Barriers to Youth Connections to Work: The Case of Young People in the Low-Income Neighborhood of Caju in Rio de Janeiro

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Introduction

In February 2005, the Administration of President Luis Ignacio da Silva (Lula) in Brazil issued a strategy statement about the work situation of Brazilian youth to follow up a commitment made at the end of 2003 to combat youth unemployment. The statement, *National Program for Encouraging the First Job for Young People-PNPE: National Action Plan for the Employment of Young People*,[2] set out a series of strategies to address the high rates of unemployment among the large cohort of Brazilians between the ages of 15-24. The statement was set in the context of the government's commitment to combat poverty and social exclusion and the fact that young people were among the chief victims of unemployment and violence.

While this statement was Brazilian in origin and purpose, it mirrors an international concern about the employment and economic condition of young people. At the same time the Lula government was issuing its strategy document, the International Labor Organization, ILO, issued a statement *Youth Employment: From a National Challenge to a Global Development Goal* as a background paper for a Group of 8 (G8) conference of Labor and Employment Ministers.[3] That paper set out with a great deal of urgency the worrying state of young people's lack of connection to regular, paid work. The ILO paper pointed out that getting a right foothold in the labor market has multiplier effects through a person's life; that youth under- and unemployment feeds armed conflict and crime; and that in developing countries key issues are supply side rather than demand side, namely the basic lack of jobs. Also specific to developing countries are the problems of the high percent of youth in the informal economy, high rates of HIV infection, gender discrimination and the over-representation of youth in the agricultural sector. The ILO followed up this problem state with a strategy report titled *Youth pathways to decent work, Report VI: Promoting youth employment-tackling the challenge*.[4]

International youth employment statistics provide roughly comparable data across countries on a few major indicators. While these statistics are useful for describing the broad parameters of the problem of youth under- and unemployment, it is possible to get a richer understanding of the context that produces those broad parameters by looking at the details of the lives of young people in their local context. Several detailed surveys of young people and their families conducted by the Rio nonprofit research and

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[1]Woodstock Institute is a research and policy nonprofit located in Chicago, Illinois, that studies ways to bring economic and financial resources to lower-income and minority communities. The author is very grateful to Aleksandra Pruszewicz, for invaluable assistance in the re-analysis of the survey data on which this paper is based. He is also grateful to Irene Rizzini, director, and the staff of the International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janerio for invaluable help in setting the IETS data in context.

[2]National Program for Encouraging the First Job For Young People-PNPE: National Action Plan for the Employment of Young People, Ministry of Labor and Employment, Brasilia, February, 2005.

[3]Youth Employment: From a National Challenge to a Global Development Goal, Background paper contributed by the ILO to the G8 Labor and Employment Minister's Conference, London, March 2005.

[4]Youth pathways to decent work, Report VI: Promoting youth employment-tackling the challenges, International Labor Conference, 93rd session, International Labor Office, 2005.

policy organization, Instituto de Estudos do Trabalho e Sociedade (IETS) included a number of questions related to work connection, and this paper analyses the IETS data on this specific topic.[5]

The Caju Survey

Caju is a low-income community of almost 20,000 people in Rio de Janeiro, the second largest city in Brazil with a population of about six million people. Caju is what is colloquially known as a favela, a term somewhat indiscriminately applied to low-income communities in Brazil[6]. In Rio there are over 750 favelas and approximately one out of every five residents of the city lives in one.

The history of the choice of Caju for two extensive surveys by IETS is as follows. In the years 1997 to 2000, the Secretary of Work in Rio commissioned a study of the social and economic conditions of low-income communities and 51 were chosen for the study. The communities chosen were those communities that since 1994 had been included in the municipal project called Favela-Bairro, a program aimed at integrating low-income communities into the life of the city through major public infrastructure improvements. It is not clear why particular communities were included in the Favela-Bairro project but the communities chosen were in all parts of the city. Several of the sub-communities in Caju were included in Favela-Bairro. IETS chose Caju out of the 51 communities in the Secretary of Work's study for its intensive study because "although it was close to the center of Rio de Janeiro and had recently received both public and private sector investments, it scored low on indices of human development". Also, a corporate funder of the study was located near Caju.

The facts that Caju is close to downtown Rio and has received a number of public and private sector investments give it particular economic advantages. Located in the southern zone of the city or *zona sul*, it is also close enough to or has good bus and subway connections to a number of middle-income districts of the city including the famous beach communities of Copacabana and Ipanema. The consequence of this location is that residents have much better and closer job opportunities than residents of favelas located, for example, in the northern zone, *zona norte*. Many low-income women in Rio work as domestic helpers in middle-class families, so the proximity of middle class families facilitates such employment. Similarly, since there is much more economic activity in the southern zone, men have closer access to various low-skill jobs.

The fact that Caju is not a representative of all low-income communities in the city is problematic for purposes of generalization but that problem is not as severe as it may sound. Certainly, young people's attempts to get connected to work with income are more difficult for young *Cariocas* (the local term for

[5]The author is most grateful to IETS for generously making available the raw data from their surveys connected to their project "Pesquisa da Juventude No Caju. In particular, he thanks Andre Urani and Adriana Fontes for full access to the data and for help with understanding the structure of the data files. The IETS project is summarized in Pesquisa da Juventude No Caju, Relatorio Final, IETS, Rio de Janeiro, mss. February, 2004. Several of the analyses in this paper come from the IETS final report, but the majority are re-analyses of the data conducted by the authors.

[6]The first reference to favelas in Brazil dates back to the end of the nineteenth century when soldiers of the Fourth Brazilian Expeditionary Force, returning from a war against the separatist village of Canudos in the state of Bahia established residence in the hillsides of Rio de Janeiro on the *Morro da Providencia*. Since this new pattern of urbanization resembled the *Morro da Favela* settlement in Canudos, the name favela was used to describe the settlement and so the *Morro da Providencia*, the first shanty town in Rio was also the first favela. The Brazilian government census and statistical office, *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica* (IBGE) does not use officially the term favela but instead the term "*aglomerado subnormal*". The definition of that term is a collection of at least at least 51 occupied or recently occupied low-income houses on public or private property. This occupation is often random, highly concentrated and usually lacks essential public services. The definition conforms with an international definition that dates to 1987.

residents of the city) living in communities further away from middle-income communities. But there is a great deal of heterogeneity among Rio favelas and a truly representative sample would have to include quite a large number of communities. Such a large sample would have made an intensive survey more difficult as the sample of respondents would have to be very large to control for community effects in addition to the large number of variables already included in the survey. Moreover, the difficulty that youth in low-income communities close to middle-income districts have finding work is illustrative of the deep structural challenges facing low-income youth, even those living close to economic and job centers. Nonetheless, young people living in Caju doubtless have many more job opportunities than those living in low-income communities distant from job rich communities.

There exist some comparative data that put Caju into context. They seem to indicate that Caju is, in general, no better off than other low-income communities but the comparative indicators are for low-income communities in the municipality of Rio not the Rio metropolitan area and, therefore, exclude the poorest communities on the periphery of the city. According to 2002 data, the median income per capita of working adults in Caju was R$170, currently about $80 U.S.[7] In all low-income communities in Caju, the figure was R$151 and for the municipality of Rio excluding low-income communities, R$380. The same report showed the illiteracy rate in Caju to be 14 percent compared to 10 percent in all low-income communities and 3 percent in Rio as a whole excluding low-income communities.[8] The median years of schooling in Caju for residents 25 years of age and older was five, the same as for other low-income communities, while the figure for the municipality excluding low-income communities was nine.[9] Twenty-five percent of young people aged 18-21 in Caju were neither at school nor in the work force compared to 13 percent for the municipality excluding low-income communities.[10] And finally, whereas about two percent of the residents of Caju and other low-income communities 25 years and older had ever entered a university course, the same percentage for Rio excluding low-income communities was 24 percent.[11]

However, Caju compares to all low-income communities in the Rio metro area, it is still poor. The IETS final report described the median individual wage as R$451 a month in 2002, with about 40 percent of residents being poor, i.e., earning less than R$143 a month[12]. About 10 percent were described as indigent meaning that their income was half of the official poverty line. A previous study of Caju by several organizations indicated several characteristics of a struggling community.[13] Out of a total of 562 commercial enterprises, 184 were bars and 53 were vacant stores. Seventy four percent of the population over 25 had not completed *ensino fundamental*. Only half of the working adults had work cards. Another 20 percent ran their own small businesses. While most households possessed the basic consumer durables, only 11 percent had a car. Forty percent said that violence was the main problem in the

[7]Apresentacao Analise das Informacoes Socio-Economica do Complexo do Caju, Business Council for Social Responsibility, Rio Federation of Industry (FIRJAN) undated mss., p.18.

[8]FIRJAN, undated mss., p. 22.

[9]FIRJAN undated mss., p. 24.

[10]FIRJAN undated mss., pp. 23-24.

[11]FIRJAN, undated mss., p. 27.

[12]In the last several years, the value of the reis has varied considerably. In the financial panic caused by candidate Lula's rise in the polls before his first election in 200?, $1 U.S. was worth almost 4 RS. At the time of writing, $1 U.S. equals about R$2.10.

[13]Federação das Indústrias do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Instituto de Estudos do Trabalho e Sociedade, and SCIENCE, Pesquisa das Communidades do Complexo do Caju, Rio de Janeiro, 2005, mimeographed list of tables.

community. About 50 percent of the residents said that their principal reason for living in Caju was the cost of housing elsewhere, and fewer than 10 percent said it was because of the proximity to jobs.[14] Historically, Caju has been transformed from a beach community with medicinal baths frequented by the Emperor Dom Joao VI and his court, to an industrial, container port, and waste dumping ground cut off from the rest of the city by the major highway, Avenida Brasil.[15]

Survey Methodology

The IETS project included two surveys. The first, conducted in October, 2002 was titled A Social-Economic Study of the Communities of Caju and was fielded to a probabilistic sample of every private, permanent, domicile (*domicilios particulares permanentes*[16]) in Caju. The youth survey, *A Study of Youth in the Communities of CAJU*, included all the youth who lived in the households chosen in the 2002 survey and was conducted in 2003. In 2002, some 24,500 people lived in Caju in some 7,000 households. One thousand, six hundred and sixty four households were included in the sample and the response rate was 74 percent. In 2003, 893 young people between the ages of 10-24 were living in the sample households. The apparently low number of youth per household is the consequence of the youth sample not including children under ten and the fact that some of the young people between the ages of 10-24 would not be living in their family of origin and, therefore, not part of the youth sample. In the final report of the youth survey, the IETS team adjusted the sample results by a various estimations of the population of CAJU. In our report, however, for clarity's sake we use the raw data in the survey.

The purpose of this article is to describe the conditions and characteristics of young people in Caju that have an impact on their relationship to current and future job market prospects. These conditions include the young people's educational experience, their past and present work experience, their job aspirations, and their family background.

Educational Experiences

Educational background is a major determinant of work success and the educational trajectories of young people in Caju are fractured like those of most poor young people in Brazil. Their parents had similarly incomplete educational experiences. The resident survey showed that 16 percent of residents had no schooling, 37 percent had completed *ensino basico* (grades 1-4), 33 percent *ensino fundamental* (grades 5-8), 12 percent *ensino medio* (grades 9-12), and about 2 percent *ensino superior* (college).[17] The young people's schooling was a work in progress with 43 percent of 18-21 year olds still attending school due to failing in the past, or dropping out in the past.[18] We should point out that fact of "still attending school" is

[14]Maria Isabel de Toledo Andrade, Diretos de Propriedade e Renda Pessoal: Um Estudo de Case das Comunidades do Caju, Master's Thesis, Instituto de Economia IE/UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, September, 2004, p.55.

[15]Op cit., p. 63.

[16]A domicile, according to the definitions use by the main Brazilian government statistics bureau, Instituto Brazileiro de Geografia e Estatistica (IBGE) is considered private when all the people in the unit are related by family, friendship, or such similar link. A permanent domicile is one where the main purpose of the structure is for living rather than for commerce or storage and where the structure is not incomplete, or like a tent or a cave.

[17]Graph 2, Distribution of education of the residents of Caju in 2002, IETS, 2004, p.20.

[18]Where a footnote does not cite a IETS study, the data is a reanalysis by Woodstock Institute. The numbers in the two studies will be slightly different because IETS adjusted the sample results to be representative of the community whereas Woodstock used the raw data. IETS weighted the sample results to control for different response rates by sex and age. The sample design and the adjustments are described in IETS,2004, pp. 7-17.

a slippery concept given high absentee rates and high failure rates. The survey question asked whether the respondent was attending school in the survey year but respondents answering yes would still be subject to high absentee rates and occasional attendance.

One hundred and sixty-six out of 893 respondents report dropping out of school one or more times (Table 1). One hundred and fifty of them answered the question "what was the main reason for dropping out of school?" The most frequent reason given was "no interest in studying" and the second most frequent, "the need to work". While an equal percent of young men as young women recorded the answer "no interest in studying", young men were twice as likely to report the answer "need to work" (30 percent versus 15 percent). Young women were more likely to report family problems as the reason for failing school as young men (9 percent versus 6 percent). Seventeen percent of the female respondents report pregnancy as the reason for dropping out of school. What is noteworthy about these responses is that the vast majority of young people assign reasons for school failure to themselves rather than to the schools.

Table 1: Main Reason for Dropping Out of School at Least Once[19]

Reason	Number	Percent
No interest in studying	49	33
Need to work	36	24
Pregnant[20]	16	11
Moved house	10	7
Failing school	9	6
Family reasons	8	5
School inadequacy	8	5
Violence	7	5
Other	7	5
Total	**150**	**101**[21]

A much higher percent of young people had failed school at least once (i.e. had failed a grade) than had dropped out and the distribution of reasons was different (Table 2). Four hundred and sixty one out of 893 respondents report failing at school one or more times and 452 of these young people reported the main reason why they failed at school.

In the case of failing a grade, the major response category is learning difficulties. Only a small percent of young people give the poor quality of the school as a reason for either dropping out or failing a grade. The third largest category of reasons for failing school at least once is playing around and/or creating disorder in the classroom. If that category is combined with the related category, lack of interest, the combined category accounts for 20 percent of all the responses.

Being in school is not a guarantee of doing well in school. One measure of school success is whether the student is at or behind grade level. About 20 percent of the young people who attended school were at grade level. Some 37 percent were one year behind grade level and another 20 percent two years behind

[19]In the IETS youth report, 2004, only the first two reasons are given and the remainder are collapsed as other.

[20]This table records the responses of all respondents so the 17 percent of women who report pregnancy as the reason for dropping out of school translates to 11 percent of all respondents who are included in this table.

[21]Percentages add up to more than 100 percent because of rounding.

grade level. The remainder, about 23 percent, was three or more years behind grade level. One important determinant of whether a student was at or behind grade level was whether a student attended a public school or a private school. Forty percent of the youth who attended private school were at or above grade level compared to 21 percent of those who attended public school (see Table 3.).

Table 2: Main Reason for Failing School at Least Once[22]

Reason	Number	Percent
Learning difficulties	256[23]	57
Lack of interest	58	13
Family problems	33	7
Playing around in school	29	6
School inadequacy	15	3
Sick	14	3
Needed to work	13	3
Domestic responsibilities	12	2
Moved house	12	2
Violence	7	2
Other	3	2
Total	452	100

Table3: Percent of Young People at or Behind Grade Level by Type of School Attended

Type of School	Public	Public	Private	Private	Total	Total
Years behind	#	%	#	%	#	%
-1	6	1.05	3	5.26	9	1.44
0	111	19.51	20	35.09	131	20.93
1	200	35.15	26	45.61	226	36.10
2	117	20.56	4	7.02	121	19.33
3	67	11.78	3	5.26	70	11.18
4	36	6.33	0	0.00	36	5.75
5	32	5.62	1	1.75	33	5.27
total	569	100.00	57	100.00	626	100.00

Not surprisingly, attendance at private school was related to total household income. Private school didn't become an option for youth in Caju until monthly household income was between R$751-R$1,000. Fifteen percent of youth who lived in households with that income level attended private school. For youth in households with monthly incomes above R$1,500, 40 percent attended private schools. Attending a private school predicted additional school outcomes. Whereas 80 percent of private school students had never failed a grade at school, that was true for only 50 percent of public school students.

[22]Failing school is the equivalent in the U.S. of failing a grade. In the IETS 2004 report, the only reasons broken out are learning difficulties, necessity to work, domestic responsibilities, and family problems. The remaining reasons are collapsed under other.

[23]This total includes the 256 reported in IETS, 2004, and 11 answers of failing a grade reported in the IETS report in the other category.

The difference between the two groups of students on their educational aspirations, what level of schooling they hoped to achieve, was not as great as might be imagined. Sixty percent of public school students aspired to complete college compared to 70 percent of private school students, although given the difference in school failure rates, the actual outcomes are likely to be different than the aspirations.

The fact that a minority of Caju youth attend private schools, and that their school outcomes are different from other Caju youth is a clue to the fact that even though in the aggregate, young people from this low-income community have poor educational outcomes, there are striking differences in outcomes within the community. And that reality begs the question of what are the correlates of those differences. Tables 4, 5, and 6, show similar patterns for the school related outcomes of (a) being two or more years behind grade level, (b) failing a grade at some point, and (c) the young people's educational aspirations.

Table 4 details a logistic regression on the dependent variable that the young people were two or more years behind grade level. Not surprisingly, the older the youth the more likely they were to be behind grade level as previous difficulties at school built on each other in the absence of successful strategies to put failing students back on track. The odds of being behind for these young people, the youngest group of whom were ten years old, increase by about 43 percent each year all else being equal. While race has no significant effect on the odds of falling behind grade level, gender is significant. Keeping all other things equal, boys have about 48 percent higher chance of being behind grade level than girls.

The odds of private school students being behind grade are about 66 percent lower than odds of those attending public schools, holding other variables constant.

What is most striking about the regression on being behind grade level is the degree to which parents' education level impacts their children's education achievements. The odds of children whose parent can read being behind grade is almost 55 percent less than those of other children and the odds decrease by about 40 percent if the parents completed elementary school.

Table 4: Multiple Regression on Young People Two or More Years Behind Grade Level

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Anti-log of Coefficient	Significance
Age	**0.3539**	**0.0377**	**1.4246**	**0.0000***
Gender: Male	**0.3872**	**0.1903**	**1.4728**	**0.0418***
Black	0.3788	0.3536	1.4606	0.2840
Brown (mixed)	0.2585	0.2012	1.2950	0.1989
Private school	**-1.0791**	**0.4558**	**0.3399**	**0.0179***
Parents education: parent can read	**-0.7879**	**0.3273**	**0.4548**	**0.0161***
Parents education: elementary school completed	**-0.5110**	**0.2544**	**0.5999**	**0.0446***
Household income	-0.0001	0.0002	0.9999	0.5140
Number of youth in a household	0.1169	0.1016	1.1240	0.2497
Constant	-4.8373	0.6368	0.0079	0.0000
Nagelkerke- R Squared	0.2960			
N	602			

*** Significant at the 0.05 level**

The multiple regression on young persons who have failed school at least once has similarities with the regression on being two or more years behind grade level except that parent education ceases to be an important explanatory variable. Notice that two other variables are significant in this second equation. As household income increases, the chance of ever having failed a grade declines but as the number of young people in a household increases, the chance of failing increase. The different results may partly reflect the difference in the part of the sample used in each equation. Table 4 only includes youth currently attending school (N = 602) while Table 5 includes all the survey youth who answered that question (N = 708.) It may be that household income and the number of youth in a household impact actually leaving school so, therefore, affect those children permanently out of school, but not those in school. So, for example, children in poorer households and in households with more children may well leave school at higher rates than other youth in order to add to the household's income or to care for other children in the home. None of the variables used in these equations, however, predicted the young people who would drop out of school at least once as opposed to fail a grade. This last finding suggests that some personal variables rather than the contextual and demographic variables captured by the survey influenced dropping out.

Table 5: Multiple Regression on Young People Failing School Once or More

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Anti-log of Coefficient	Significance
Age	**0.1385**	**0.0256**	**1.1485**	**0.0000****
Gender: Male	**0.3874**	**0.1594**	**1.4731**	**0.0151****
Black	-0.0421	0.2811	0.9588	0.8810
Brown (mixed)	0.2550	0.1687	1.2905	0.1307
Private school	**-0.8210**	**0.3650**	**0.4400**	**0.0245****
Parents education: parent can read	-0.2244	0.2579	0.7990	0.3842
Parents education: elementary school completed	-0.2103	0.2093	0.8103	0.3149
Household income	-0.0004	0.0002	0.9996	0.0601*
Number of youth in a household	**0.2239**	**0.0859**	**1.2509**	**0.0091****
Constant	-2.2088	0.4873	0.1098	0.0000
Nagelkerke- R Squared	0.1288			
N	708			

***Significant at the 0.1 level. ** Significant at the 0.05 level.**

The survey variables did, however, help predict the educational aspirations of the young people. Two hundred and twelve of the young people in school, or 36 percent aspired to an educational level of completing high school or less. The vast majority of these young people aspired to completing high school. The other 64 percent of young people still in school when they responded to the survey aspired to completing college or more. The vast majority of these aspired to completing college. Table 6 details the multiple on educational aspirations with aspirations equal to one when the youth wishes to complete college or more and equal to 0 when the youth aspires to high school or less.

The table shows that age has a significant effect over youth aspirations. Keeping other things constant, with each additional year of age the odds of youth intending to go to college increase by about 15 percent. It could be that as the young people grow older they understand more the possibilities of a broader range of job choices and the need for, and advantages of, a higher level of education. Statistically, girls plan to study longer than boys. The odds of a boy wishing to complete college are 55 percent smaller than odds

of girls planning to do so. Private school students more often consider higher education than public school attendees. The odds that private school student aspire to completing college are over 2.7 times higher than their public school peers.

Table 6: Multiple Regression on Youth Educational Aspirations

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Anti-log of Coefficient	Significance
Age	**0.1421**	**0.0367**	**1.1527**	**0.0001****
Gender: Male	**-0.7979**	**0.1807**	**0.4503**	**0.0000****
Black	-0.3114	0.3295	0.7324	0.3445
Brown (mixed)	-0.1571	0.1903	0.8546	0.4090
Private school	**1.0027**	**0.4282**	**2.7257**	**0.0192****
Parents education: parent can read	0.1251	0.3000	1.1333	0.6767
Parents education: high school completed	0.7398	0.4324	2.0956	0.0871*
Household income	0.0001	0.0002	1.0001	0.5700
Number of youth in a household	0.1662	0.0982	1.1808	0.0907*
Less then 2 years behind grade	**1.1575**	**0.2097**	**3.1820**	**0.0000****
Constant	-2.2765	0.6630	0.1026	0.0006
Nagelkerke- R Squared	0.1763			
N	602			

***Significant at the 0.1 level. ** Significant at the 0.05 level.**

It appears that there is an element of reality to student aspirations. If the student is no more than one year behind grade level, he or she considers college more often. The odds of such a student thinking about pursuing college education are almost 3.2 times higher that the odds of a student, who had already fallen two or more years behind grade. Until quite recently, such aspirations would have been unrealistic but the introduction of the *vestibular communitario*, a training program for the standard university entrance examination designed for low-income youth, and a new mandate for public universities to admit much higher ratios of non-white students[24] has increased the chances for lower-income youth to attend college. Even so, the percent of Caju youth aspiring to complete college is still very high. As a reference point, the survey of adult residents of Caju showed that only 1.6 percent of them had completed college.[25]

College is not the only option for young people trying to add to the skills and education they acquired at school. Professional training courses provide a much quicker and cheaper way to add something to high school education. It is not that the young people do not see the need for education and training. Over 22 percent of the Caju sample, mainly older youth, report having concluded a professional course of training and that figure is roughly the same for young men and young women. Eighteen percent reported that they were currently taking a professional course. Of those youth who had completed a course, 73 percent of them had completed a course in computers. The other courses ranged over a wide area of professional skills. Of those who had taken or were taking but had not completed the course, 36 percent had taken

[24]Public Law 3627/2004 provides that the federal universities and technical schools must reserve 50 percent of the places for students who attended high schools in the public system. From this percentage, Afro-descendants and indigenous people will have places reserved in proportion to their respective population rates from each state.

[25]IETS 2004, p. 20.

computer courses, and 17 percent in English. What is not recorded in the survey is the quality of the courses and it is thought that a large number of professional courses taken by low-income youth are not rigorous. These low standards are in contrast to the professional training courses offered by the federally sponsored job training institutions, *Servico Nacional de Aprendizagem Comercial* (SENEC) and *Servico Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial* (SENAI), whose courses at a cost of R$2,000 each are way beyond the reach of low-income youth. Moreover, the basic qualifications for such courses also probably disqualify such youth.

Actual Work Experience

While educational achievement is a positive phenomenon, work experience among young people can be positive or negative depending on the age of the young person. For many years, the Brazilian government and organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) have been working to reduce child labor so that more young people have the chance to extend their education. In Brazil, it is illegal for young people under the age of 16 to work[26]. Despite the law, a significant minority of children do work so the federal government has taken other steps to reduce such work including paying families money if their children attended school in a program originally called *Bolsa Escola* and now recast as *Bolsa Familia*[27] or school/family stipend. In Brazil, as in countries like Mexico, there is a huge drop off in school attendance between the elementary grades and the higher grades and the *bolsa familia* program is particularly aimed at those children. On the other hand, at some point, work experience is a valuable asset in the pursuit of future work opportunities. But in a country like Brazil, with huge income inequalities and huge differences in the quality of work available, early work experience might not always predict later work success. Hustling to sell trinkets, cheap toys, soft drinks, or packages of nuts on major street intersections in Rio de Janeiro might not help a young person find a better job although it certainly indicates a degree of initiative and drive.

Defining Work

The youth survey captures different kinds of youth work including unpaid work. The official definition of a person who works by the key public demographic organization in Brazil, *Instituto de Pesquisa Economica Aplicada* (IPEA) is anybody who works for at least one hour a week whether the job is paid or unpaid.

At the other end of the scale, one could argue that the most important work or work experience a young person could have is one that sets him or her on the road to a decent job. Decent can be defined in a number of ways but might include a wage that enabled someone, with the help of the earnings of other family members, to support a family adequately. A commonly accepted definition of a good enough job in Brazil is a job that comes with a work card or *carteira de trabalho e previdencia* (CTPS) which entitles the holder to a variety of social benefits. But the reality in Brazil is that half the population work in the informal sector without a work card and many young people are engaged either in domestic work without pay or in a small family business without pay.

[26]The Federal Constitution provides that children under 18 years of age are not allowed to do work at night or in any dangerous or unhealthy job; children under 16 cannot be allowed to work at all, except as apprentices, which they may work as from the age of 14.

[27]*Bolsa Familia*, created in October 2003 is the main conditional cash transfer program in Brazil. It targets poor families with a monthly per capita income of below R$100 (US$40). The conditions for receipt of the program are that for school aged children the family must attain 85 percent school attendance, have updated immunization cards if between 0-6, and that nursing mothers or pregnant women regularly attend health clinics. For more details see: Fabio Veras Soares et. al., *Cash Transfer Programmes in Brazil: Impacts on Inequality and Poverty*, International Poverty Center, United Nations Development Programme and Instituto de Pesquisa Economica Aplicada, Working Paper, #21, June 2006, Brasilia, Brazil.

The Caju youth survey uses the same definition of work as the federal government and includes as working any youth who worked for an hour a week or more. The survey gives an unusually detailed picture of the actual work experience of Caju youth which in turn permits an analysis of the correlates of getting a "good" job. It does not, however, capture domestic work done without pay in a young person's own house. So the apparent finding that 55 percent of the young men worked in the reference week compared with 36 percent of the young women, ignores the young women who performed domestic work in their own homes. (A total of 354 of the people in the sample, or 40 percent had worked at some point in their lives.) The IETS study, extrapolating from the sample to the population, reported that of the young people in the work force, 68 percent were regularly employed and 13 percent worked as domestics. Only the young women worked as domestics and about 29 percent of them were so employed.[28] About 12 percent were unemployed and 6 percent worked either without pay or for themselves.

Table 7 gives an overview of young people's connection to the job market in Caju. A total of 7 percent of the youth worked despite the fact that they were under 15 years of age, and young boys were twice as likely to be in this category as young girls. Work increased with age and while the percent of girls and boys in the 15-17 year age group who were working was roughly even at just over 20 percent, in the 18-21 year old category, 55 percent of the young men were working compared to 36 percent of the young women. It turned out that a fairly high percentage of the young people who worked, had a job that came with a work card. Forty-five percent of the young men aged 18-21 in the labor force had a work card and the corresponding figure for young women was 49 percent.

Table7: Worked or Not in the Reference Week by Age and Gender (N=893)

Gender/Age	**Worked in Reference Week**	**10-14 Years of Age**		**15-17 Years of Age**		**18-21 Years of Age**	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Boys	Yes	18	10.29	25	24.27%	60	55.05
	No	157	98.71	78	75.73	49	44.95
Girls	Yes	12	5.15	28	22.40	54	36.49
	No	221	94.85	97	77.60	94	63.51
All	Yes	30	7.35	53	23.25	114	44.36
	No	378	92.65	175	76.75	143	55.64
Total		408	**100**	228	**100**	257	**100**

Not surprisingly, the number of hours worked increased with age although the average number of hours worked by young men and young women were roughly the same. Note that while the vast majority of the younger youth are not working, some of those who are, worked long hours. The fact that only about 23 percent of these low-income young people aged 15-17 are working at all may seem strange from a U.S. perspective where 39 percent of 17 year-olds work during the school year and 48 percent of 17 year-olds work during the summer holidays.[29] But the shortage of jobs is a major issue in the Brazilian economy and jobs which might be taken by teenagers in the U.S. economy are likely to be taken by adults in Brazil.

[28]IETS, 2004, p. 33.

[29]See Current Trends in Youth Employment, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, November, 2000, Washington, D.C. p. 30.

Table 8: Number of Hours Worked Per Week By Age (N = 207)

Hours Worked/Age	10-14 Years of Age		15-17 Years of Age		18-21 Years of Age	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1-10 hrs	9	27.27	7	12.28	6	5.13
11-30 hrs	15	45.45	21	36.84	21	17.95
31-40 hrs	6	18.18	17	29.82	43	36.75
41-50 hrs	2	6.06	6	10.53	40	34.19
Over 50	1	3.03	6	10.53	7	5.98
Total	33	100.00	57	100.00	117	100.00

As might be expected, the younger workers were more likely to work inside the community than outside and young women were more likely to work inside their own community than young men. Overall, 37 percent of the young people who worked did so inside their own community and the rest outside. Seventy percent of the young men worked outside the community compared to 47 percent of the young women. Almost 80 percent of the 10-14 year olds in the work force, worked inside their own community compared to 24 percent of the 18-21 year olds.[30]

There are several keys to successful employment including the state of the job market and job skills. But there is another factor, namely the circle of connections a person has related to employment. These connections might bring news of a job opening, or more substantively might provide a reference for a particular job with a family member, a friend or a colleague. People with richer job-related networks are likely to have access to a wider range of jobs. It is only in the formal sector that most jobs are formally advertised but even here, connections that give advance notice of openings or push an application up to the top of the pile give applicants a crucial advantage. People from different families have different circles of connection and low-income communities can have rich networks. Those connections are likely, however, to be more useful for finding jobs inside the community rather than outside particularly in an economy like Brazil's with a large gap between the informal and the formal sectors. The Caju survey shows that connections are very important to getting a job in a lower-income community. Forty-six percent of the young people who were working reported that they got their first job through talking to relatives, friends, or colleagues. Another 25 percent of the working youth said their first job was connected to the work or business of family members or relatives, or of friends. Twenty-six percent said they taken no steps meaning presumably that the job had fallen into their laps, and only 14 percent said they had approached an employer who didn't fall into one of the categories listed above. But clearly finding a job was a lengthy task. When asked about their current employment, 32 percent reported that it had taken between 61 and 180 days to find it and another 26 percent said it had taken over 181 days.

As for "good enough" jobs, 40 percent of the 18-21 year olds in Caju who had a job, had a job with a work card. The Caju survey permitted a multi-variate analysis of the determinants of which of the young workers were employed with a card. As Table 9 shows, several variables were strongly predictive of whether or not a young worker had a job with a work card.

[30]IETS, p. 34.

Table 9: Multiple Regression on Having a Job With a Work Card

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Anti-log of Coefficient	Significance
Age	**0.5084**	**0.1495**	**1.6627**	**0.0007***
Gender: Male	-0.2005	0.4878	0.8183	0.6810
Brown (mixed)	0.6884	0.5384	1.9905	0.2011
Black	0.5401	0.7484	1.7162	0.4705
education: high school completed	0.6490	0.6628	1.9136	0.3275
education: elementary school	**1.7722**	**0.6333**	**5.8840**	**0.0051***
professional course finished	-0.0229	0.5628	0.9774	0.9676
professionals course attended	-0.5757	0.6805	0.5623	0.3975
age started work	-0.0375	0.0946	0.9632	0.6919
work outside community	**2.9079**	**0.8692**	**18.3178**	**0.0008***
Constant	-13.5472	3.0642	0.0000	0.0000
Nagelkerke- R Squared	0.5755			
N	156			

***Significant at the 0.05 level.**

The older the youth the more likely he or she was to have a job with a work card. Educational level was also crucial and the key cut off was completing *ensino fundamental* or 8th grade. Completing the next level of education, *ensino medio*, or 12th grade was not a determinant of getting a job with a work card. And lastly, youth who worked outside their community were 18 times more likely than those who worked in the community to have a job with a work card. This finding reflects the reality that businesses that provide jobs are found in the formal sector and formal sector businesses are more likely to be in the downtown or middle-income communities. It is interesting that skin color did not impact getting a job with a work card among those youth who had a job.

Conclusion

The survey of youth in Caju is a powerful example of the intermittent and incomplete education of lower-income young people in Brazil. Fifty two percent of respondents had failed a grade at least once, and 23 percent were three or more years behind grade level. Such an inadequate education is poor preparation for a competitive global job market. While quality of school issues are beyond the scope of this paper, it is noteworthy that the main reason given by the over 50 percent of respondents who had failed a grade at least once, was their own learning difficulties. What that says about students' expectations about how responsible schools are for helping students overcome their learning difficulties is unclear. It is also noteworthy that even within a low-income community, there are clear differences in school achievement for students from families that differ in the parents' educational levels. Just as striking, however, is the appetite for education demonstrated by the percent of young people who have taken or were taking professional courses. It is sobering to note, however, that being involved in such courses does not seem to influence the chance of a young person working with a work card.

Young people in Caju had a variety of work experiences although the percentages who work may seem low in comparison with the job rich U.S. economy. As the ILO has pointed out in the reports referenced earlier, the supply of jobs is a critical issue in some southern tier countries. There is a minority of Caju youth who fall into the category that causes most concern among policy makers of neither working nor

being in school. The survey allows a calculation of youth who were neither in school nor at work. Seventeen percent of the young men between 18 and 21, and 35 percent of young women in the same age group were neither worked during the reference week nor attended school in the reference year. The gender disparity is probably due to the extra home and family maintenance demands put on young women including the care of their own children. But this group as a whole is at risk of attenuating already weak links to the economic mainstream and being more vulnerable to the hazards of life in low-income communities.

While it is crucial to retain more young people in schools that prepare them adequately for a broad job market, the Caju survey shows that there are already a large number of young people older than normal school age who are poorly prepared for work and who need age appropriate educational opportunities to enhance their prospects. Without such opportunities, these youth face permanent disconnection from mainstream Brazilian society.