility. MDS sets enrollment targets using an econometric model developed in partnership with the World Bank (Fried 2012). The actual transfer of money is the responsibility of Caixa, a large public bank that long precedes the Lula government (Lindert et al. 2007, Soares 2012).

The program is programmatic and reaching the people it is intended to help. However, existing studies of *Bolsa Família's* impact credit it with a first-order reduction of headcount poverty of under two percentage points, with similar results for extreme poverty. Sergei Soares (2012) writes:

*Bolsa Família* has had a modest impact on poverty and even on extreme poverty, defined as the percentage of people living on less than the program's eligibility levels. This should not be too surprising, since the values transferred are also quite modest. Equally modest are the number of studies addressing this issue, particularly when compared to the studies on inequality.

He then remarks that he only knows of three studies on the question.

Is this really all the program accomplished? Answering that question requires thinking carefully about (1) our concept of poverty and (2) how poverty measurements capture that concept.

## **Poverty Measurement**

By far the most common way to measure poverty is headcount: how many people, or more often households, fall under a given threshold. This is the approach employed in the findings just cited. However, we have known for decades that headcount has some serious shortcomings. Here I discuss those shortcomings and alternative poverty

measures in general terms. Chapter 4 expands on this in greater detail, including the equations for each measure. This overview provides the necessary background to look at how these alternative measures have been applied to *Bolsa Família*.

Sen (1976) points out that with the headcount measure once someone is below the poverty line it does not matter how far below the line she falls. In short, there is no “partial credit.” On the other hand, headcount has the advantage of being easy to understand. In addition, one need not estimate a household’s precise income if it clearly falls well below the poverty line, which is an advantage since it can be difficult to report exact incomes for such households.

Given that headcount fails to take account of a household’s distance to the poverty line, an alternative is to focus on this distance. This is the basis for the income gap measure, which expresses the average distance between poor households and the poverty line. However, this measure is unaffected by the number of households under the poverty line. The intensity measure combines the new measures by multiplying them together and thus responds to both the number of poor people and how poor they are. The problem with all of these measures is that they do not take into account the distribution of income among the poor. Among the various scenarios producing a given a number of poor people and a particular income gap, there are good reasons to prefer greater income equality among the poor (Sen 1983). A measure doing so is called an ordinal measure.<sup>16</sup>

Foster, Greer, and Thorbecke (1984, 2010) provide a way to express three of these measures in one equation. The equation includes a coefficient, alpha. By setting this

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<sup>16</sup> Not to be confused with an ordinal variable.

coefficient at 0, 1 or 2 it expresses the headcount, intensity, and ordinal measures, respectively.

### **Impact on poverty**

Before looking at studies of *Bolsa Familia* specifically, let us look at some of the broader literature on the impact of cash transfers on poverty. Barrientos and DeJong (2006) find that conditional cash transfers are effective at reducing child poverty. A study of Mexico's *Oportunidades* found that, in 2004 "for the 25% poorest in Mexico, cash transfers can represent a significant share of total income" reaching a quarter of household income for the poorest (Zepeda 2006). Using the pre-transfer 25<sup>th</sup> income percentile as their poverty line, Fiszbein, Schady and colleagues (2009) find that cash transfers reduced headcount poverty by about 0.5 percentage point in Brazil, 2 percentage points in Ecuador, 1.1 percentage points in Jamaica, and 1.8 percentage points in Mexico, with stronger impact for income gap in all four countries.<sup>17</sup>

We now turn to impact assessments of *Bolsa Familia*'s role in reducing poverty. Soares and colleagues (2010) focus on headcount poverty. They briefly discuss alternative poverty measures, writing that the headcount measure "is most relevant for moving society toward the eradication of poverty where the other two [income gap and ordinal] merely alleviate poverty, making it less harsh for those who remain poor" (my translation). Their study defines poverty and extreme poverty by *Bolsa Familia*'s original eligibility lines from 2004, 100 and 50 *reais* per month, respectively, adjusted for inflation. A major contribution of their study is that it looks at the change over 1998 to

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<sup>17</sup> Their data for Brazil and Ecuador are from 2006 and their data for Mexico and Jamaica are from 2004.

2010 (this includes the cash transfers that preceded *Bolsa Família*), to demonstrate an increasing impact over time as coverage expands. Still, for 2009 they find a reduction of 1.9 percentage points for poverty and 1.6 percentage points for extreme poverty.

As part of a larger overview of the program, Soares and Sátyro (2009) look at all three Foster-Greer-Thorbecke measures, again using the eligibility requirements as a poverty line. As expected, they find greater impacts for the other measures, with an eighteen percent (not percentage point) reduction in the intensity measure and a twenty-two percent reduction in the ordinal measure.

Rocha (2008) uses twenty-five poverty lines in order to account for regional differences in the cost of living. Her values range from 62.47 *reais* in the rural northeast to 250.79 *reais* in metropolitan São Paulo. She explains that this means it is impossible for *Bolsa Família* to bring an urban household out of poverty. This comes down to simple arithmetic: if a family has an income low enough to qualify for the benefit, there is no scenario where the benefit will be enough to bring the family across this higher urban poverty line. Like the other studies, her simulations of what 2004 would look like without the program find a modest impact on headcount poverty, with no reduction in urban and metropolitan areas and only about a two percentage-point reduction for rural areas. This is probably partly because Brazil was still in the process of expanding coverage of *Bolsa Família*. She also presents Foster-Greer-Thorbecke's intensity and ordinal measures, and these again show a greater impact. Of the three studies, hers is the only one to break down the impact on poverty by region and to compare rural and urban rates.

None of the three studies reports the income gap ratio by itself. As Brady (2003) argues, the use of headcount, income gap ratio, and intensity measures together provides

insights they cannot accomplish alone. None of these studies applies alternative measures to examine the impact of *Bolsa Família* on extreme poverty. Since households in extreme poverty receive more money than those in poverty and the extreme poverty threshold is lower, we should expect a greater impact. Chapter 4 shows this to be the case.

### **The impact of cash transfers on hunger**

What is already known about the impact of conditional cash transfers on hunger? Hoddinott and Bassett (2009:16) conclude that they “can have a positive and sizable effect on preschool nutritional status” but “outcomes are mixed,” finding evidence of success in Mexico’s PROGRESSA and Nicaragua’s *Red de Protección Social* but not Honduras’s *Programa de Asignación Familiar* or Brazil’s Food Allowance (the Ministry of Health transfer dating to Cardoso, not to be confused with Zero Hunger’s *Food Card*). Hoddinott and Skoufias (2004) find that PROGRESSA both increased calories program recipients consumed and the quality of the food they consumed, as compared to similar non-beneficiaries. Behrman and Hoddinott (2001) find that the program improved child nutrition, as measured by height.

Morris and colleagues (2004) find that the Food Allowance—again, not to be confused with MESA’s *Food Card*—was “associated with a small reduction in the rate of weight gain of preschool children in Northeast Brazil.” Their control group was “excluded as a result of quasi-random administrative errors.” In explaining why those receiving Food Allowance would be more likely to have underweight children they write:

...we are inclined to attribute the small negative impact on children’s weight gain to an incentive effect: mothers may have believed that their participation in the program was due to their child being underweight and that the benefits would be suspended should the child start to grow well. This rule was once enforced in a

Brazilian federal program called *Incentivo para o Combate de Carências Nutricionais*, which made milk powder available to mothers of underweight children. Many (probably the majority) of the mothers in our sample had previously been beneficiaries of this program, and there have been anecdotal—and impossible to substantiate—reports of beneficiary mothers deliberately keeping their children malnourished to qualify for the benefits (2340).

Of course the anecdotal reports are equally impossible to refute. Even if, due to legacies from previous nutritional policies, this was what happened in this particular case, the authors point out that:

...our findings only apply to the 4 pilot municipalities studied and may not have been replicated in the expansion phase of the program. In fact, it is very likely that families' concerns about being suspended from the program will have diminished over the course of 2003, because it became obvious that mass suspensions were not occurring (2341).

They also note that their previous research found an increase in food consumption associated with Food Allowance.

Paes-Sousa and Santos (2009) analyze data from participants in four of Brazil's Health and Nutrition Days. In contrast with Morris and colleagues, they find that "children whose family received the PBF [*Programa Bolsa Família*] benefit were 26% more likely to have an appropriate height/age than those from non-beneficiary families, and that the same difference also applied to weight/age." Given Brazil's large size and the great differences between regions, it would be useful to also look at nationally representative data.

Instead of looking at outcomes, like underweight children, another approach is to look at access to food. The term for this is "food security." Segall-Correa and colleagues (2008) analyze the 2004 Brazilian Household Sample Survey (PNAD) and find "...an increased chance of food security of 8% per each R\$ 10.00 contributed by social programs (40)." They use a stepwise regression to analyze cross-sectional data. In the

stepwise approach the statistical software estimates a series of models until it finds the one which best fits the data. Maximizing model fit comes with some tradeoffs, however. Judd, McClelland and Ryan (2009: 125-126) level three criticisms against this approach<sup>18</sup>:

First, an unfocused search through many possible models (sometimes pejoratively referred to as a “fishing expedition”) increases the likelihood of capitalizing on chance (i.e. making Type I errors)...Second, as we learned in this chapter, the interpretation of the coefficients and the meaning of the questions being asked depend on what other variables are included in the model...Third, it is our experience and strong belief that better models and a better understanding of one’s data result from focused data analysis, guided by substantive theory.

The Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE 2008) conducted an in depth study of recipients, and found that the average household receiving *Bolsa Familia* spent R\$ 200 (about \$90) on food per month (p. 45) and that the average family received R\$ 71.60 (about \$32), making the average transfer equivalent to about a third of the average food budget. Over 80% of households used their benefit to buy food, making it the most common category of expenditure in the study.

The balance of these studies suggests that *Bolsa Familia* had an impact on food security. Given the difficulty in measuring hunger and the limited available data, every study will employ tradeoffs of some kind. One of the problems with any cross-sectional approach is that if a transfer is both (1) targeted well at people more likely to be hungry and (2) effective at reducing hunger, it should be positively correlated with hunger in a given moment but negatively correlated with hunger over time. Thus a study employing observations from more than one time point would be useful. Chapter 5 pursues such an approach to analyzing food security data.

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<sup>18</sup> See Stribney (1998) for more discussion.



## **Conclusion**

Taken together, the discussion above points at the following hypotheses. First, a new policy that builds on policy legacies will be more likely to be successful than one that does not. Second, a simpler policy will be more likely to succeed than a complex one. Third, *Bolsa Família* made a more significant reduction in the intensity measure of extreme poverty than headcount. Fourth, this reduction led to a reduction in food insecurity over time. Chapter 3 looks at the first two hypotheses

## CHAPTER 3: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

### Introduction

This chapter takes on the “why these policies?” question. The previous chapter outlined why we should expect a policy to be more successful if it builds upon policy legacies and employs a simple design. This chapter will test those hypotheses through a detailed process tracing of Zero Hunger’s development in 2003.

### Background

Zero Hunger was initially popular, with a March 2003 poll finding that 72% of Brazilians had a positive image of the program.<sup>19</sup> In April 2003, *Folha* reported, “4,500 people visit Zero Hunger’s website daily, 200 of them send emails asking to volunteer. Between March 14 and April 9, the information center received 131,728 calls.”<sup>20</sup> Numerous groups donated, or tried to donate, food to the program, as detailed below.

Celebrities, including soccer players Ronaldo and Kaká, Argentine NBA player Emanuel Ginóbili, and musicians from Gilberto Gil to Pavarotti to The Chemical Brothers worked to raise funds and publicize the program.<sup>21</sup> The music label

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<sup>19</sup> “Mesmo Insatisfeito, Lula Vai Manter Graziano No Governo.” March, 14 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>20</sup> Marta Salomon, and Gabriela Athias. April 13, 2003. “Com Programa Único, Lula Prepara Guinada No Social.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>21</sup> Bergamo, Monica. January, 25 2003. “Lula Chama Ronaldo Para Lançar Fome Zero.”

Universidade released a CD with the official Zero Hunger anthem in May 2004, which included Gil, Jorge Bem Jor, and others.<sup>22</sup> Pope John Paul II urged everyone to support the program and support also came from the business sector, including banks, Nestlé, and Coca-Cola.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Duda Mendonça, one of best campaign managers in Brazil and the architect of Lula's successful 2002 campaign (McCann 2008: 38), did free publicity for the program.<sup>24</sup>

In Lula's inauguration speech he had emphasized land reform as one of the keys to ending hunger in Brazil (da Silva 2003). However, even if successful, the changes necessary to create that kind of structural change would take time, so the emergency measures would have to come first. MESA's major policy initiative was the Food Card, modeled after the U.S. food stamp program. There were three major federal cash transfer programs in Brazil: School Allowance, Food Allowance, and Gas Allowance (Soares 2012). The Food Card would be different because it could only be used to buy food, and

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*Folha de São Paulo*; "Jogador Quer Participar Do Fome Zero." February 4, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*; "Jogador Da NBA Quer Participar Do Fome Zero." March 31, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*; Fernandes, Kamila. March 21, 2003. "'Tele Fome Zero' Vai Arrecadar Fundos Pele TV." *Folha de São Paulo*; "Pavarotti Traz Evento Beneficente a São Paulo." October 12, 2004. *Folha de São Paulo*; "Eletrônica." September 15, 2004. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>22</sup> "Universidade Lança CD Com Hino Do Fome Zero." May 4, 2004. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>23</sup> Terpins, Jack. June 27, 2003. "A Comunidade Judaica e o Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*; Spinelli, Evandro. January 26, 2003. "Doação Ao Fome Zero Serve de Vitrine." *Folha de São Paulo*. "Febraban Oferece Ajuda a Fome Zero." February 7, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*; "Governo Oferece Vitrine Aos Colaboradores Do Fome Zero." October 28, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>24</sup> Cantanhêde, Eliane. March 18, 2003. "Fome Zero 'Toma' Ações Já Realizadas Por Outras Pastas." *Folha de São Paulo*. Dantas, Iuri. March 30, 2003. "Governo Descobre Tentativa de Fraude Do Fome Zero No ED." *Folha de São Paulo*.

because civil society, through municipal level Management Committees (*comites gestores*), would be charged with selecting recipients.

Many things went wrong in the first year. There was confusion, and disagreement within government, regarding many basic details of the program. What would be the relationship between the new special ministry and existing programs? Would people be given food, income to buy food, or both? Would they be required to spend that money on food, or could they use it for other basic needs? What form would participation “from society” take? How would the program decide which states, municipalities, and individuals to help first? Partially due to this confusion, the Food Card expanded slowly. All of this led to relentless criticism in the media, as well as from inside the Workers’ Party (PT) and from members of its coalition.

The announcement of *Bolsa Familia* came in September 2003, followed by MESA’s merger into MDS in January 2004 and the start of the “umbrella” approach to Zero Hunger. How, within a matter of months, did policy move from promising a “new economic model” to an approach that looked fairly similar to that of the previous government? Why did a program with widespread public and international support encounter so many problems?

This chapter focuses on the move from MESA to MDS and from the Food Card to *Bolsa Familia*. It argues that this evolution reveals how a lack of continuity with previous policies and an excess of complexity both contributed to the failure of Zero Hunger under MESA. In contrast to the Food Card, *Bolsa Familia* used a simpler design and built on legacies from the previous government, leading it to become the largest conditional cash transfer in the world.

## **Alternative Explanations**

Two common explanations for the failure of the MESA approach are lack of funding and poor management. While important, they are insufficient.

## **Resource Constraints**

Early media reports presented lack of funding as a major obstacle to the program.<sup>25</sup> Lula's "Letter to the Brazilian People" had committed to maintaining the basic contours of Cardoso's macro-economic policies, including balanced budgets, which limited funds for new social programs (da Silva 2002). Thus it is reasonable to wonder if a limited funds explain the move to a less ambitious approach in combatting hunger.

This is part of the story. All programs cost money and ambitious policies usually cost a lot of money.<sup>26</sup> A government can get all the other pieces right—good policy design, solid leadership, and effective organization—and have it all be for naught without sufficient funding. Simply put, there was no way anything like what was proposed in 2001 and promised in Lula's inauguration speech could have been achieved with the funds allocated in 2003. MESA's budget at the start of the year was 1.8 billion *reais* (Takagi 2011: 56). With a population of nearly 200 million people, this amounts to about

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<sup>25</sup> "Fome Zero Precisa de R\$ 5 Bi, Mas Orçamento Prevê Apenas R\$ 1,8 Bi." January 13, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*; Natali, João Batista. January 20, 2003. "Fome Zero Esbarra Na Falta de Pessoal e No Baixo Orçamento." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>26</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, scholars who study implementation are in agreement about this

US\$ 2.50 per capita *for the year*. The 2001 proposal aimed to help about a quarter of the Brazilian population (Citizenship Institute 2001: 19). At 2003 exchange rates this amounts to roughly ten U.S. dollars for each person in the target population for the entire year.

However, Zero Hunger did not even spend all the money budgeted to it. The Fund to Combat and Eradicate Poverty, which fell under Zero Hunger, had over a billion *reais* unspent at the end of the year.<sup>27</sup> Clóvis Rossi was scathing in an end of the year retrospective:

If someone does not have the money to fulfill a promise, that's understandable. There's a shortage of everything in Brazil (except, of course, for the sacred interest on the debt). But when, having money, the government was unable to spend it all, this is already a scandal, a demonstration of unparalleled incompetence.<sup>28</sup>

Clearly there is more to the story than just the limited budget.

Not even spending the money allocated to it suggests problems with the program's leadership. Special Minister José Graziano's only major experience in government was nine months working for the state of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>29</sup> Of course, lack of experience in government does not mean someone will be ineffective in government, as Lula's example itself illustrates, though Lula's history as a trade unionist and PT candidate doubtless taught him valuable leadership skills. In contrast to Lula's ability to learn on the job, Graziano did not prove himself equal to the task of managing the new

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<sup>27</sup> Salomon, Marta. December 25, 2003. "Doações Para o Fome Zero Ajudam a Pagar Superávit." *Folha de São Paulo*. For MESA's response and Salomon's reply see "Painel de Leitor." December 29, 2009. *Folha de São Paulo*

<sup>28</sup> Rossi, Clóvis. December, 26 2003. "Fome de Competência." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>29</sup> "Curto-circuito Social." March 15, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

government's flagship program. While he made a number of missteps resulting in bad press, here we look at two of the biggest.

In late January 2003, Brazilian model Gisele Bündchen decided to donate part of her earnings from São Paulo Fashion week to Zero Hunger and MESA expressed its thanks.<sup>30</sup> Later, in an interview, Frei Betto was unaware that bank accounts had been opened for donations to the program over a month before at Caixa and Banco do Brasil, something the person coordinating public participation could reasonably be expected to know.<sup>31</sup> In the end, it took about six weeks for MESA to deposit the check into one of its accounts.<sup>32</sup>

Probably the most infamous news story was Graziano's poorly worded comment about people from the northeast.<sup>33</sup> At a speech at the Federation of Industry in São Paulo (FIESP) he said, "We have to create work there [in the Northeast], because, if they keep coming here, we're going to have to drive around in bullet-proof cars."<sup>34</sup> Note the undertones of class and region that can be read into this sentence. Here we have a white university professor from the Brazil's largest city, in the wealthier South, talking about people from the much poorer Northeast as "them" and painting "them" as prone to

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<sup>30</sup> Zorzan, Patricia and Ivan Finotti. January 28, 2003. "Gisele Doa Parte de Seu Cache Ao Projeto Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>31</sup> "Frei Betto Não Sabia Sobre Contas Para Doação." March 13, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>32</sup> "Governo Recebe Doação de Gisele." March 20, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>33</sup> "Graziano Pede Desculpas Aos Nordestinos." March 27, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>34</sup> "Temos de criar emprego lá... porque, se eles continuarem vindo pra cá, vamos ter de continuar andando de carro blindado."

violence. This is almost certainly not what he meant by the comment, but opponents took the opportunity to interpret it this way. The comment led to protests and an apology.<sup>35</sup>

## Leadership

It is tempting to lay responsibility for all of Zero Hunger's problems at Graziano's feet. After all, it was his job to make sure Zero Hunger used resources budgeted to it, to run an effective operation, and to avoid saying or doing things that would earn negative media coverage. Two months into the government Eliane Cantanhêde remarked, "The program, which everyone imagined was ready, detailed, and with a defined team, was none of this."<sup>36</sup> The program was largely his idea, and these failings fall in great part to him.

Graziano was close friends with President Lula, as had been his father. In interviews this was a recurring explanation for his appointment.<sup>37</sup> By early March there were already conversations about replacing Graziano, with some advocating Abílio Diniz, head of the grocery chain Pão de Açúcar.<sup>38</sup> Lula's response was unambiguous: "Graziano works with me for 22 years, never took salary, and lost four elections at my

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<sup>35</sup> "Ministro É Chamado de 'Marginal'." April 16, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*; "Graziano Pede Desculpas Aos Nordestinos." March 27, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>36</sup> Cantanhêde, Eliane. March 9, 2003. "Zero a Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with: Newton Naciso Gomes Junior. Former MESA employee. Professor of social work at the University of Brasília. February 24, 2011; Ana Fonseca. Former head of *Bola Família*. April 15, 2011. Brasília; Cristovam Buaruque. Federal Senator for the Federal District. June 29, 2011. Brasília.

<sup>38</sup> Cantanhêde, Eliane. March 13, 2003. "Fome e Vontade de Comer." *Folha de São Paulo*.



side. You're asking me to replace him after two months?"<sup>39</sup> Though he was unhappy with the progress made, Lula felt obligated by loyalty to keep Graziano in the position.

Sometimes people hire their under-qualified friends and sometimes those friends perform poorly. We already know this, and the performance of U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration head Michael Brown during Hurricane Katrina easily illustrates that this problem is not isolated to Brazil. So one general takeaway point is: if you have just come to power in a historic election promising major change, it would be good to think twice before placing an inexperienced friend in charge of your major new initiative.

Be that as it may, the personal relationship between Lula and Graziano is not very helpful for understanding the politics of anti-hunger policy. Graziano's friendship with Lula explains why he got to try out his ideas, not why many of those ideas were unsuccessful. The latter potentially provides knowledge about social policy applicable beyond this one place and time.

## **The Argument**

A key reason Zero Hunger went so poorly in its first year is that it insisted on building new policies in areas where policies already existed and made anti-hunger policy much more complicated than it needed to be. As a programmatic leftist party, it is not surprising that the PT wanted to combat hunger and extreme poverty. However, in hindsight, some of the specific decisions made during the first year of Zero Hunger are

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<sup>39</sup> "Mesmo Insatisfeito, Lula Vai Manter Graziano No Governo." March 14, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

surprising. This is in part because the Zero Hunger strategy represents a particular left-wing ideology. Frei Betto claimed in January 2003, “In Zero Hunger we don’t have dogmas. We’re learning with those who already worked in food security.”<sup>40</sup> However, for all their talk of learning-as-you-go, again and again those in charge Zero Hunger acted as though they already knew the correct answer to a policy question.

Just as important as what they proposed doing is *how* they proposed to do it. Even if one agrees that the problem of hunger should be prioritized and that many of the policies proposed in 2001 and attempted in 2003 are appropriate to address the problem, that still leaves plenty of room to disagree about the specifics of carrying them out. Clearly, what MESA tried to do—give money to the poorest people so they could buy food—was neither novel nor radical, but the approach it took to doing this sought to be both these things. This commitment led to the failure of the Food Card.

One key part of the ideology governing Zero Hunger in 2003 is that combatting hunger requires a sharp break with the status quo instead of a gradual shifting of priorities, a “new economic development model” (Citizenship Institute 2001: 17). In his preface to the 2001 proposal Lula even went so far as to say that ending hunger required a “true revolution” (da Silva 2001: 13). The authors of the proposal claimed “Brazil lacks a National Food Security Policy today...” because President Cardoso’s policies were “...of a merely localized nature and usually intended to supplement the income of poor families at levels that are not sufficient to eliminate hunger” (Citizenship Institute 2001:

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<sup>40</sup> Gerchmann, Léo. January 28, 2003. “Fome Zero Testará a Distribuição de Cupons e de Dinheiro No Piauí.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

18). Given this, it comes as no surprise that MESA's focus was on making new policies instead of building on those already in place.

A second key belief is that complex inter-connected problems require complex inter-connected solutions. After outlining the kinds of policies necessary, the authors remark, "none of them can, isolatedly [sic], tackle the hunger issue, much less ensure food security to the population" (Citizenship Institute 2001: 21). Given that the proposal defines food security in terms of both quantity and quality of food (18), it is certainly true that no single policy can achieve this goal. However, this does not mean that those policies must be implemented in an inter-connected fashion. In the language of restaurants, the decision to serve up a set of policies does not mean that they must be offered as a combo meal. There are reasons to consider an *a la carte* approach that leaves their implementation largely independent of each other, but allows their benefits to compliment each other.

## **Research Design**

Both in theory and in practice Zero Hunger went beyond cash transfers, and the overall conversation about anti-hunger policy in Brazil must look at agrarian development policies, too. However, the Food Card received two thirds of MESA's budget, 1.2 billion *reais* (Takagi 2011: 56). Given that structural policies take longer to implement, it is natural that the emergency policies came first and also received the most public attention. Ansell (2007) remarks that people spoke of Zero Hunger arriving to a municipality when the Food Card arrived there, even if the complementary development initiatives had not.

The Food Card and *Bolsa Família* provide an opportunity to compare two policies with the same immediate objective of increasing income through cash transfers so that the poor can buy food. They are both policies of the Lula Government and both carried out around the same time. The Food Card only reached 1.9 million households by the end of 2003 (Takagi 2011: 68), where *Bolsa Família* hit 6.5 million households in 2004 and nearly 11 million households by the end of Lula's term in 2006 (IPEA 2013). In my experience even many Brazilians and scholars of Brazil do not recall the Food Card, where *Bolsa Família* is known worldwide.

This chapter looks at a series of key decisions during the first year of the Lula government regarding emergency programs designed to combat hunger. The evidence, taken from media reports, government documents, secondary scholarly literature, and interviews, largely supports my claim that lack of continuity with existing policies and excess complexity in program design were major contributors to the Food Card and MESA, giving way to *Bolsa Família* and MDS. In the next sections I look at some of those key decisions.

## **MESA**

For Zero Hunger the first key decision was to create a special ministry in charge of food security as recommended in the 2001 proposal (Citizenship Institute 2001: 36-37). Lula's transition team had recommended that Lula break with the "fragmented structure" of social policy right away, but instead Lula sided with Graziano in creating MESA.<sup>41</sup> This established the framework under which Zero Hunger operated in its first

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<sup>41</sup> Salomon, Marta. April 9, 2003. "Fome Zero Engasga e Área Social, Desordenada,

year. The decision to structure policy this way is a prime example of both the desire to make new, fresh policy and of taking a complicated approach to doing so.

Shortly after MESA's formation, Bishop Maruo Morelli, a longtime anti-hunger advocate and member of the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), argued that MESA should be "an organ for planning, not a center of autonomous projects,"<sup>42</sup> but the approach it took was precisely the latter. Indeed, Maya Tagaki, who worked in MESA and later served as the Secretary for Food Security in the Ministry of Social Development in the Dilma Rousseff government, held this up as one of its principal successes.<sup>43</sup> In early 2004 Morelli reflected back on the previous year, saying, "To create a ministry for hunger is to embark, at a minimum, on a disastrous error."<sup>44</sup> The events of 2003 suggest it was not an effective organizational structure, consistent with this dissertation's expectations.

In March 2003, Senator Pedro Simon (Rio Grande do Sul) made the following criticism:

Lula's government created so many organs—29—that, in some form, making them function is not easy. In other words: the problem of hunger is Graziano's, social problems are Minister [of Social Assistance] Bendida da Silva's. But hunger is a social problem. The problems of cities are minister Olívio Dutra's. But there's hunger

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Patina." *Folha de São Paulo*. Interview with Ana Fonseca April 15, 2011 Brasília.

<sup>42</sup> Tortato, Mari. February 8, 2003. "D. Mauro Volta a Criticar Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Maya Takagi. Former MESA official, Secretary for Food Security in MDS. March 25, 2011. Brasília.

<sup>44</sup> Guibu, Fábio. March 20, 2004. "D. Mauro Ataca o Fome Zero e a Política Econômica." *Folha de São Paulo*.

in the city. So, it creates a tangled mess where no one knows where one ends and the other begins. It's really difficult.<sup>45</sup>

Simon was from The Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), part of Lula's coalition. There were similar criticisms within Lula's own party. At a meeting of PT federal deputies both Tarcísio Zimmermann (Rio Grande do Sul) and Terezinha Fernandes (Maranhão) made the same point, with Fernandes stating, "With our government policy became even more fragmented. We have social policy in Health, Education, and now in Food Security."<sup>46</sup> This recalls Weyland's (1996) argument about fragmentation undermining reform.

MESA's primary initiatives duplicated policies already underway in other parts of the federal government. One of the three federal cash transfer programs, The Ministry of Health's Food Allowance, was aimed specifically at fighting hunger. The Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) was responsible for supporting family farmers, with The National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) responsible for land reform.<sup>47</sup> It is easy to see why economist Marcelo Néri concluded "now we're reinventing the wheel."<sup>48</sup>

With multiple ministries responsible for the same areas, the turf battles that followed ought to come as no surprise. Indeed, the rivalry between Minister of Health

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<sup>45</sup> Cantanhêde, Eliane. March 18, 2003. "Fome Zero 'Toma' Ações Já Realizadas Por Outras Pastas." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>46</sup> Athias, Gabriela. April 24, 2003. "Em Ato Fechado, Petistas Atacam Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>47</sup> Cardoso placed INCRA under the control of MDA. See Ondetti (2007).

<sup>48</sup> "Economista Vê Pouca Estrutura." February 22, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

José Serra and Minister of Education Paulo Renato Souza, both presidential hopefuls, had kept the cash transfer programs from being unified under President Cardoso.<sup>49</sup> On January 20, 2003 *Folha* reported that Minister of Social Assistance Benedita da Silva called for centralizing all social programs, including Zero Hunger, under her ministry.<sup>50</sup> The same day it also reported that Graziano's team wanted School Allowance and Food Allowance to fall under their jurisdiction.<sup>51</sup> The concerns about fragmentation were well founded.

Fragmentation of authority, and the ensuing complexity, extended to Zero Hunger's internal politics as well, with Graziano and Betto often appearing to be reading from different scripts. Early reports had Graziano announcing that Zero Hunger had forty-one separate actions<sup>52</sup> while Frei Betto put the number at twenty-five.<sup>53</sup> Stating that he felt ignored and could be more effective outside of government, Grajew, who had been responsible for coordinating with businesses, left MESA in November 2003.<sup>54</sup> Betto

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<sup>49</sup> "Governo Quer Trocar Cartões Magnéticos." March 5, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>50</sup> Constantino Luciana. January 20, 2003. "Benedita Planeja Centralizar Ações Sociais." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>51</sup> Batista Natali, João. January 20, 2003. "Fome Zero Esbarra Na Falta de Pessoal e No Baixo Orçamento." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>52</sup> "41 Ações Do Fome Zero Saem Dia 30." January 17, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>53</sup> "Frei Betto Pede Que ONGs Evitem Assistencialismo." January 27, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*; Gerchmann, Léo. January 28, 2003. "Fome Zero Testará a Distribuição de Cupons e de Dinheiro No Piauí." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>54</sup> Athias, Gabriela and Patrícia Costa. November 11, 2003. "Sem Espaço, Grajew Deixa Assessoria de Lula." *Folha de São Paulo*.

(2010) complained of an excess of time, effort, and money spent on publicity instead of programing.<sup>55</sup>

By mid-March the PT's National Directorate was calling for Zero Hunger to move faster, stating in a resolution "...the program needs to better define its focus, its instruments of implementation, and the criteria for evaluation of results."<sup>56</sup> Around the same time there were discussions of making Zero Hunger an "umbrella" program.<sup>57</sup> It took until the end of the year to move to this approach.

Did the end of MESA mean that Zero Hunger had failed? Senator José Agripino of Rio Grande do Norte, from the opposition Liberal Front Party (PFL) thought that it did, stating, "If a team is working, you don't change anything. If the President changed something, it's because the program wasn't going well."<sup>58</sup>

MDS is a simpler structure than a ministry in charge of social assistance, a special ministry in charge of food security, and a secretariat in charge of cash transfers. The approach also marks a shift back towards the division of responsibility under Cardoso, instead of having a new ministry implementing new policies in these same areas.

With this understanding of how the decisions regarding institutional structure fit my argument, we now look at the decisions MESA made regarding emergency anti-hunger programs.

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<sup>55</sup> For more on the conflict between Graziano and Betto see Goertzel (2011).

<sup>56</sup> Valente, Rubens and Rafael Cariello. March 17, 2003. "PT Critica Fome Zero e Pedu Governo 'Eficaz'." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>57</sup> Salomon, Marta and Luciana Constantino. March 23, 2003. "Lula Estuda Submeter Toda Políticas Social Ao Modelo Do Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>58</sup> "Falta Organização, Afirma Zilda Arns." February 4, 2004. *Folha de São Paulo*.



## **Food vs. Income**

The argument framing the 2001 proposal was that Brazil needed the short-term emergency programs to help people in dire need while the structural programs got underway. In the language of an expression popular in both Brazil and the U.S., you need to give a man a fish to keep him from starving until you have taught him to catch his own fish.

The two main approaches to emergency anti-hunger efforts are giving people food and increasing people's incomes so they can buy more food. MESA tried to do both simultaneously. Cardoso had abolished distribution of baskets in 2000,<sup>59</sup> replacing them with cash transfers (Graziano da Silva, Belik and Takagi 2011: 45). The decision to make direct food benefits part of Zero Hunger was a break with this. Efforts to collect donations replicated and competed with existing efforts by civil society. All of this made for a much more complicated program and contributed to confusion about Zero Hunger's goals and the means by which it hoped to achieve them.

## **Baskets**

The 2001 proposal for Zero Hunger generally opposed the use of baskets, arguing that baskets of food should be used only in situations where no other alternative exists, such as emergencies and people newly settled by land reform (Citizenship Institute 2001:

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<sup>59</sup> Salomon, Marta and Luciana Constantino. March 23, 2003. "Lula Estuda Submeter Toda Políticas Social Ao Modelo Do Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

28). Yet, about halfway through 2003 *Folha* reported that the government had spent more on baskets than the food card.<sup>60</sup>

Even though Graziano had explicitly prohibited them from doing so, Zero Hunger in Piauí still gave out baskets.<sup>61</sup> While the program touted the merits of a partnership between federal, state, and municipal governments, this is a prime example of the kind of problems such an approach can have and the complexity of coordinating these different levels of government.

MESA announced that at the end of April it would start distributing baskets to 63,000 people in isolated communities.<sup>62</sup> In one sense this is not a reversal, as the position had always been that baskets can be necessary for particular communities. However, this broke with the previous government and required them to re-create what former “Secretary of Drought” Orlando Muniz called a “very complex” program.<sup>63</sup> It was also a very difficult program to carry out. Athias writes:

“An ex-director of CONAB [Brazilian National Food Supply Company], who asked not to be identified, told *Folha* that distributing baskets in the most remote regions of the country was a ‘war operation.’ The baskets ‘travel’ [viajam] up to 40 days to reach their final destination, and many times arrive late.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Costa, Raymundo and Marta Salomon. June 9, 2003. “Cesta Básica Tem Mais Verba Do Que Cartão-alimentação.” *Folha de São Paulo*. For the official response see “Painel Do Leitor.” June 11, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>61</sup> Cariello, Rafael. March 13, 2003. “Contra Diretriz de Graziano, PI Distribui Cestas.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>62</sup> “Graziano Rebate Crítica Do Bird Ao Fome Zero.” April 3, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>63</sup> Athias, Gabriela. March 2, 2003. “Fome Zero Não Tem Onde Armazenar Doações.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>64</sup> Athias, Gabriela. March 2, 2003. “Fome Zero Não Tem Onde Armazenar Doações.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

In sum, baskets were complicated, difficult, and a sharp break with the previous government's policy.

## **Donations**

In addition to the baskets there were campaigns for public food donations. The 2001 proposal for Zero Hunger called for participation of all parts of society and in early 2003 many Brazilians responded to the call, with food donations being a major form of support. Unfortunately, the program was ill-prepared to receive and organize this support.

For example, in January 2003 Zero Hunger received 2.5 (metric) tons from a group of 60 van drivers in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>65</sup> Many such groups participated, and by mid-March this added up to 40 tons from business groups and trade unions.<sup>66</sup> The immediate problem was getting the donations to the people who needed them.

MESA announced in late January that municipal governments and civil society would be in charge of distributing the donations.<sup>67</sup> However, the confusion continued. In early March Gabriela Athias reported "The federal government is asking for food donations for Zero Hunger, but it still doesn't have a structure to receive and store large shipments."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Dupla, Mão. January 21, 2003. "Perueiros Dão Comida Ao Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>66</sup> "Até Maio Projeto Vai Ser Ampliado, Anuncia Ministro." March 18, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>67</sup> "Fome Zero Será Descentralizado." January 22, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>68</sup> Athias, Gabriela. March 2, 2003. "Fome Zero Não Tem Onde Armazenar Doações." *Folha de São Paulo*.

July 2003 marked the launch of the NGO called Support Zero Hunger (*Apoio Fome Zero*) headed by Brazil's first lady, Marisa Leticia Lula da Silva.<sup>69</sup> Its role was to coordinate businesses and civil society support for the government's efforts. This again represents Zero Hunger starting from scratch instead of building on existing legacies, as Brazil already had a major NGO dedicated to fighting hunger. In 1993 sociologist Herbert de Souza had created Brazil's primary anti-hunger group, Citizenship Action Against Hunger and Misery, and for Life, responsible for Brazil's annual Christmas Without Hunger donation campaign<sup>70</sup>

On the one hand, Zero Hunger contrasted its approach to such charity campaigns. Walter Belik, an economist and co-author of the 2001 proposal, said that Zero Hunger "is not a donation campaign, it is not a 'Christmas without hunger' for four years."<sup>71</sup> It may not have intended to be Christmas Without Hunger, but it ended up competing with that program, with Citizen Action reporting a 31% decrease in food donations.<sup>72</sup> The donation campaigns clearly duplicated existing efforts in civil society.

Being involved in donations carries a clear opportunity cost. Commentator Carlos Cony complained about "the loss of energy and time from a government that ought to combat hunger and misery with reforms that only the state can do, leaving charity for the

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<sup>69</sup> "Em Lançamento de ONG, Marisa Fará 1o Discurso." July 8, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>70</sup> da Escóssia, Fernanda. October 14, 2003. "Ação Da Cidadania Cobra Lula e Critica Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>71</sup> "Governo Estuda Fazer Leilão Dos Alimentos Doados Ao Fome Zero." February 19, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>72</sup> Fraga, Érica. December 25, 2003. "Com Fome Zero, ONGs Perdem Doações." *Folha de São Paulo*.

charitable.”<sup>73</sup> The coordinator for Christmas Without Hunger, Maurício Andrade agreed, saying that his NGO’s charitable donations were incapable of ending hunger and that the state needed to focus on making public policy.<sup>74</sup>

The early distribution of food was key for defining Zero Hunger in the public eye. It makes sense that, when asked to participate in a campaign against hunger, many Brazilians would think of collecting food as the way they could participate. There was a long history of giving food directly to the poor, and the new ministry dedicated to leading the campaign against hunger seemed a natural focus point to organize these efforts.

In calling for the public to take action but not clearly outlining suggested actions that would not outstrip their small new ministry’s capacity, MESA created a lose-lose situation for itself: not accepting and effectively using the food donations—or even discussing auctioning them<sup>75</sup>—looks bad, but incorporating them into the program diverts resources from the approach it was trying to take. The food donations approach also reinforces the understanding of hunger Zero Hunger sought to correct: that hunger was about there not being enough food available or needing to move food to a different part of Brazil.

Given these limitations, an obvious choice was a simple message from the start that MESA and the federal government were not interested in receiving food donations. Local governments and civil society would of course be welcome to collect and distribute

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<sup>73</sup> Cony, Carlos Heitor. April 3, 2003. “O Zero e a Fome.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>74</sup> da Escóssia, Fernanda. October 15, 2003. “Ação Da Cidadania Cobra Lula e Critica Fome Zero.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>75</sup> “Governo Estuda Fazer Leilão Dos Alimentos Doados Ao Fome Zero.” February 19, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

donations as part of the nation-wide effort, without involving MESA. Ultimately this was the approach taken, but this coming as a change in policy makes it look like failure, where if MESA had done this from beginning it might have avoided the entire problem.

### **Stamps vs. Cash**

The existing approach to income support was cash transfers, such as the Ministry of Health's Food Allowance and the Ministry of Education's School Allowance. The 2001 plan proposed a new food stamp program as Zero Hunger's primary emergency program, arguing that a coupon program could be "massive" without causing inflation because it could stimulate local production (Citizenship Institute 2001: 26). Stamps were to only be used to buy unprepared food, and not alcohol, fast food, or sweets. The supermarket, store, or farmers' market would need to be registered in order to participate, with the use of an electronic card or paper coupons depending on the location. The coupons were to be independent of cash transfers and pensions, to require participation in self-improvement programs such as literacy and job training, and to be subject to renewal every 6-12 months (Citizenship Institute 2001: 26). The plan called for gradual implementation, starting with pilot programs in areas of the Northeast hit by drought (27). A key reason for the preference for a food stamp was to connect the emergency measure to the larger project stimulating economic growth. The idea was that forcing recipients to purchase food would channel funds towards local producers, who would receive support from the structural parts of the program. Producers would, in turn, spend their new income, and so forth.

As Special Minister for Food Security, Graziano remained doggedly committed to the food stamp idea. Walter Belik, one of the authors of the 2001 proposal, argued that the government had no desire to weaken or end existing social programs.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, the original proposal called for expanding cash transfers in addition to creating the Food Card (Citizenship Institute 2001: 25). Nevertheless, the Food Card represented a choice to put money energy into a new program instead of expanding into the existing ones. This allowed them attempt to contrast the new program with the old, but came at the cost of being much harder to implement.

Key figures in the PT advocated expanding cash transfers instead of creating a food stamp. Cristovam Buarque, who started the School Allowance program in the Federal District when he was governor, was at this point serving as Minister of Education. He argued that it would be better to simply increase the size of the federal School Allowance payments, since the program already reached 5.5 million families.<sup>77</sup> When I interviewed him in 2011 (at which point he was a Federal Senator and had left the PT for the Brazilian Labor Party [PDT]), he remarked that Food Allowance was basically a food stamp, but it was better because recipients could use it to meet other basic needs.<sup>78</sup> São Paulo Senator Eduardo Suplicy, a longtime advocate of a guaranteed minimum income for all Brazilians, had disagreed with the food stamp idea ever since it

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<sup>76</sup> “Co-autor Nega Que Projeto Seja Marketing.” February 22, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>77</sup> “Ministro Sugere Alternativa Ao Fome Zero.” March 15, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*; Salomon, Marta. April 9, 2003. “Fome Zero Engasga e Área Social, Desordenada, Patina.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Cristovam Buarque. Federal Senator for the Federal District. June 29, 2011. Brasília.

was proposed, also arguing that the poor have needs that go beyond food (Suplicy 2004: 151-152). At the first meeting of the PT Executive in 2003, he proposed an experiment pairing two poor cities, with one requiring program recipients to spend the money on food and the other not, with a comparison of results after five months.<sup>79</sup>

Though, overall, the Food Card was a complicated program, there is one way in which it was extremely simple. Families received a flat amount (50 *reais* monthly); the benefit did not depend on household size nor did it vary with household income. Suplicy (2004: 153) contrasts this with the U.S. food stamp program, which essentially works as a negative income tax (for specifics see Klerman and Danielson 2009).

Whatever one thinks about requiring recipients to buy food in principle, in practice it met multiple obstacles. In the U.S., automated cash registers and bar codes make it much easier to only allow recipients to only use their electronic cards to buy approved, unprepared food items with their benefits. If a state decided to prohibit the purchase of soft drinks (as some have advocated), implementing this would be relatively straightforward.

On January 8 2003 *Folha de São Paulo* reported that food card recipients in Guaribas would be required to provide receipts to prove they spent the money on food<sup>80</sup> and Graziano reiterated this requirement.<sup>81</sup> As the program approached its official launch, this remained a point of confusion and controversy. Management Committees, made up

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<sup>79</sup> Fábio Zanini, and Lilian Christofolletti. January 21, 2003. “PT Critica Condução Do Fome Zero e Das Reformas de Lula.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>80</sup> Michael, Andréa. January 8, 2003. “Fome Zero Exigirá Nota Fiscal Em Guaribas.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>81</sup> “Fome Zero Será Descentralizado.” January 22, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.



of local members of civil society, were responsible for selecting beneficiaries and monitoring the program. Representatives of the committees in Acuã and Guaribas stated that only foods that are part of the basic basket could be purchased. State coordinator Rosângela Maria de Souza stated that she never gave this instruction during trainings, but a member of the committee for Guaribas stated “Those who receive the money and violate the rule a second time will have the benefit canceled.”<sup>82</sup> The Secretary of Health for Acauã reported that yogurt would be among the prohibited foods.<sup>83</sup> A coordinator for the program in Piauí said that the only prohibited purchases would be soft drinks, cigarettes, and alcohol.<sup>84</sup> A member of the Management Committee in Guaribas complained that he received contradictory instructions from the state and national level of the program.<sup>85</sup>

Studies of existing cash transfers found that the money was largely being spent on food already. The mayor’s office for São Paulo reported that 70% of the money from its cash transfers went to food purchases.<sup>86</sup> The Ministry of Education figures put the portion of School Allowance spent on food at 87%<sup>87</sup> and a Unicamp study by Mariana Bittar

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<sup>82</sup> Athias, Gabriela. January 28, 2003. “Executores Ainda Divergem Sobre Fome Zero.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>83</sup> Athias, Gabriela. January 28, 2003. “Executores Ainda Divergem Sobre Fome Zero.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>84</sup> “Ínex Alimentar.” January 29, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>85</sup> Athias, Gabriela and Luciana Constantino. January 30, 2003. “Indefinido, Fome Zero Sai Hoje Do Papel.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>86</sup> “Ínex Alimentar.” January 29, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>87</sup> “Ministro Sugere Alternativa Ao Fome Zero.” March 15, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

found that recipients of the transfer Minimum Income Campinas (*Renda Mínima de Campinas*) spent 43% of their income from the transfer on food and only 2% on beverages and cigarettes.<sup>88</sup>

Getting receipts was a major challenge in some parts of Brazil. For example, only two merchants in Guaribas offered them.<sup>89</sup> This directly undermined the goal of having recipients buy from small producers, since the primary place to buy local grown products was open-air farmers' markets where buyers and sellers prefer to be without the paperwork of receipts.<sup>90</sup> Members of the Food Security Committee in Guaribas reported that it was easy to circumvent the requirement to spend money on food.<sup>91</sup>

Early on Graziano said that it was up to the Management Committees to decide how to enforce the requirement.<sup>92</sup> From the beginning some responded to the reports about requiring receipts by saying a spoken pledge to only spend the money on food would be sufficient.<sup>93</sup> The ultimate effect of was confusion about the program, appearing unprepared to manage a program, poor communication. It also meant a lot of time and energy that could have been spent elsewhere.

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<sup>88</sup> Nassif, Luís. January 31, 2003. "A Tutela Do Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>89</sup> Gabriela Athias. January 28, 2003. "Executores Ainda Divergem Sobre Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with members of local Rural Workers' Union. June 15, 2011. Acauã.

<sup>91</sup> Fernandes, Kamila. February 2, 2003. "Fome Zero é 'Fácil de Burlar', Dizem Membros de Programa." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>92</sup> "Fome Zero Será Descentralizado." January 22, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>93</sup> Luís Nassif. January 31, 2003. "A Tutela Do Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

One great irony about Graziano's resistance to building upon cash transfer programs inherited from Cardoso is that these programs were in large part the fruit of the PT's efforts (Coelho 2012). The two principal figures advocating versions of the cash transfer, Suplicy and Buarque, were from his own party (Buarque left the PT in 2005). The driving force behind many of the antecedent programs had been the PT and parties trying to compete with it in this policy area. Treating these policies as belonging to solely to Cardoso was conceding something that was actually the result of a back-and-forth process of political competition. Far from borrowing an idea from Cardoso, it would be borrowing the idea back after Cardoso had put a new coat of paint on it.

### **Choosing Municipalities**

Having decided how to start, the next decision was where to start. Budget and capacity made it impossible to roll out the Food Card everywhere at once. MESA had to decide which states and municipalities with which to start.

It was decided that two pilot municipalities in the northeastern state of Piauí would serve to develop policies for use throughout Brazil. While Piauí is certainly one of the poorest states in Brazil by any measure, PT candidate Wellington Dias's election in 2002 to be governor of Piauí also made this an appealing state, since an allied governor would be likely to support the program.<sup>94</sup> The selection of the two pilot municipalities was met with arguments that other municipalities were worse off than those selected. Athias drew attention the municipality Nossa Senhora dos Remédios, also in Paiuí, where

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with activists from Piauí Workers' Party. June 12, 2011. Teresina.

nearly 30% of children under six were malnourished according to Ministry of Health data from 2000, pointing out the municipality's absence from the pilot program.<sup>95</sup>

In addition to the pilots, Zero Hunger selected an initial list of 957 municipalities to work in (out of about 5500 in the entire country). Though starting in Piauí may have appeared politically motivated, the selection of municipalities lacked any clear partisan bias. *Folha* reported, “Of the 179 cities attended as of the start of May, 25% have PFL mayors and 24% PMDB mayors. None has mayor from the PT.”<sup>96</sup> However, the list included 195 municipalities in Piauí, but none in neighboring Maranhão, which actually had more municipalities in need according to the 2000 Municipal Human Development index compiled by IBGE (The Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics) and IPEA (The Institute for Applied Economic Research). Of the bottom twenty municipalities on an Index of Social Exclusion developed at Unicamp, only nine had been selected to be part of Zero Hunger.<sup>97</sup> The reason given for Maranhão not being on the initial list was because it did not have municipalities in a federal state of emergency due to drought.<sup>98</sup> There were similar complaints about the municipalities selected when the program expanded to Rio Grande do Norte, with the mayor of Venha-Ver arguing that his municipality, with a poor Human Development Index, had been excluded because it

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<sup>95</sup> Athias, Gabriela. February, 3 2003. “Fome Zero Ignora Campeã Da Desnutrição.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>96</sup> Duailibi, Julia. April 11, 2003. “PT Critica, Mas Não Participa Do Fome Zero, Diz Graziano.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>97</sup> Natali, João Batista. January 29, 2003. “Piauí Terá a Maior Lista de Municípios No Fome Zero.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>98</sup> Athias, Gabriela and Luciana Constantino. January 30, 2003. “Indefinido, Fome Zero Sai Hoje Do Papel.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

strongly supported Lula's opponent in the 2002 election, Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) candidate José Serra.<sup>99</sup>

Once it had decided to start with a small number of municipalities MESA was bound to receive this kind of criticism. Whatever criteria it employed to select the municipalities in the worst shape, different criteria would suggest a different set of "correct" ones. This foreshadows a central theme of the next two chapters: how we measure hunger and poverty has important implications for the conclusions we draw about policies to combat them.

The decision to start by only bringing the Food Card to some municipalities in some states added a great deal of complexity. MESA had to create a process to decide who was in and who was out, among a great number of needy municipalities. When MESA announced in April 2003 that it would expand to municipalities in the northeastern states Paraíba and Pernambuco, the scale was again modest, with fifteen municipalities in Paraíba, where they would again select 500 families in each municipality.<sup>100</sup>

Municipalities not in the targeted regions could become part of Zero Hunger, provided they formed a Management Committee first.<sup>101</sup> At a national meeting of PT city council members and state deputies Graziano told them, "If the program hasn't arrived there [the cities] yet, it's their fault, because they haven't formed a Management

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<sup>99</sup> de Oliveira, Eduardo. April 29, 2003. "Excluídos Do RN Criticam Escolha Do Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>100</sup> de Oliveira, Eduardo. April 3, 2003. "Paraíba e Pernambuco Serão Os Próximos a Receber o Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>101</sup> Betto, Frei. March 27, 2003. "Fome Zero Nos Municípios." *Folha de São Paulo*.

Committee. We want this to be a bottom-up program. Don't just wait for the Food Card to arrive.”<sup>102</sup> This issue of forming Management Committees and the emphasis on a bottom-up, participatory approach leads us to our next topic: how to go about selecting 500 households in each municipality, given the widespread poverty in most of them.

### **Choosing Individuals**

The next key decision was which households would get the Food Card. Lula inherited a list of the poor throughout Brazil called the Universal Registry (*cadastro unico*). This was a work in progress, with plenty of errors and omissions. A recent report by the Supreme Court of Audit (TCU) had found irregularities in the unified registry, with recipients with income too high to qualify receiving benefits.<sup>103</sup> Graziano did not hold back in criticizing the registry, and blaming it for MESA's slow progress: “We inherited this registry from the previous government. Half the families were included because of personal favoritism. The registry is shameful [vergonhoso]. Because of this, we have to do it again.”<sup>104</sup> Graziano contended these errors included electoral targeting<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> “Graziano Culpa Desinteresse de Petistas Por Lentidão de Programa.” June 29, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>103</sup> “Desperdício Anunciado.” March 10, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>104</sup> “Graziano Culpa Desinteresse de Petistas Por Lentidão de Programa.” June 29, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>105</sup> Athias, Gabriela. March 27, 2003. “Oposição Ataca o Fome Zero - Graziano Admite Dificuldades.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

and explained that his intent was to fix the registry they inherited, not to begin a new one.<sup>106</sup>

In focusing on the northeast, the government was enacting policy in a region where the PT was historically weak and with a long history of personalistic, clientelistic politics. The registry clearly needed to be fixed but how to do it, especially given the likely challenges posed by local politicians in these municipalities? MESA decided to delegate the work of updating the registry to the Management Committees, made up largely of members of civil society. Participatory government had long been part of “the PT way of governing” (Wampler 2007: 37), with the most famous example being participatory budgeting at the municipal level. The 2001 plan’s emphasis on participation from civil society was in this same tradition.

The decision to attempt participatory government in the face of local politics hostile to their agenda suggests those in charge did not understand the successes of participatory budgeting very well. This was not the result of a bottom-up process, but a top-down one. Wampler explains, “Ironically, mayors must first centralize authority in their own hands before they can hand that authority back to citizens through PB [participatory budgeting]” (2007: 36). In other words, the PT had not established the authority it was trying to delegate.

The procedure for forming the Management Councils was as follows. MESA agents would supervise an assembly to elect representatives, with a super-majority of seats going to representatives of civil society. All representatives of civil society were

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<sup>106</sup> “Mesmo Insatisfeito, Lula Vai Manter Graziano No Governo.” March 14, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

elected by the entire assembly. This council was then in charge of meeting to select the Food Card recipients (Ansell 2007: 145-146; Takagi 2011: 67).

This was clearly an attempt to do a run-around the mayors and establish a new center of power for anti-hunger policy. Given the state of politics in many of these municipalities, the appeal of doing this is clear. It is also unsurprising that many mayors were having none of it.

The approach of some mayors was to resist the incursion into their political territory. Ansell details such a response in the municipality he studied (2007: 138). The program met with resistance from mayors in other municipalities as well; a former MESA agent I interviewed told of other agents being run out of town.<sup>107</sup> By attempting to build a new program from scratch MESA angered those already responsible for social protection at the local level.

Other mayors responded by attempting cooptation. *Folha* reported: “In at least 64 of the 218 cities in Paraíba attended by Zero Hunger, the mayors are accused of controlling—and using electorally—the program.”<sup>108</sup> They did this by controlling the Management Committees. Corruption is not a new problem in Brazil, but complexity allowed mayors more opportunities to intervene inappropriately.

Just as some in the PT criticized the existing cash transfers for being politicized, the opposition in turn expressed similar concerns about the new citizen committees.

PSDB federal deputy Sabastião Madeira said, “Nothing is stopping the executive from

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with Juliana Batista. Former MESA employee working at (Brazilian Agricultural Research Company). February 28, 2011. Brasília.

<sup>108</sup> Athias, Gabriela. November 2, 2003. “Uso Eleitoral Ameaça Fome Zero Na Paraíba.” *Folha de São Paulo*.



saying that the control in a particular municipality is in the hands of the PT or the CUT [Unified Workers' Central, Brazil's primary labor confederation]."<sup>109</sup> Likewise, Rafael Cariello alleged that the PT was attempting to use the program to make inroads in municipalities.<sup>110</sup>

Graziano told a group of federal deputies, "We're being vigilant to make sure the committees don't become partisan nuclei in the interior."<sup>111</sup> Frei Betto also shared these concerns, saying that it was society's job to make sure that did not happen.<sup>112</sup> There is good reason to believe they were sincere. At a PT meeting where militants demanded a more central role in Zero Hunger, Graziano rebuffed them, arguing that the program was for all Brazilians, and not just one party.<sup>113</sup> In any case, if the Committees had been an attempt to take over local politics they failed; the PT lost in the 2004 mayoral elections in both pilot municipalities.<sup>114</sup> However, in 2003 what mattered most was the perception.

While the politics of bypassing the mayors and of party conflict are clear, the problems with selecting beneficiaries extend well beyond this. Though one of the criticisms of the municipal governments—justifying making these new committees—was

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<sup>109</sup> Costa, Raymundo. May 2, 2003. "PT e PSDB Disputam o Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>110</sup> Cariello, Rafael. September 7, 2003. "PT Se Aproveita Do Fome Zero Para Fazerfiliações No Piauí." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>111</sup> Constantino, Luciana. April 25, 2003. "Graziano Troca Críticas Com Oposição Na Câara." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>112</sup> "Panorâmica." *Folha de São Paulo*, December 6, 2003.

<sup>113</sup> Duailibi, Julia. April 11, 2003. "PT Critica, Mas Não Participa Do Fome Zero, Diz Graziano." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>114</sup> "Guaribas." October 6, 2004. *Folha de São Paulo*.

the limited capacity of municipal government,<sup>115</sup> the committees ended up having the same problem. An early hint was the Food Card's launch, in Acauã February 24, 2003, where they only gave out 218 cards.<sup>116</sup> This modest beginning is in marked contrast to the scale Zero Hunger promised, and not even half of already modest the 500-card target.

In an interview with PT activists in Teresina, Piauí, including Rosângela Sousa, who had directed Zero Hunger in Piauí, the activists complained about the use of the committees, giving the example of a woman on one of the committees who worked several jobs and then had to do this volunteer work on top of that. "It should be the properly constituted authority doing this work," one remarked.<sup>117</sup> Ana Fonseca, who headed *Bolsa Família* until it was placed under MDS, agreed. In an interview with anthropologist Aaron Ansell she said:

I don't like the idea of a crippled, neoliberal state. The state needs to be more active, not less active. We can't bypass the municipal governments and leave it to civil society to do this. It's the state's job to find out who the poorest members of society are, not that of civil society. The mayor is democratically elected; he is the public power, the state. We need to start respecting that democratic process (Ansell 2007: 168).

Management Committees were another attempt to create a new entity instead of trying to make use of what was already there. Municipalities already had mayors, municipal staff, and social assistance offices. Instead of doing a run-around to avoid them, the alternative was to seek a relationship that incorporated the mayors into a

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<sup>115</sup> Interview with MDA official who served in MESA. Brasília, Brazil. April 8, 2011.

<sup>116</sup> "Começa a Distribuição de Cartões Do Fome Zero." February 24, 2003. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with activists from Piauí Workers' Party. June 12, 2011. Teresina.

programmatic policy and constrained their ability to personalize or politicize transfers. This is exactly what *Bolsa Família* later did.

Ansell points out that MESA's concern was that the committees had consistent, objective criteria, not what they were (2007: 147). This means that there could have potentially been a thousand different standards in a thousand different municipalities. Advocates might argue that this is a benefit because it empowers the local community to decide its own standards and the committee members are those who know their community best.

Yet this close knowledge had a significant downside. Recall that one of Graziano's specific complaints about the registry was that it was personalized and politicized. In a small rural community using a Management Committee also meant that the decisions about who gets the five hundred cards were incredibly personal for the committee members. This is a recurring theme in Ansell's (2007) ethnography and in my interviews with people who had served on the Management Committee in the same municipality.<sup>118</sup>

There is all the difference in the world between having a forum where civil society can recommend policies and charging civil society with carrying out those policies. Doing the latter was a sharp break with the existing institutions providing social protection, and led to a complex, and controversial, process for selecting program recipients.

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<sup>118</sup> Interviews with two individuals who served on the committee June 15-16, 2011; interview with members of the Rural Workers' Union June 15, 2011. Piauí.

After the reorganization in early 2004, the new Minister of Social Protection, Patrus Ananias, criticized the committees saying many members were not properly trained for their responsibilities.<sup>119</sup> He later remarked, “If president Cardoso did a disservice to Brazil, it wasn’t only in his economic policy. It was also in his dismantling of the state, privileging actions with non-government organizations... We’re reconstructing the Brazilian state.”<sup>120</sup>

The Management Committees had their defenders. Bishop Mauro Morelli criticized the decision to get rid of them, saying “...without the active participation of the citizens, it is difficult to escape two terrible things: bureaucracy and corruption.”<sup>121</sup> However, the committees created had both and it was time to try a different policy design.

### **How *Bolsa Familia* is different**

By May 2003 plans to unify Brazil’s transfer programs were already under way,<sup>122</sup> though MESA survived until the end of the year. *Bolsa Familia* returned to the state the role of selecting beneficiaries for new social programs, but, responding to the challenges of federalism, it did so in a particular way. The municipalities register

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<sup>119</sup> Athias, Gabriela. March 8, 2004. “Ministro Da Área Social Critica Fome Zero.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>120</sup> “Grupo de Trabalho Do Fome Zero é Instalado Após 1 Ano e 8 Meses.” September 3, 2004. *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>121</sup> Fábio Guibu. March 20, 2004. “D. Mauro Ataca o Fome Zero e a Política Econômica.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>122</sup> Athias, Gabriela. May 14, 2003. “Governo ‘Enquadra’ Fome Zero e Unifica Os Programas.” *Folha de São Paulo*.

applicants, but MDS processes the applications and manages the actual transfers, in partnership with Caixa, a state-owned bank (Soares 2012).

Having the municipalities register program applicants achieves several things. In marked contrast to the blatant attempt to bypass mayors through the Management Committees, *Bolsa Família* makes them part of the process and allows them to claim some of the credit for benefits delivered. However, it also greatly limits opportunities for political manipulation, since the municipality never touches the money. Professionals in Brasília process the application, greatly limiting opportunities for favoritism. In addition, since it is their full time job instead of volunteer service, they can do this work faster.

Instead of having a debate in each municipality about who should receive the transfer, the law establishing *Bolsa Família* sets established standard criteria for qualification: per capita income thresholds. In practice, measuring income of the extremely poor is difficult, so the program also uses a household survey instrument as a proxy measure, but the definition of poverty is clear and standardized (Lindert et al. 2007; Soares 2012).

From an administrative point of view, incorporating the municipalities is a response to policy legacies, in this case the asymmetrical federalism created by the 1988 constitution, that uses an existing resource instead of creating a new political entity and allows things to move forward faster by avoiding startup costs. Using the existing four cash transfers as a starting point achieves the same goal and also reduces the number of clearances needed to make the policy work.

Zero Hunger started in particular municipalities even though some measures indicated that excluded municipalities were worse off. Regardless of actual

motivations, some in the opposition alleged political targeting. Instead of using one measure, which could be subject to such criticisms, MDS determines targets based on the econometric model developed in partnership with The World Bank (Fried 2012). In other words, the administrators delegated the program to technocrats in order to de-politicize it.

The most important difference in selecting municipalities is that by moving rapidly towards nationwide coverage it minimized the period of time when it existed in some places and not in others. One of the reasons it was able to expand so quickly was by building on existing programs and being a focused, simple program.

At the level of individuals, *Bolsa Familia* also provides a simple response to debates about why one poor family receives support when another does not: strive for universal coverage. Soares (2012) explains that the program is a “quasi-right,” because budgeting limits the total number who can be enrolled in the program. In principle, the idea is that any household with a qualifying per capita income should receive the benefit. With the Food Card, the initial limit of 500 households per municipality inevitably created the problem of having to exclude extremely poor people who also needed assistance, leading to unnecessary conflict.

## **Conclusion**

The relationship between *Bolsa Familia* and Zero Hunger was a point of confusion. In March 2004, Zilda Arns wrote:

There is confusion between the programs Zero Hunger and *Bolsa Familia* that the federal government should elucidate. Does one substitute the other? Does one compete with the other? My understanding is that the government’s priority is Zero

Hunger. *Bolsa Família* is a program within Zero Hunger, created to reinforce it with cash transfers ... Zero Hunger can't be restricted to *Bolsa Família*...<sup>123</sup>

I encountered both descriptions in my interviews. For example, Newton Gomes, Jr., who had worked in food security for decades and briefly served in MESA and whose dissertation is discussed in Chapter 2, pointed to the moment of *Bolsa Família*'s creation as when it was all over for Zero Hunger.<sup>124</sup>

The Lula Government resisted this understanding. In August 2004 Lula announced that it would put the Zero Hunger logo on all of the *Bolsa Família* cards. Minister Patrus Ananias explained that this was "...because there are frequently unreasonable references about Zero Hunger" including that the program had ended.<sup>125</sup> So, what is the answer to Arns's question?

*Bolsa Família* competed with the main thing MESA was doing: the Food Card, and thus with MESA. So it was competing with the key part of Zero Hunger in 2003. This did not preclude Lula's government to redefining Zero Hunger and continuing to develop a wide range of policies in areas related to food security under a different structure. Instead of charging a special ministry with very little power or resources with taking the lead, the new approach left ministries in charge of their traditional policy areas. MDS, whose full name is The Ministry of Social Development and the Fight Against Hunger, has a Secretariat for Food Security. The Inter-Ministerial Assembly for Food and

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<sup>123</sup> Arns, Zilda. March 17, 2004. "Fôlego Para o Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Newton Naciso Gomes Junior. Former MESA official. Professor of social work at the University of Brasilia. February 24, 2011.

<sup>125</sup> Salomon, Marta and Luciana Constantino. August 8, 2004. "Lula Quer Mudar Cartão Para Reviver Fome Zero." *Folha de São Paulo*.

Nutritional Security (CAISAN) brings representatives of various ministries together to plan and coordinate policy, but ultimately responsibility for implementing policy remains with the separate ministries.<sup>126</sup> The National Council for Food and Nutrition Security, which Lula revived as part of Zero Hunger and is housed in the executive (*Casa Civil*), provides a forum for representatives of civil society to advise the government about food policy. The ultimate responsibility for making and implementing that policy remains that of the state.

The 2001 proposal was right in recognizing that no one thing is going to solve the problem of hunger. The error, however, was to think that all those separate things needed to be tied up with each other in their implementation. In writing this I conflict with the perspective I encountered in many of my interviews. For example, one of the people at the Ministry of Health responsible for its work in nutrition emphasized the need for everyone in food security to work together.<sup>127</sup> At a CONSEA meeting I attended in May 2011, Francisco Antonio da Fonseca Menezes, one of the most prominent figures in Brazilian food politics and head of CONSEA from 2004-2007, argued that food security is like a car, and all the parts need to work together for it to go forward.<sup>128</sup> Metaphors are mental models. Like any models they have their limits. The question is, what are the consequences of thinking this way? The evidence just surveyed suggests that this

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<sup>126</sup> CAISAN. 2011. “Plano Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional – 2012/2015.” [http://www.mds.gov.br/segurancaalimentar/arquivos/LIVRO\\_PLANO\\_NACIONAL\\_CAISAN\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.mds.gov.br/segurancaalimentar/arquivos/LIVRO_PLANO_NACIONAL_CAISAN_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>127</sup> Interview with public official at General Coordinator for Food and Nutrition (CGAN), Ministry of Health. March 22, 2011.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Francisco Antonio da Fonseca Menezes, former head of CONSEA. May 4, 2011. Brasília.



approach can lead to unnecessary complexity that undermines a policy's chances for success.

Two indicators of *Bolsa Família*'s success are that it has maintained the same basic program design for ten years and it reaches over thirteen million Brazilian households.<sup>129</sup> Since this ended up as one of the principal policies designed to combat poverty and hunger, a natural next question is how well it has done this, the topic of the next two chapters. The answer in part depends on how we conceive, and measure, poverty and hunger.

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<sup>129</sup> Figure for 2011.

## CHAPTER 4: REDUCING POVERTY

### Introduction

The previous chapter argues that *Bolsa Família* emerged as Lula's most prominent new social policy because it built upon what Cardoso had already done, combining and expanding existing cash transfer programs, and that this simple approach contributed to its success. Chapter 2 reviewed studies finding the program is programmatic and well targeted. Given this, and given that the program just celebrated its tenth birthday, it is reasonable to expect it to have been successful in reducing poverty.

For an example of how *Bolsa Família* has transformed lives, consider this account from the magazine *Carta Capital*, profiling Rogéria Maria da Silva Lima and her family in Ipaumirim, Ceará:

“The family's income is 130 *reais* per month, divided between 94 *reais* that they receive for having two children enrolled in *Bolsa Família* (the youngest, Ranieli, is no longer registered) and 30 or 40 *reais* that her husband, José Marcio dos Santos, earns from odd jobs.

Once per week they eat meat at a family meal, usually chicken but sometimes a bit of red meat. Less than once a week Marcio buys “salad”: a tomato or an onion, divided between the five family members. The foods most consumed are manioc flour, rice and milk...With *Bolsa Família*, Rogéria buys biscuits, a liter of oil, margarine, soap, another piece of clothing and eventually shoes. The water does not cost very much, the stove is wood fired, and electricity is shared with the neighbor. With *Bolsa Família* she has enough to “get through the month” (my translation).<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> de Athayde, Phylia. July 2, 2008. “Nossa fome cotidiana.” *Carta Capital*.

One interpretation of Ms. Silva Lima's story is to see it as the Lula Government beginning to make good on his promise to work towards a Brazil where everyone eats three meals a day. Of course, one anecdote does not establish the program's success; this requires systematic evidence.

Assessing *Bolsa Família*'s impact on poverty requires carefully thinking about (1) how we measure poverty and (2) the conception of poverty implicit in each measure. Continuous measures better reflect a conception of poverty as how far away a household is from being able to meet its basic needs and are thus better for assessing how well *Bolsa Família* achieved its intended goals. *Bolsa Família* was never supposed to eradicate poverty all by itself, but to be a step in this direction. The idea was to (1) give the poor enough money to let them better meet basic needs and (2) use this money to incentivize the improvement of human capital through education and health, giving the next generation a better chance to escape poverty; this chapter focuses on the first objective.

On the basis of understanding poverty as a continuous variable, this chapter argues that while we cannot directly credit *Bolsa Família* with bringing many households completely out of poverty or extreme poverty, alternative measures taking into account how far a household falls below a poverty line show it did significantly reduce the severity of that poverty, and thus did what it was designed to do. This important achievement also helps explain *Bolsa Família*'s political relevance.

This chapter focuses on *income* poverty. People clearly have needs that cannot be readily met through income,<sup>131</sup> such as education, healthcare, clean water, sanitation, and security. *Bolsa Família*'s conditions are an effort to connect the poor to education and

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<sup>131</sup> At least at the levels being discussed. Granted, those with higher incomes can provide for such services privately.

health care services. In addition, *Bolsa Família* is part of a group of policies aimed at reducing poverty. These include raising the minimum wage, increasing government pensions for poor seniors, and expanding access to credit.

*Bolsa Família* had a tangible benefit on Ms. Silva Lima's family; the family is *less poor* than it was prior to receiving the transfer, but remains poor. Characterizing them as *less poor* implies that poverty is a continuous space. The alternative way of thinking about poverty is as a binary: a household is poor or it is not. More common in social science research is to say that some families are extremely poor, some are poor, and the rest are not poor.

Applying this approach to Ms. Silva Lima's family, we see that their per capita income is 26 *reais* per month (130 divided by five family members). The per capita income from sources other than *Bolsa Família* (her husband's work) is about 8 *reais* per month. Both fall under *Bolsa Família*'s definition of extreme poverty (in 2008) of 60 *reais* per capita monthly income. Regional poverty lines based on the price of a basket of basic goods adjusted for local prices put the extreme poverty line for the northeast at 96.36 *reais* per capita monthly income for urban areas and 85.94 for rural areas (IPEA 2011a). So, whichever line we use, the family was in extreme poverty before receiving *Bolsa Família* and remains in extreme poverty after.

That her household remained in extreme poverty is not surprising once we consider the program's benefit structure. Since its creation, the program has classified eligible families as either poor or extremely poor. Extremely poor families receive both a (per household) basic benefit and variable benefits for each child and (after 2008) adolescent enrolled in school. Poor families only receive the variable benefit. Ms. Silva

Lima's monthly benefit of 94 *reais* represents a basic benefit of 58 *reais* plus 18 *reais* for each of her two children. So, while benefits partly scale with household size, they do not do so as fast as the increase in total household income required to bring *per capita* monthly household income above the extreme poverty line, since each additional household member adds 60 *reais* (under the 2008 definition) to that line.

Chapter 2 summarized the findings from three studies of *Bolsa Família's* impact on poverty. All found that the impact on headcount poverty was very small. This raises the following puzzle: if the program brings so few households out of poverty or extreme poverty, why is it widely viewed as effective? One familiar with the program might respond that there is no puzzle here at all. Close to one in four Brazilian households receives *Bolsa Família*; in 2006 the average household participating in the program received 71.60 *reais*, making the average transfer equivalent to about a third of recipients' average food budgets (IBASE 2008). The impact on the Silva Lima household was even more pronounced. In other words, it is a valuable benefit being delivered to a large number of people, and this allows them to better meet their needs.

The full extent of *Bolsa Família's* success is only evident when we move beyond simple headcount measures. Evaluations of the program must take into account decreases in the severity of poverty, which requires looking at alternative poverty measures. Chapter 2 briefly introduced the headcount, income gap, intensity, and ordinal poverty measures and their strengths and shortcomings. The next section looks at these measures in greater detail, including the equations used for each measure.

## Poverty Measurement

### Headcount (H)

By far the most common poverty measure is headcount, which simply establishes a poverty line (or multiple lines to reflect regional differences in the cost of living) and expresses the number of households under that line as a fraction of the overall population. If  $q$  is the number of poor households and  $n$  is the total number of households, then our headcount measure is

$$H = q/n$$

Sen (1976) argues that this poverty measure violates two axioms central to an adequate conception of poverty:

*Monotonicity Axiom: Given other things, a reduction in income of a person below the poverty line must increase the poverty measure.*

*Transfer Axiom: Given other things, a pure transfer of income from a person below the poverty line to anyone who is richer must increase the poverty measure.*

Using the headcount measure, once someone is below the poverty line it does not matter how far below the line she falls. In short, there is no “partial credit.” On the other hand, it has the advantage of being easy to understand. In addition, one need not estimate a household’s precise income if it clearly falls well below the poverty line, which is an advantage since it can be difficult to report exact incomes for such households.

### Income gap (I)

Given that headcount (H) fails to take account of a household's distance to the poverty line, an alternative is to focus on this distance. This is called the income gap, expressed as  $g_i$  for a given household,  $i$ . We normalize it over the poverty line to get an individual household's income gap ratio. If we sum these ratios for all households and divide by the total number of poor households we have the income gap measure of poverty (I).

As an equation, we express this as

$$I = \sum g_i / qz$$

Where  $g_i$  is the income gap,  $q$  is the total number of poor people, and  $z$  is the poverty line.

The income gap measure (I) is in many ways the mirror image of the headcount (H). It tells us nothing about how many people are poor. Different scenarios can produce the same income gap measure (I) with different numbers of poor people (H). This is not satisfactory either since, all else being equal, we prefer fewer people to be poor.

### **Intensity (HI)**

The simplest way to combine information about the number of poor people and their average income shortfall is to take the product of the headcount measure (H) and the income gap measure (I) in order to produce the intensity measure (HI).<sup>132</sup> Brady (2003: 727) summarizes the advantage of this approach as a “simple, parsimonious measure combining quantity and depth of poverty.” In addition, since both headcount (H) and income gap (I) may be communicated to a more general audience (something decidedly

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<sup>132</sup> Some scholars also use the term “interval” for the same measure.

*not* true of the ordinal measures surveyed below), it is but one more simple step to multiply them together. The problem with the intensity measure—a problem all three of these measures share—is it ignores the distribution of income among the poor, a point to which we return shortly.

### **Conceptions of poverty**

Behind each measure is a conceptual understanding of poverty. Headcount (H) reflects a binary categorization. It is more common to think of poverty as an ordinal variable<sup>133</sup> where someone is either extremely poor, poor (but not extremely so), or not poor. We may also think of this as collapsing poverty into two binaries where all of the extremely poor also fall into the poor category.

An alternative is to think of poverty as a continuous space. As Brady (2003: 728) puts it, summarizing the work of Harold Watts, “In reality, poverty is not a discrete condition that is immediately acquired or shed by crossing any particular income line.” That is, someone can be more or less poor. At some point she stops being poor altogether, meaning the need for a poverty line remains. Income gap (I) reflects this understanding of poverty. Intensity (HI) combines the two conceptions into one measure.

### **Relative Deprivation and Ordinal Measures (O)**

It could also be that how poor a household is depends on its position relative to others in society. This is captured by the concept of relative deprivation (Sen 1983). Sen (1976) argues the three measures just surveyed are insufficient because they ignore the

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<sup>133</sup> Not to be confused with ordinal measures, discussed shortly.



distribution of income among the poor. That is, among various scenarios producing the same values for H and I, we should prefer the one with greater equality among the poor. We order the poor from poorest to least poor and weigh the income gaps according to their place in this ordering (hence his term “ordinal rank weights” and referring to this family of measures as ordinal measures). He proposes a poverty measure that satisfies all of his axioms and may be derived from headcount (H), income gap (I), and the Gini coefficient of inequality among the poor (G).

Since the publication of Sen’s work, scholars have presented several alternative ordinal measures, including that of Foster, Greer and Thorbecke (1984, 2010). They provide the following formula:

$$P\alpha = (1/n)\Sigma(g_i/z)^\alpha$$

Where n is the total number of households,  $g_i$  is the income gap for a household (i), z is the poverty line and  $\alpha$  is “...a measure of poverty aversion: A larger  $\alpha$  gives greater emphasis to the poorest poor” (Foster, Greer, Thorbecke 1984). When  $\alpha = 0$  the measure is headcount (H). When  $\alpha = 1$  it is the intensity measure (HI). When  $\alpha = 2$  it is an ordinal measure (O). Two of the studies surveyed below apply the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke measure, as does this chapter.

Sen argues there should always be an “absolutist core” to any conception of poverty (1983) and that for developing countries absolute measures are most appropriate (1999). In addition, Brady (2003) writes:

...some evidence exists that the variation in O [the ordinal measure] not captured by HI [intensity] is empirically unimportant (Myles & Picot 2000; Osberg & Xu 2000). Hence, O often adds unneeded complexity that may obscure national comparisons of poverty (Atkinson 1987; Hagenaars 1991). Therefore if one seeks a sufficient yet parsimonious measure and prefers to avoid the complexity and assumptions of O, HI may be the best alternative.

However, the studies finding little difference between severity and ordinal poverty focus on advanced capitalist democracies. Reporting an ordinal measure will allow me to test how closely the two measures track in a middle-income country with a long history of extreme inequality.

Let me illustrate the information gained by using the different measures for the case of two hypothetical Brazilian families in 2009, each with two adults and two children. Household A makes 100 *reais* per month and Household B makes 460 *reais* per month. Table 4.1 calculates their per capita income and the benefits they would receive under *Bolsa Familia* in 2009. Household A—like Ms. Silva Lima’s family—remains in extreme poverty; a much smaller transfer pushes Household B across the poverty line.

Table 4.2 presents each household’s distance to the poverty line and, for Household A, the extreme poverty line. We see that, though Household A did not cross the extreme poverty line, the reduction for Household A is much greater when expressed relative to the total poverty and extreme poverty lines. So, which household saw a greater reduction in its poverty depends on how we measure it.

Poverty reduction from cash transfers, then, is a result of (1) program design, (2) the poverty measure used, (3) the poverty line(s) used, and (4) the incomes of poor households prior to transfers. If most of Brazil’s poor households look like Household A we will see little reduction in headcount, but a great reduction in the severity of poverty. If most look like Household B we will see the opposite. In reality, of course, the poor are heterogeneous and we will see both effects: but how much of each?

Critical thresholds clearly exist; such thresholds are likely multiple for each household and represent points where a household faces major opportunity costs pitting

essential needs against one another. At some point a household must choose between not paying rent, going without food, or going without medicine. At another point it can only pay for one of the three. Thus we should expect to see many income thresholds that qualitatively change the character of a household's poverty. Income gap and intensity measures help us capture this, especially in the case of extreme poverty. If we see a greater reduction in poverty according to these measures this should help us to understand the program's political popularity.

## **Research Design**

What would poverty levels look like if we were to take *Bolsa Família* away from its recipients? To answer this question, I calculated these poverty measures for Brazil in 2009 and then calculated what the measures would be without *Bolsa Família*. Looking at poverty measures before and after taxes and transfers is a common approach in the study of the welfare state (e.g. Myles and Picot 2000, Brady 2003). The difference here is that I calculated the impact of one transfer. Such an approach is “first-order” and does not take into account “second-order” effects (Myles and Picot 2000; Kelly 2009: 24-25). Such effects, including multiplier effects, exist (IPEA 2011b), but are beyond the scope of this article.

In addition to selecting measures, a researcher must make two additional decisions: where to draw the poverty line(s) and how to account for household size (Rainwater and Smeeding 2003). Regarding the poverty lines, I adopted the approach of Soares and Sátyro (2009) and Soares et al. (2010), and used the program eligibility lines

as definitions of poverty and extreme poverty. This allows us to assess *Bolsa Familia* according to its own criteria for who is poor and extremely poor.

Accounting for household size is less straightforward. One extreme is to analyze household income without accounting for size at all. While some take this approach, it raises the obvious problem that a larger family requires more income to attain a given standard of living. The other extreme is to assume the cost of meeting an individual's needs is independent of household size and use per capita income. This is the approach taken in the studies surveyed above. The standard advocated by researchers associated with the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) is to take the square root of household size and treat this as "equivalent household size" in order to arrive at an approximate accommodation for larger households' economies of scale (Rainwater and Smeeding 2003, LIS 2012). My analysis looked at both per capita and equivalent household size for two reasons. First, it allows for a comparison with the studies already surveyed. Second, it provides an opportunity to see how much difference there is between the two approaches.

I used Philippe Van Kerm's "poverty" plugin for the statistical package Stata 11.2 to calculate all of the poverty measures just discussed. First, I did this for per capita household income (with and without *Bolsa Familia*). Like Soares and Sátyro (2009) and Soares and colleagues (2010) I used the program eligibility lines as definitions of poverty and extreme poverty. I then calculated the same measures using equivalent household income, following the convention of taking the square root of household size, as outlined above.

## Data

Brazil's annual National Household Sample Survey, the PNAD, provides detailed individual and household-level information. The 2009 PNAD includes 121,163 households, is a representative sample of the country, and includes information about total household income and the sources of that income. It probably underestimates income due to under-reported informal sector sources (Ferreira et al. 2000).

To arrive at total household income I added up all the income categories for an individual and then summed these for each household. For the income without *Bolsa Família* I subtracted *Bolsa Família* from total income.

Unfortunately the PNAD provide neither a separate variable for *Bolsa Família*, nor one for cash transfers. Such income falls under the interest variable, v1273 (presumably because it is non-work income): "Interest from savings accounts and other financial investments, dividends, social programs and other income normally received in the reference month" (my translation). Soares and colleagues (2010) rightly describe this as an "absurdly heterogeneous" category. Poor households are unlikely to receive actual interest from investments and richer individuals are likely to receive investment income and not receive transfers, but the limits of this assumption remain unknown.

Like Soares and colleagues I calculated the maximum possible benefit (in 2009) and used this as the cut-off point for where benefits stop and other income begins.<sup>134</sup>

There have been several modifications to *Bolsa Família*'s benefit structure over the years

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<sup>134</sup> For a longer discussion of alternatives for estimating income from *Bolsa Família* in the PNAD see Soares et al. (2010) and Segall-Correa et al. (2008).

(Soares 2012: 7). Law 11.692 of June 2008 added up to two variable benefits of 30 *reais* for adolescents aged 16-17. In September 2009 the basic benefit increased to 68 *reais*, the variable benefit increased to 22 *reais*, and the variable benefit for youth increased to 32 *reais*. The PNAD does not provide the month an observation was made, requiring the choice of which cutoff point to use. I opted to use the value after the increase, just to be safe. Thus, after the 2009 increase the maximum possible benefit was one basic benefit (R\$ 68), three variable benefits (R\$ 66), and two youth benefits (R\$ 66), for a total of 200 *reais*. Thus my *Bolsa Família* variable is the interest variable with values greater than 200 *reais* recoded as zero.<sup>135</sup>

## Results

Table 4.3 estimates how much *Bolsa Família* directly reduced poverty and extreme poverty in 2009, using per capita household income. Table 4.4 does the same, using equivalent household income. Both present four measures: headcount (H), income gap (I), intensity (HI), and ordinal (O).

First, consistent with the previous studies, I found a small reduction in headcount poverty and extreme poverty. The reduction remained similarly modest when using equivalent household income. The reason the results for per capita income were not identical to the study by Soares and colleagues (2010) is my study used the poverty lines

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<sup>135</sup> Before the 2009 increase the maximum possible benefit was one basic benefit (R\$ 62), three variable benefits (R\$ 60), and two youth benefits (R\$ 60), for a total of 182 *reais*. A robustness check (not shown) using the lower number as the cutoff point for what interest income would be assumed to be from *Bolsa Família* produced virtually identical results, with all differences to the right of the decimal place in the figures reported in Tables 4.3 and 4.4.

from *Bolsa Família* in 2009, where their study adjusted the 2004 lines for inflation to allow for comparison across time.

The reductions in income gap are more substantial, representing over three percent of the poverty line and five percent of the extreme poverty line (percentage points in the table) when using per capita income. Employing equivalent household income shows an even greater impact of nearly five and eight percent of the poverty and extreme poverty lines, respectively. This represents a substantial impact on many who did not cross a poverty threshold.

The intensity measure (HI) does not have the same kind of intuitive interpretation as its component parts. The most helpful row in this column is the relative (percentage) change. We see a large impact of *Bolsa Família* on poverty, with a seventeen percent reduction of poverty for per capita income and a reduction of over a fifth for equivalent household income. As expected, the impact on extreme poverty was even greater, over a fifth for per capita income and over a quarter for equivalent household income.

Since the intensity measure is likely new to most readers, it may be helpful to make a rough comparison with Brady's (2003) figures for the same measure in advanced capitalist democracies from 1967 to 1997 (using different poverty lines, obviously). For market-generated income (pre-taxes and transfers) the mean is 28.1, while for state-mediated (post-taxes and transfers) the mean is 6.6. Of course, that measures the impact of all government programs and not just one transfer, but it gives some sense of how much advanced welfare states reduce the intensity measure of poverty.

The results for the ordinal measure are similar to the results for intensity, conforming to Brady's comments, above. That the reduction in ordinal poverty is slightly

larger than intensity represents a greater impact on reducing the poverty of the poorest Brazilians, which is what we should expect given the program's design. It also reveals a decline in inequality among the poor, in addition to the widely-reported decline in inequality overall.

## **Conclusion**

Chapter 3 argued that *Bolsa Familia*'s success was due to its simple design and to the decision to build upon existing policies. This chapter's central finding—that *Bolsa Familia* reduced the poverty intensity—means that it has been successful not simply in reaching its target population, but in actually helping that population. This suggests that taking policy legacies as a starting point and attempting to incorporate them into a simple approach can be an effective strategy for expanding social policy. The next chapter examines if this approach resulted in fewer hungry Brazilians.



**Table 4.1 Two scenarios, headcount**

	Family A	Family B
Initial household income (R\$)	100	460
Initial per capita income (R\$)	25	115
Initial classification	Extremely poor	Poor
Basic Benefit (R\$)	68	0
Variable Benefit (R\$)	44	44
Total Benefit (R\$)	112	44
Total post-transfer income (R\$)	212	504
Total post transfer per capita income (R\$)	53	126
Post-transfer classification	Extremely poor	Not poor

Benefits and eligibility lines are from late 2009. All values are monthly.

**Table 4.2 The same scenarios, distance to poverty line**

	Family A	Family B
Income needed to be at poverty line	480	480
Initial distance to poverty line	380	20
Initial gap as percentage of poverty line	79.2	4.2
Post-transfer distance to poverty line	268	0
Post-transfer gap as percentage of poverty line	55.8	0
Reduction as percentage of poverty line	23.3	4.2
Income needed to be at the extreme poverty line	240	
Initial distance to extreme poverty line	140	
Initial gap as percentage of extreme poverty line	58.3	
Post-transfer distance to the extreme poverty line	28	
Post-transfer gap as percentage of extreme poverty line	11.7	
Reduction as percentage of extreme poverty line	46.7	

Benefits and eligibility lines are from late 2009. All values are monthly.

**Table 4.3: Impact on poverty (per capita income)**

	<b>Headcount</b> <b>(%)</b>	<b>Income Gap</b> <b>(%)</b>	<b>Intensity</b>	<b>Ordinal</b>
Poverty (no <i>Bolsa Família</i> )	12.5	56.9	7.1	5.7
Poverty (with <i>Bolsa Família</i> )	11.1	53.5	5.9	4.6
Change (points)	1.5	3.4	1.2	1.2
Change (percentage)	11.6	6.0	17.0	20.4
Extreme Poverty (no <i>Bolsa Família</i> )	6.6	76.6	5.1	4.6
Extreme Poverty (with <i>Bolsa Família</i> )	5.5	71.6	3.9	3.4
Change (points)	1.1	5.0	1.1	1.2
Change (percentage)	17.1	6.6	22.6	25.4

**Table 4.4: Impact on Poverty (equivalent household size)**

	<b>Headcount (%)</b>	<b>Income Gap (%)</b>	<b>Intensity</b>	<b>Ordinal</b>
Poverty (no <i>Bolsa Família</i> )	6.7	75.0	5.1	4.6
Poverty (with <i>Bolsa Família</i> )	5.6	70.3	4.0	3.4
Change (points)	1.1	4.8	1.1	1.1
Change (percentage)	16.3	6.3	21.6	24.7
Extreme Poverty (no <i>Bolsa Família</i> )	4.9	87.9	4.3	4.2
Extreme Poverty (with <i>Bolsa Família</i> )	3.9	80.0	3.1	3.0
Change (points)	1.0	7.9	1.2	1.2
Change (percentage)	20.3	9.0	27.5	28.4

## CHAPTER 5: REDUCING HUNGER

### Introduction

The discussion in Chapter 2 explains why a cash transfer could be an effective anti-hunger policy. People go hungry because they are unable to exchange what they have (money, labor, assets, etc.) for what they need (food). In 2003, Brazil, as a net exporter of food, did not suffer from a problem of insufficient production, but of equitable distribution. So cash transfers provide an additional source of income and should improve the ability of the poor to buy food. Power resource theory, also discussed in Chapter 2, predicts that a programmatic left government will enact policies effective in reducing poverty. Given that poverty is a key cause of hunger, we should expect this reduction in poverty to translate into a reduction in hunger.

The previous chapter showed that, as expected, *Bolsa Família* had a substantial impact on poverty intensity. This chapter argues that this reduction in poverty in turn reduced hunger. Within this larger claim, I make five specific points. First, we should evaluate Brazil's progress in fighting hunger in terms of food security instead of malnutrition. Second, food insecurity was a significant problem in Brazil when President Lula took office. Third, food insecurity declined significantly while Lula was in office. Fourth, *Bolsa Família* provides a valuable benefit, large enough to make a real impact on the ability of the poorest to buy food, even in the face of rising food prices. Lastly, *Bolsa*

*Familia* contributed to a reduction in food insecurity over the course of the Lula government.

## **Conceptions of Hunger**

Even though Brazil's program had "hunger" in its name, this chapter avoids the term in favor of the more specific "food security" and "under-nutrition." This is because hunger has at least two separate, but related, elements: how much food people have and how well it nourishes them.

Concern with hunger is ultimately rooted in concern with the consequences for people's wellbeing. One way to see if people are getting enough food is to look at outcomes: if they are properly nourished. The most reliable way to do this is to measure people's bodies. If they are under weight and/or under height, they are likely undernourished (Leathers and Foster 2009: 40-41).

Access to sufficient food is a necessary but not sufficient condition for proper nutrition, that requires access to clean water, sanitation, education, and healthcare. When illness due to one of these factors prevents the adequate absorption of nutrition from food this is called secondary malnutrition (Leathers and Foster 2009: 40-41, Drèze and Sen 1989:13). This chapter focuses on this question of *access* to food of sufficient quantity and quality; the term for this is food security. This is in accordance with Lula's framing of the goal in terms of three meals per day in his 2003 inauguration speech.

The choice to focus on food security merits further explanation. Given the many determinants of nutrition, discussed above, a common causal story for how a conditional cash transfer could impact nutrition is as follows (see Figure 5.1). The transfers of cash

have an immediate impact on the ability of a household to buy food. Preventive healthcare reduces secondary malnutrition over time, as does education. Clean water and sanitation are collective goods not covered by the program. The increase in purchasing power is unlikely to be sufficient to obtain such services on an individual basis. Weighing and measuring children brings stunted and wasted children to the attention of health providers who can then respond with supplements, education about feeding, etc. This chapter is about the first part: the near immediate impact of being able to buy more food.

### **Was anybody hungry?**

Establishing that there was a problem is a necessary precursor to evaluating the solution. Even though this chapter is about food security, it is illuminating to compare estimates of food insecurity with data on under-nutrition, because these data tell a somewhat different story. Taken together, they give a rough picture of the state of hunger in Brazil around the time Lula took office and announced Zero Hunger.

Writing in the *Folha de São Paulo*, Hélio Schwartzman claims that Zero Hunger suffered from "an error in diagnosis--in 2003 obesity was already a greater problem than malnutrition"<sup>136</sup> (author's translation). While it is certainly true that the "nutrition transition" was (and is) leading to rising obesity and declining malnutrition in Brazil (Monteiro et al. 1995), this does not mean there were no problems with food security and malnutrition.<sup>137</sup> The best data available on the subject reveal that food insecurity was

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<sup>136</sup> Schwartzman, Hélio. June, 28 2011. "FAO e Fome Zero não podem ser chamados de casos de sucesso." *Folha de S. Paulo*.

<sup>137</sup> In any case, to the degree that obesity results from poor people being forced to eat low quality foods (of which they eat an excessive quantity), the problem is also one of food

indeed a problem when Lula took office, but less so than some imagined. The previous section defined the concepts of under-nutrition and food insecurity. There are multiple measures of both, but this chapter only looks at the ones most widely used in Brazil.<sup>138</sup>

### **The 2001 estimate**

The 2001 proposal, discussed in Chapter 1, did not have a direct measure of hunger. It reported poverty figures and assumed that people at that level of poverty meant were food insecure:

Based on data of the 1999 National Household Sample Survey (Pnad) carried out by the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Zero Hunger Project identified the existence of 9.3 million families and 44 million very poor people (with an income of less than one dollar a day, or about R\$ 80.00 a month in August 2001), respectively, who were seen as potential beneficiaries of this project due to their vulnerability to hunger. (Graziano et al. 2011<sup>139</sup>).

While it was likely the case that many of the extremely poor had trouble buying enough food, simply assuming that all 44 million of them were hungry is problematic and measures of under-nutrition and food security undermine this assumption.

### **Anthropometric Studies**

There were existing studies about under-nutrition in Brazil at this time, however. Given their findings, it is not surprising that the 2001 proposal chose not to include them,

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insecurity.

<sup>138</sup> For a summary of methods of measures related to hunger see (Leathers and Foster 2009, Ch. 11).

<sup>139</sup> For the original Portuguese see Graziano et al. 2010. I consulted the original Portuguese to correct an error in the translation in Graziano et al. (2011).

since a traditional nutritional approach to measuring hunger gives much lower figures for the percentage of Brazilians who were hungry. Monteiro (2003) writes that in 1996/1997 the portion of the population in the rural northeast that was underweight, as measured by body mass index (BMI), was 7.1%. He contrasts this with rates of 40% in Ethiopia and 50% in India. Monteiro and colleagues (2010) compare several nationwide studies of child stunting, defined as being more than two z scores (standard deviations) below normal height for age, using probability samples from the mid 1970's to the present. Table 5.1, drawn from their table, provides the stunting rates by income quintile. The trend, as the authors point out, is clear: steady decline. They also note that the improvement was greatest among the poorest and accelerated over time. The first three time points demonstrate that malnutrition was already declining when Lula took office. The values for 2006-2007 indicate that this trend continued into his government.

Remember, these studies measure malnutrition: the end result of a number of factors, not only if someone has enough food to eat. So the children that are stunted are not necessarily suffering from lack of access to food, since their condition could be due to secondary malnutrition. On the other hand, just because a child's height or weight is not far enough below the norm for a researcher to say with certainty that she is stunted and/or wasted, does not mean that there could not be lower grade malnutrition occurring.

### **The 2004 Brazilian Household Sample Survey**

These stunting data might lead to the conclusion that there was little to worry about. Turning the focus from severe malnutrition to food insecurity tells a somewhat different story. The annual National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) conducted by the



Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE) employs a standard set of questions and a supplemental section, which changes annually. In 2004 this section included questions about food security for the first time, a direct result of the government's new focus on hunger.

The measure used, the Brazilian Food Security Scale, is adapted from a U.S. Department of Agriculture survey measure (Nord et al. 2010). It asks the head of a household a series of fifteen questions about the past ninety days. The instrument begins with the least extreme questions ("Household members worry about running out of food before they buy or obtain more") and puts them in order of severity (final question: "Someone in the household under 18 has spent an entire day without eating because of a lack of money to buy food") (IBGE 2006: 25, author's translation). Questions 10-15 all concern children and are thus not asked of households without children. IBGE surveyed 112,716 households but only about half were asked the food security questions, which were only posed to lower-income respondents (Segall-Corrêa et al. 2008).

The question ordering is of theoretical importance. The idea is that the poor first worry about running out of food. If their problems continue they must reduce the quality of food, then the quantity, then eventually skip meals entirely (IBGE 2006 25-26). IBGE divides households into four categories depending on their score on this scale: food security, light insecurity, moderate insecurity, and severe insecurity, corresponding to the steps along this process.

Regarding data quality, sampling methodologies yield data that is representative at the state and national level. Not all municipalities are surveyed, the data are not

representative at the municipal level and, in any case, municipal identifiers are suppressed to protect the identities of respondents.

Table 5.2 summarizes 2004 food security levels, expressed as percentages of Brazilian households, showing that just over a third of households reported some kind of food insecurity. About half of reported food insecurity is in the light insecurity category. Because a respondent answering that she was worried about running out of food once in the last ninety days is enough to qualify a household for this category, it is fundamentally different from the moderate and severe categories, which reveal changes in actual behavior. Thus, like Segall-Corrêa and colleagues (2008) I draw the cutoff point for a binary secure/insecure measure between light and moderate. That is, secure and light insecurity count as "secure" and moderate insecurity and severe insecurity count as "insecure". This biases against finding that food insecurity was a serious problem. Even with this more conservative approach, we still have just over one in six Brazilian households reporting moderate or severe food insecurity.

## **Discussion**

Taken together, these studies paint a picture of a substantial number of Brazilians lowering the quality of their diets, reducing how much they eat, or even skipping meals due to poverty, but with this food insecurity much less commonly leading to measurable stunting. That anyone was skipping meals was unacceptable according to the standards that the Lula Government had set for Brazil.

## **Change under Lula**

Fortunately, Brazil repeated the supplemental questions about food security in the 2009 PNAD, revealing the changes in food security during his government. However, the individuals in the 2004 PNAD are not the same as in the 2009 PNAD and, as already mentioned, the municipal identifiers are suppressed. This means making a comparison over time requires looking at state-level data. This second time point comes at a considerable cost: it reduces the sample size from nearly 400,000 individuals to 27 states<sup>140</sup> and introduces risk of the ecological fallacy (Robinson 1950). On the other hand, one benefit of the small sample size is that we can closely examine it. Table 5.3 presents the rates of food insecurity (again defined as the combination of moderate and serious food insecurity) for each state in both years and the change over that five-year period, expressed as a change in percentage *points*. Food insecurity decreased in 26 out of 27 states. So the overwhelming trend is towards improvement (though the case of food insecurity going up in Sergipe merits further investigation). Did *Bolsa Família* contribute to this decrease?

## ***Bolsa Família* and Food Prices**

What did *Bolsa Família* mean for households' ability to buy food, and how has this changed over time? The 2008 food crisis caused large increases in world food

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<sup>140</sup> Brazil has 26 states and the Federal District. For ease of language, I simply refer to them as 27 states. The Federal District is much larger than the District of Colombia in the U.S. and includes several satellite cities in addition to Brasília.

prices<sup>141</sup> followed by sharp increases in recent years,<sup>142</sup> eroding the purchasing power of a cash transfer. It is well known that the poorer a person is the larger portion of her income is spent on food ("Ernst Engel's Law," see Zimmerman 1932). The poorest Brazilian households spend 70 per cent of their income on food (IBASE 2008), making them particularly vulnerable to these increases. If the government was truly committed to using cash transfers to combat food insecurity, it would have to increase benefits to keep up with food prices.

A conditional cash transfer's impact on food entitlement will obviously depend on food prices. Since the size of *Bolsa Família* payments increased over time and food prices rise and fall, the exact food entitlement is constantly changing. Sen (1981) and Drèze and Sen (1989) point out that changes in either income or food prices impact the overall entitlement: for example, doubling the price of food will have the same impact of cutting a family's food budget in half. The study by IBASE (2008) summarized in Chapter 2 found that the average transfer represented about a third of the average food budget for beneficiaries, so whether the transfer maintains purchasing power in the face of rising food prices make a difference for food security.

If a family were to spend all of its income from *Bolsa Família* on food, how much food would that buy and how does this change over time? Sen (1981) constructs a simple index of wages relative to food prices in order to show differences in food entitlements over time. I build a similar index for *Bolsa Família*. Sen generally uses rice as his index

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<sup>141</sup> "UN warns of deepening food crisis." December 9, 2008. *BBC*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7774167.stm> (Accessed October 25, 2011).

<sup>142</sup> "World food prices close to record." *BBC*. July 7, 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-14062360> (Accessed October 25, 2011).

food, because it is a staple food in the cases he analyzes. I construct two indices, one for rice and one for beans, since these are still the two staples of the Brazilian diet (IBGE and Agência Brasil 2011), and especially important to very poor households (IBASE 2008). My index sets the amount of rice and beans someone on *Bolsa Família* could purchase when the program was first created to 1.0.

Since different families receive different amounts of money it is necessary to decide what benefit is typical. Since the average household size of beneficiaries in 2006 was 4.1 (Lindert et al. 2007), the index looks at a household of four in extreme poverty. It makes little difference if the family has one adult or two, since the index is virtually identical for both scenarios.

The FAO provides annual food price data for Brazil. This is the wholesale commodity price, expressed as the price per metric ton. The price paid by consumer is certainly higher, but I assume that in Brazil's market economy consumers will pay a fairly consistent mark-up on these underlying wholesale prices. Data on *Bolsa Família* benefits come from the Ministry of Social Development (MDS 2011), which provides the specific date of the benefit increases.

## **Results and Discussion: Maintaining Purchasing Power**

The index for *Bolsa Família* indicates that the purchasing power in terms of food has remained roughly constant. This is more of an achievement than it first appears. During the period under consideration the increase in food prices outstripped overall inflation. So, had the value of *Bolsa Família* merely remained constant in terms of overall

purchasing power, food entitlement would have declined. *Bolsa Família* at least battled food insecurity to a draw.

The rise in food prices corresponds to a commodity boom, from which many sectors of the Brazilian economy, such as export agriculture, greatly benefited. A neoliberal government could have simply ridden out this boom and benefited from the additional foreign exchange,<sup>143</sup> but the Lula government increased the value of transfers.

### **Bolsa Família and Food Security at the State Level**

If the expansion of *Bolsa Família* deserves part of the credit for this reduction in food insecurity, there should be a greater reduction in food insecurity where there was a greater expansion in *Bolsa Família* coverage (in other words per capita change). I test this hypothesis using two methods: a geographic information system (GIS) analysis and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression.

#### **First Method: Maps**

For a first test of this hypothesis, I use the software program ArcGIS to make two maps. The first shows the expansion of *Bolsa Família* at the state level between 2004 and 2009, defined as the change in percentage of the population receiving it (measured as the difference in percentage *points*). The map divides states into quartiles according to the size of this increase. The second shows the change in food insecurity (again defined as the combination of moderate and severe insecurity and again measured as difference in percentage points) between the same two years, also dividing states into quartiles. The

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<sup>143</sup> I thank Fernando Filgueira for framing the issue this way for me in a conversation.

food security data again comes from the Brazilian Household Sample Surveys (IBGE 2006, 2010) and the figures for *Bolsa Família* coverage come from the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Economics (IPEA 2011c).<sup>144</sup>

## **Results and Discussion**

The maps (figures 5.2 and 5.3) show that the overall pattern is consistent with the hypothesis. Overall the north and northeast had greater *Bolsa Família* expansion and greater reduction in food insecurity. This is also the region with the greatest poverty. Since Brazil targeted *Bolsa Família* at the poorest, the first map is exactly as expected. Given that the north and northeast had the highest levels of food insecurity in 2004, they had more room for improvement. For example, the northeastern state of Paraíba decreased food insecurity by nearly fifteen percentage points. This was impossible for a state like Santa Catarina with a lower starting level, in this case six percent. The maps do not include a measure of confidence in this relationship nor do they provide any sense of effect size, which is vital for assessing substantive importance. In other words, it would be helpful to know: All else being equal, for every ten people added to *Bolsa Família* how many people moved from food insecurity to security?

## **Rival Explanations**

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<sup>144</sup> For *Bolsa Família* coverage I use figures from IPEA for the number of households in each state and population figures from IBGE. To convert households to individuals I multiply the number of households by 4.1, the average number of individuals in a household receiving *Bolsa Família* in 2006, as mentioned earlier.

Most importantly, the maps do not account for any rival explanation for the decrease in food insecurity, such as economic growth and increased formal sector employment. Given that gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is a frequent predictor of food insecurity at the national level (Jenkins and Scanlan 2001) it might be that gross state product (GSP) predicts food insecurity at the state level. There are many ways this could conceivably happen, but they all rely on the most vulnerable sharing in the fruits of economic growth (recalling the discussion of "Growth Mediated Security" in Drèze and Sen [1989]). The hypothetical impact of formal sector employment is more straightforward: by getting jobs in the formal sector people who were previously unemployed or in extremely low-income employment increase their earnings and are able to afford enough food.

### **Second Method: Statistical Regression**

I use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to test and compare these rival explanations. All variables in my analysis are measured as change between 2004 and 2009, again expressed as the differences in percentage points. I regress the change in food insecurity on change in *Bolsa Familia* coverage, formal sector employment, and economic growth. One advantage of using the difference at the state level is it automatically controls for any state-level variables present at both time periods. The food security and *Bolsa Familia* coverage data come from the same sources as above. I measure economic growth using the change in Gross State Product (GSP) per capita for each state (IBGE 2009, 2011).<sup>145</sup> For the change in formal sector employment I use the

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<sup>145</sup> Brazil's official figures (IBGE 2009, 2011) present two methods for measuring Gross



RAIS figures from the Brazilian Ministry of Labor (Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego 2012), which I express as the percentage of a state's population employed in the formal sector.

## Results and Discussion

Even with such a small sample, there is a strong relationship between how much food insecurity decreased and how much *Bolsa Família* coverage increased at the state level (see table 5.5). Model 1 provides a bivariate model for *Bolsa Família* (see also Figure 5.4). Models 2 and 3 provide bivariate models for formal sector employment and economic growth. Only the model for *Bolsa Família* is statistically significant. On average, a one percentage point increase in the portion of a state's population covered by *Bolsa Família* corresponded to a one-third percentage point decrease in food insecurity. In other words, for every three households added to the program one became food secure.<sup>146</sup>

Models 4 and 5 each include *Bolsa Família* and one rival explanation. Model 6 includes all three explanations. *Bolsa Família* remains significant, the rival explanations remain insignificant, and the effect size remains about the same. So the finding is somewhat robust.

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State Product. One method is to add up the prices of all goods and services in each state using market prices. The other is to measure the value added at each stage. For a concrete example, if a car is manufactured in one state and then has tires added in the second, the market price method would give the second state all the credit, where the value added method gives each state credit for its share of the economic activity. Clearly, the value added approach appropriately measures the kind of economic activity that might conceivably reduce food insecurity at the state level.

<sup>146</sup> Though because of its ecological nature this evidence cannot tell us for sure that these are the same individuals, though I see no other plausible explanation.

Data limitations make this less than an airtight case. That is, it is consistent with the expected relationship but leaves room for doubt. However, this is far from the first study of the issue. We know from the IBASE study that households report being able to buy more food; the dominant finding of studies of the impact of transfers on malnutrition surveyed in Chapter 2 was that conditional cash transfers had a significant impact (Paes-Sousa and Santos 2009, Segall-Corrêa et al. 2008). So this macro-level study adds one more piece of evidence.

## Conclusions

Brazil did not experience high levels of severe malnutrition at the time Lula announced Zero Hunger, but it did suffer from substantial food insecurity and *Bolsa Família* played an important role in reducing that insecurity. This example supports Sen and Drèze's framework, outlined earlier. One way to think about *Bolsa Família* is as a change to Brazil's entitlement framework.<sup>147</sup> As a small guaranteed minimum income, *Bolsa Família* expands the role of the state and establishes it as a source of entitlement for the very poor. The rules of exchange remain unchanged. This is to say they rely largely on the market as a source of food to buy, but are less reliant on it as a source of income.<sup>148</sup>

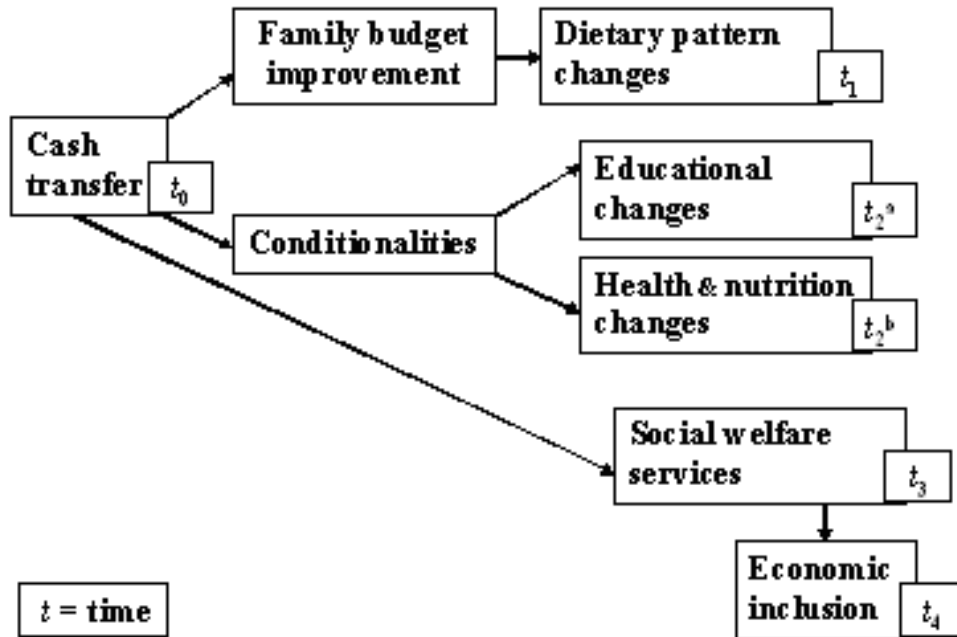
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<sup>147</sup> Indeed, The Organic Law of Food Security and Nutrition (LOAS) from 2006 (Public Law 11.346) amends the Brazilian Constitution to include the right to food, so this can be seen as one of the policies working to make this right a reality.

<sup>148</sup> This reduction on reliance on the market recalls a definition Epsing-Andersen's gives of de-commodification: "the degree to which individuals, or families, can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of market participation." (Epsing-Andersen 1990:37)

*Bolsa Família* represented a consolidation and expansion of conditional cash transfer programs from the Cardoso government, and thus a continuation of the basic strategy. Chapter 3 contrasted this response to policies with the one taken by the Food Card. Chapter 4 showed that *Bolsa Família* reduced poverty intensity. This chapter provides evidence that this reduction in poverty in turn led to a Brazil where more people were able to eat three meals a day.

Figure 5.1: Model from Paes Sousa and Santos.



See Paes Sousa and Santos (2009: 14).

Figure 5.2: Map: Expansion of Bolsa Familia, 2004-2009.

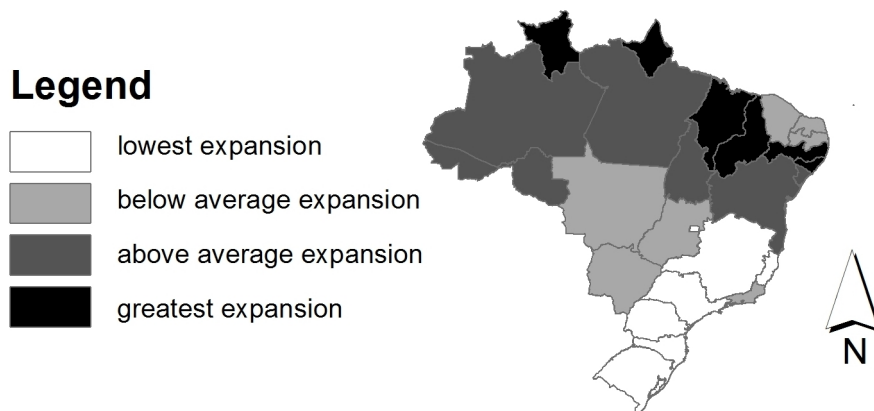


Figure 5.3: Map: Reduction in food insecurity, 2004-2009.

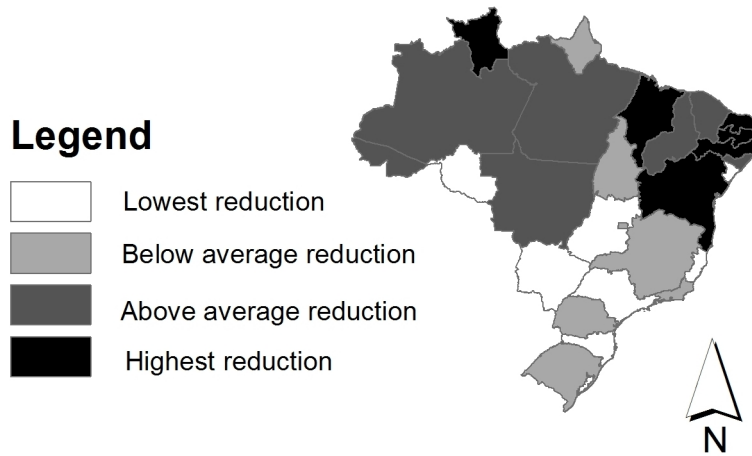
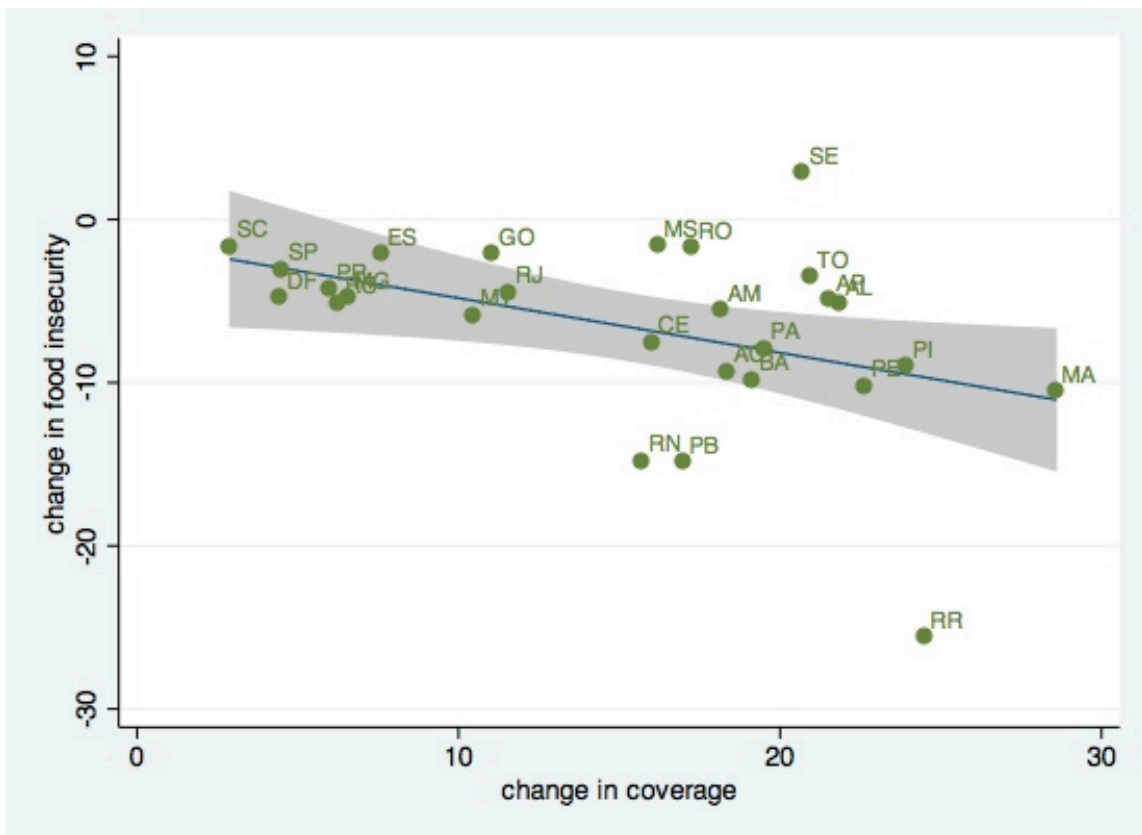


Figure 5.4: Change in Food Security and *Bolsa Família* Coverage, 2004-2009.



Grey area is 95% confidence interval.

**Table 5.1: Child Stunting by income group**

<b>Year(s)</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Poorest</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>4th</b>	<b>Richest</b>
1974-75	Per capita income	59.0	50.8	38.5	25.7	12.1
1989	Per capita income	39.1	30.6	16.6	7.2	5.1
1996	Asset-based	30.7	17.9	9.6	5.7	4.9
2006-07	Asset-based	11.0	9.3	6.8	3.6	4.0
2006-07	Per capita income	11.2	9.3	5.2	5.9	3.3

From Monteiro et al. (2010) Table 1, p. 307.

**Table 5.2: Food security Overview, 2004 PNAD**

Food Security	65.0%
Light Insecurity	18.0%
Moderate Insecurity	9.9%
Severe Insecurity	7.0%
Food Insecure (all)	34.9%

**Table 5.3: Food Insecurity at the State Level**

	2004	2009	Change
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>-5.3</b>
Urbana	15.7	10.8	-4.8
Rural	23.5	15.6	-7.9
<b>North</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>-6.6</b>
Rondônia	12.1	10.3	-1.8
Acre	31.4	22.0	-9.4
Amazonas	18.7	13.2	-5.6
Roraima	44.3	18.7	-25.6
Pará	30.6	22.7	-8.0
Amapá	24.8	19.9	-4.9
Tocantins	20.3	16.8	-3.6
<b>Northeast</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>-9.4</b>
Maranhão	41.8	31.2	-10.6
Piauí	31.7	22.7	-9.0
Ceará	31.4	23.9	-7.5
Rio Grande do Norte	36.7	21.8	-14.8
Paraíba	32.3	17.4	-14.9
Pernambuco	27.3	17.0	-10.3
Alagoas	27.0	21.8	-5.2
Sergipe	13.4	16.3	+2.9
Bahia	29.5	19.7	-9.8
<b>Southeast</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>-3.8</b>
Minas Gerais	13.1	8.3	-4.8
Espírito Santo	11.0	8.9	-2.2
Rio de Janeiro	11.7	7.2	-4.5
São Paulo	9.3	6.2	-3.1
<b>South</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>-4.1</b>
Paraná	10.6	6.3	-4.3
Santa Catarina	6.0	4.3	-1.7
Rio Grande do Sul	10.2	5.1	-5.1
<b>Center-west</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>-3.4</b>
Mato Grosso do Sul	12.3	10.6	-1.6
Mato Grosso	13.3	7.4	-5.9
Goiás	14.4	12.2	-2.2
Federal District	11.0	6.2	-4.8

**Table 5.4: Entitlement Index for *Bolsa Familia***

Dates	Total Benefit (R\$)	Rice Price	Rice Purchased	Rice Index	Bean Price	Beans Purchased	Bean Index
2003 (Oct-Dec)	95	585	0.16	1.00	1353.3	0.070	1.00
2004 (all)	95	634.2	0.15	0.92	1153.3	0.082	1.17
2005 (all)	95	493.3	0.19	1.19	1305	0.073	1.04
2006 (all)	95	454.2	0.21	1.29	1190.8	0.080	1.14
2007 (Jan-Jul)	95	499.2	0.19	1.17	1305.8	0.073	1.04
2007 (Aug-Dec)	112	499.2	0.22	1.38	1305.8	0.086	1.22
2008 (Jan-Jun)	112	654.2	0.17	1.05	2384.2	0.047	0.67
2008 (Jul-Dec)	122	654.2	0.19	1.15	2384.2	0.051	0.73

Example household is an extremely poor family of four.

**Table 5.5: The determinants of food security at the state level, 2004-2009.**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<i>Bolsa Familia</i>	-0.335*			-0.339*	-0.381*	-0.366*
	(-2.40)			(-2.46)	(-2.10)	(-2.03)
Formal Sector		-0.79		-0.825		-0.803
		(-1.14)		(-1.30)		(-1.23)
Growth			0.403		-0.185	-0.108
			-1.08		(-0.41)	(-0.24)
Constant	-1.469	-4.014†	-8.562***	1.291	0.142	2.159
	(-0.62)	(-1.60)	(-4.06)	(0.41)	(0.03)	(0.45)
Observations	27	27	27	27	27	27
R-squared	0.187	0.049	0.044	0.241	0.193	0.243
Adjusted R-Squared	0.155	0.011	0.006	0.178	0.126	0.144

*t* statistics in parentheses

†  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (1-tailed tests)

All variables expressed as differences between 2004 and 2009.



## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### Summary of Findings

Governments make policy decisions that directly affect how many of their citizens go hungry. These decisions are the result of politics. It is common for political scientists to describe politics as a game, because, like a game, politics consists of competition structured by a set of rules. This dissertation's contribution is to bring attention to policy implementation, not as a purely technical problem, but as a continuation of politics, albeit one less formal than the world of roll call votes and presidential vetoes.

If the theoretical framework from Chapter 2 is correct, it will often be politically, as well as technically, more difficult to start a new policy instead of revising inherited policies in accordance with a new government's goals. Chapter 3 used evidence from interviews, Brazilian media, and government documents to show that this was precisely one of the reasons why *Bolsa Familia* succeeded where the Food Card failed.

Chapter 2 also explained why, all else being equal, the more complex of two policy designs will lead to a greater chance of implementation failure. Again, this is not just about the technical process of implementation, but also about how politics continues through that process. Every new component is a place for the implementation process to break down. This can happen for many different reasons—limited capacity, limited recourses, limited competence—but also because of political opposition. The comparison

of the Food Card to *Bolsa Família* in Chapter 3 supported this understanding of policy implementation. For example, it showed how the choice to charge the Municipal Committees with selecting beneficiaries for the Food Card led to both opposition parties and local mayors fearing that the committees would be put to partisan ends.

Chapter 4 argued that cash transfers can be effective at combating income poverty. It analyzed the 2009 Brazilian Household Sample Survey (PNAD) to show that, consistent with expectations, *Bolsa Família* did little to reduce headcount poverty, but led to substantively significant reductions in income gap, intensity and ordinal measures of poverty.

Chapter 5 argued that cash transfers can be effective at combating food insecurity. After showing that food insecurity decreased between 2004 and 2009, it demonstrated that the amount of food a household could buy with *Bolsa Família* remained largely constant. Geographic information system (GIS) maps and a simple ordinary least squares (OLS) regression showed that the states where food insecurity decreased the most were generally the same states where *Bolsa Família*'s expansion was the greatest.

Arriving at conclusions about program effectiveness required thinking carefully about concepts of poverty and hunger and how to turn these concepts into measures. The idea that concept formation is a key step in the research process is not new (see Sartori 1970), but is one worth remembering. Thinking about poverty and hunger differently leads to different conclusions about *Bolsa Família*'s effectiveness. There is not one right way to measure poverty and hunger, but this dissertation argued that poverty intensity and food security are appropriate measures for assessing Lula's success in achieving his goal of a Brazil where everyone eats breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

## **Policy Implications**

About 840 million people suffer from hunger; they are about an eighth of the world population (FAO et al. 2013). A child dies from hunger every five seconds (UNICEF 2006). Does this dissertation offer any useful lessons for the rest of the world about how to change this?

I think that it does. This dissertation's theoretical framework cannot offer specific suggestions for what policies other countries should adopt to combat hunger. The set of countries with hungry people is, sadly, a large subset of all the countries in the world. Given the tremendous differences among them, I doubt that there is a set of policies that would work everywhere. In essence, someone ought to have some specific knowledge of Chad before advising Chad on how to combat hunger.

More modestly, what this dissertation offers—the knowledge that “travels” beyond one place and period—is a way of thinking about those choices. What are a country's policy legacies? How can they be an effective starting point? How can that country expand upon them in a way that avoids unnecessary complexity in order to increase the chance of success? None of these arguments are new. Indeed all of them date back to at least the 1970's or 1980's, as Chapter 2 made clear.

In more general terms the argument about legacies dates at least 120 years earlier than that. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* Marx (1972 [1852]: 595) famously writes that “men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past.” Understanding that

women and men cannot make anti-hunger policy “just as they please” is this dissertation’s key lesson.

The arguments about simplicity and complexity were not only present in the research discussed in Chapter 2, but also in debates within the PT. As we saw in Chapter 3, Ana Fonseca, Eduardo Suplicy, and Cristovam Buarque were all prominent advocates of a simplified approach that avoided fragmentation and for building on existing cash transfers. Yet Lula initially opted for Graziano’s overly complex, fresh start approach until it was clear that the keep-it-simple contingent was correct.

These lessons are timely, as there is continuing interest in Zero Hunger as a “model” for other countries. The op-ed from India quoted in Chapter 1 is but one example. Brazil has inspired a steady spread of zero hunger campaigns in other countries, including Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Antigua and Barbuda, and South Africa.<sup>149</sup>

The Brazilian government “is engaged in globally diffusing the knowledge of the Zero Hunger Strategy throughout the developing world” (Fraundorfer 2013). The Latin American and Caribbean regional office of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has a Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative<sup>150</sup> started when Graziano headed that office. Now the United Nations has a worldwide campaign called The Zero Hunger Challenge.<sup>151</sup> In addition to various private NGOs, the challenge brings together

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<sup>149</sup> Cero Hambre [Zero Hunger] in Guatemala, Sin Hambre Cruzada Nacional [National Crusade Against Hunger] in Mexico, Programa Hambre Cero [Zero Hunger Program] in Nicaragua, Zero Hunger Challenge in Antigua and Barbuda, and Food for All in South Africa.

<sup>150</sup> <http://www.rlc.fao.org/en/initiative/the-initiative/>

<sup>151</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/zerohunger/>

many UN agencies whose work touches on hunger, including The FAO. The FAO's current director: José Graziano, elected in July 2011.

Brazil lobbied hard for Graziano's candidacy, housing his campaign in the Ministry of Foreign Relations (Itamaraty). The key argument for electing him was that, having led Zero Hunger, he could bring this successful experience to the rest of the world. The pamphlet for his candidacy summed up his experience as follows:

In 2001, Graziano da Silva led the formulation of the Zero Hunger Program and was subsequently appointed to the position of Extraordinary Minister of Food Security and [the] Fight Against Hunger to implement it. The program has helped to lift 24 million people out of poverty in five years and to reduce undernourishment in Brazil by 25%.<sup>152</sup>

It conveniently omits his departure from the position after a year, the abolition of his special ministry, or that *Bolsa Família* was in direct competition with his ministry's Food Card. Likewise, recent media coverage painting Graziano as the protagonist behind Zero Hunger makes it look like *Bolsa Família* was the natural outgrowth of his leadership and he deserves credit for it.<sup>153</sup>

Spin is part of politics. Just because Brazil's Zero Hunger Program crashed and burned under Graziano's leadership does not mean he will repeat the same mistakes at the FAO. Indeed he may have learned from them. My worry is that the selective retelling of Zero Hunger might give others the wrong idea of how to succeed in achieving the same kinds of gains against poverty and hunger as Brazil. In other words, it could lead to a flawed theory that in turn leads to flawed policies.

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<sup>152</sup> "Graziano da Silva: Candidate to the position of Director – General of FAO." 2011. Pamphlet. Print.

<sup>153</sup> Vaisman, Cecilia. April 4. 2012. "Brazil delivers on hunger promise." Marketplace. Available at: <http://www.marketplace.org/topics/sustainability/food-9-billion/brazil-delivers-hunger-promise> (Accessed November 17, 2013);

In 1932, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt summed up the trial-and-error approach to public policy as follows:

The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it: If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something. (Roosevelt 1932: 646)

For all the problems discussed in Chapter 3, Brazil tried something (the Food Card) and, when that did not work, tried something else (*Bolsa Familia*); Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated that Lula's second take at using cash transfers to reduce poverty and hunger worked well. In my experience people familiar with Zero Hunger know this is what happened. The issue with spinning to make it look like things went fine on the first try is more than one of intellectual honesty. While I understand the political reasons not to frankly admit the early errors—which were hardly surprising given that the PT was just learning how to govern at the federal level—I fear that some people looking to learn from Brazil's experience will buy the tidy narrative and not understand the lessons to be learned from these mistakes. For instance, I fear they may read the English translation of the 2001 proposal (in Graziano et al. 2011), think that this is the blueprint for what Brazil actually did, and attempt to copy that.

What does it mean to use Brazil as a model? One approach would be to use the Zero Hunger brand as a way of communicating the shared goal of a set of initiatives, regardless of how connected the government of those initiatives is. The Lula Government's slogan for the Brazilian federal government as a whole was "Brazil: A Country for All" (*Brasil: Um país de todos*). President Rousseff's slogan is "Brazil: A rich country is a country without poverty" (*Brasil: Um país rico é um país sem pobreza*). Her major anti-poverty initiative is Brazil without Misery (*Brasil Sem Miséria*).

I suspect Brazil's "umbrella approach" would have worked just as well with a different label. Granted, branding is important—"Brazil: slowly getting fairer" does not inspire the same effect—but the substance of the policies is essential. When it comes to specific policies, simply trying to "copy and paste" what a large, federal, urbanized, middle-income country did into a wildly different context seems unwise.

### **Cash Transfers**

A country looking to copy policies from Brazil would likely consider *Bolsa Família* a prime candidate. Indeed, cash transfers, both conditional and unconditional, have been spreading around the world. Nearly every country in Latin America and the Caribbean has some kind of cash transfer (Fonseca 2008). So should other countries adopt this approach?

Not so fast, argues Drèze:

CCT [Conditional Cash Transfer] enthusiasm... is often based on a superficial reading of the Latin American experience. In Brazil, Mexico and other pioneers of this approach, CCTs were used to bring into the fold of health and education services a fringe of marginalised households...<sup>154</sup>

He agrees that conditional cash transfers can be effective incentives to get people to use services, but expresses misgivings about expecting more from them:

What is remarkably dangerous... is the illusion that CCTs can replace public services by enabling recipients to buy health and education services from private providers. This is not how CCTs work in, say, Brazil or Mexico. In Latin America, CCTs are usually seen as a complement, not a substitute, for public provision of health, education and other basic services. The incentives work because the services are there

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<sup>154</sup> Drèze, Jean. May 11, 2011. "The cash mantra." *The Indian Express*. Available at: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/the-cash-mantra/788791/> (Accessed November 17, 2013). For a more extensive version of this argument see Chapter 7 in Drèze and Sen (2013).

in the first place. In India, these basic services are still missing to a large extent, and CCTs are no substitute.

In other words, these countries had policy legacies—having established these services—that made the conditional cash transfer approach an effective next step. Other countries ignore this at their peril. Another legacy Drèze points out is that Latin American countries already had systems of social insurance that covered large parts of the country. So targeting “makes some sense, because the bulk of the population is already covered and the rest is (relatively) easy to identify...”

Drèze goes on to discuss the relative advantages of giving people food vs. cash, arguing that one advantage of direct food support is that it is inflation proof. A kilo of rice is a kilo of rice is a kilo of rice. It is difficult to imagine *Bolsa Família* working in the era before Brazil put an end to hyperinflation. The need to constantly adjust benefit sizes to make them have any significant purchasing power would have greatly complicated the program. So in this case the simplicity of the cash approach is partly a result of a policy legacy from the Itamar Franco government.

Given that, countries experiencing high inflation should think carefully about the choice of cash vs. food. Part of the reason distributing basic baskets was so complicated in Brazil (Chapter 3) is doubtless the size of the country and challenging terrain. Just as a different economic context might make the cash approach comparatively more difficult, different geography might make food distribution comparatively easier. The choice will depend on context, as well as legacies. For example, Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux (2010) find that food transfers were more effective than cash in Ethiopia during a period when it suffered from high inflation.



## Politics

The policies appropriate for a given country are not the only thing that will be different; the politics will be different as well. Brazil is a diverse half-continent with asymmetrical federalism. This is hardly the modal country in the world. Different countries have different politics and this leads to different policy outcomes. We know this. So, if hunger is political those differences in politics will result in differences in policies relevant to hunger, which will in turn result in differences in outcomes. That has been a central premise throughout this dissertation.

When scholars (e.g. Drèze and Sen 1989) or activists (eg. Lappé et al. 1998) frame hunger a political problem the implied model seems to be:

- 1a) Progressives win an election, or
- 1b) Progressives mobilize to pressure the government, resulting in a situation where
- 2) The government commits to combat hunger.
- 3) The government enacts policies to combat hunger.
- 4) These policies reduce hunger.

Politics does not stop at step two or three; it runs through the entire process.

Implementation, as we saw in Chapter 3, is full of politics, but of a different sort: rivalries between ministers in the same party, mayors who operate in a world of personalistic factions and not ideology, citizens charged with picking which of their neighbors are most needy.

The political context—and corresponding policy legacies—will be different in each situation. Policymakers must respond by taking this into account, but in doing so they should think about the relative complexity of their alternatives. If I am correct that

complexity hamstrung Zero Hunger in its first year—along with the wider literature arguing this is true of policy implementation more generally—this suggests that policymakers should seek the simplest program likely to achieve its goal.

In spite of these cautionary lessons, Brazil gives us reason to be hopeful. Its experience with Zero Hunger teaches that:

- It is possible for a government to reduce hunger.
- A government does not have to get things right the first time to succeed.
- A program does not need to be perfect to be effective

It is because of these encouraging lessons that governments and international organizations are engaged in zero hunger campaigns of their own. I am glad to see so many working earnestly to fight hunger. The only general advice I can offer them is this: if possible build on the work of those before you. Keep it simple. Be persistent.

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