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**Young Women's Accessing Welfare: Poverty and Gender
in the 'Hybrid' *Auxílio Brasil* Program**

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Disclaimer:

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List of Acronyms

ABP	Auxílio Brazil Program
BFP	Bolsa Família Program
CO	Cras Office
CRAS	Cadatro Único (Single Register)
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
NIS	Número de Inscrição Social (Social Admission Number)
PT	Partido Trabalhista (The worker's party)
RP	Research Paper

Abstract

This study aims to bring to light the perceptions and experiences of young women living in Rio de Janeiro, who are part of the Brazilian government social welfare program Auxílio Brasil (ABP). The former social assistance program Bolsa Família (BFP), was reformed by the current administration of Jair Messias Bolsonaro. Partido Trabalhista (PT) adhered to the concept of combining multiple existing social assistance benefits under Bolsa Família (BFP). Welfare, which could have been interpreted as common ground between the two main presidential candidates in 2022, has become fuel for political gain and self-interest. Although politics cannot be discarded as an influence, this research focuses on young women beneficiaries and their families. Along with the name change to the program, registration has been updated to follow current cultural processes with the influence of internet and social media. The main research question aims to determine if the new digital/hybrid welfare program is indeed promoting inclusion or widening social exclusion. In order to answer this question and follow up questions, the research methodology used is qualitative through individual interviews, credible online databases, and participatory observation. In conclusion this study examines the changes, if any, in the program Auxílio Brasil (ABP) compared to BFP program (PBR) as a hybrid welfare program, based on young women's experiences. Some key suggestions are made, having in mind the dignity of young women as welfare recipients.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research aims to amplify the voices of poor women in Rio de Janeiro who navigate their lives and raise their families on the basis of public assistance provided by the government as their main source of income. Social policies for millions of those families throughout Brazil should be based on their unique circumstances. For successful social development no one can provide more accurate information for policy makers than recipients themselves. The lack of representation for young women welfare claimants leads to failures in social governmental projects and policies and tends to widen inequalities. The importance of this research is to empower women using their knowledge and empirical exposure to Auxílio Brasil (ABP), and to suggest some measures for improved implementation.

Keywords

Auxilio Brasil; Bolsa Familia; Young Women's Experiences; Social Inclusion; Poverty; Education; Women Welfare; Marginalization Theory; Social Protection; Politics; Brazil; Rio de Janeiro.

Chapter 1 | Introduction

1.1 Overview

This first chapter will introduce the challenging yet inspiring subject of social inclusion through the example of the Brazilian welfare program Auxílio Brasil (ABP). Poverty is not a new topic, but the circumstances under which many poor Brazilians are living after COVID19 pandemic are relatively new. Although it was and in some parts of the world still is a scary period of our lives, there is much to learn from, in adapting to the current normalcy. In one sense, the problem of improving policies and their management remains. This research study will build from qualitative methodology to effectively illustrate the experiences of the young women's journey to social inclusion through ABP. Along with my positionality and motivation, which were the birth of my interest in women's poverty in Brazil. A brief background context of the problem in this Chapter, lands the reader in the current challenges around areas tethered to poverty. The participants and their profiles are introduced, welcoming the details of the fieldwork planned in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

1.2 Transformation Mindset

It can be difficult to focus on the subject matter of welfare, as there are so many varying issues to consider. It is hoped that connections between issues addressed in this study will emerge from the main themes and questions, to aid in comprehending the wider context and the bigger picture. A grasp of the complex livelihood of young women welfare claimants in Rio de Janeiro, involves considering webs of poverty that start with previous generations before them and circumstances present from before their birth that disadvantage them. Generally, to discover people's social problem in Brazil, the angle is to identify their socio-economic setting, through their job, if any, and their level of education. However, the situation regarding poverty is not that simple. Many aspects of vulnerable communities in Brazil are not in their control. For example, poorly designed government policies and ineffective laws at times seem to favour the few and against the many, and can result in violence, high taxation, inflation, and other problems for the poor. This research has no definite answers to the complex and fascinating topic of welfare policy. At best, this study can provide a different side of the story, one that perhaps has been ignored or often forgotten. Individual young women are assumed to know their own needs and desires. Considering the constant change in their lives, young women's needs, and desires are also subject to change, bringing about the need for constant partnership with local community leaders.

In Brazil, the topics of poverty and welfare are part of the political realm and bring with them a lot of frustration and resentment. Most Cariocas (those born and raised in the city of Rio de Janeiro) have a list of sensitive topics, politics is one of them and at times poverty. When those topics are raised in conversations, it can seem as if perspectives are quite polarised. The culture in the Southeast of Brazil is very influenced by the news, by music and popular trends, and by soap operas. This makes it very difficult to challenge dominant views from any other perspective. As a Brazilian, I too tended to resist new views that provoked my convictions related to this topic of welfare, gender, and poverty. It was not easy to break through the culture of firmly formed opinions. I was confronted in the process of writing this research paper with a perception and a bias that contradicted the essence of advocating for structural injustice as a Social Worker like myself. I was reminded that my story is not a representation of my target group and social accessibility cannot be easily simplified. As a

result, I accepted my own areas of blindness and tried to engage in this research whilst questioning my own motives and attitudes towards the topic, in order to see this old topic from a different angle. The exciting part of this process is to spot what needs changing, and what remains unrecognized so that systems remain in a loop and unaware of problems of claimants, for example young women. This journey started with the objective of giving voice to some of those neglected in Brazil. The hope was to help promote integrity, dignity, and social inclusion. However, during data collection it was I who was also changed and transformed by those young women I came into contact with.

The focus of this study, through the lens of young women's dignity as a priority, is to see whether there is accessibility and inclusivity of entry into ABP benefits for them. Women's time during the process of claiming benefits is considered important, so their time is not wasted nor disrespected. The research question objectives in this study are interested to access the experiences of young women registering for ABP benefits, their perceptions of the program information and digital platforms, and their concepts about whether there is prioritization of women's welfare during the process of accessing ABP. Moving beyond the case study, I believe the research findings could be used to suggest some ways to optimize the ABP welfare system, thus contributing modestly to policy making and linking welfare to the economic realm, forming a bridge by bringing empirical experience to bear on humanising the welfare system in future.

1.3 Statement of the Problem:

A brief background will provide the context to the situation of ABP today, in late 2022. Bolsa Família was a hub created in 2004, during the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and was designed to optimize the time families spent in getting enrolled or seeking to access social programs already put in place by previous administrations in Brazil (Azevedo, 2014). Following the concept of a unified welfare payment with different components, other social programs were added to BFP, and renamed Auxílio Brasil. There were a few differences between ABP and BFP in terms of the registration process, the adjusted poverty line, greater online accessibility, the number of benefits, and so on. Benefits were also made conditional on children's continued attendance at school (Carranço, 2021). Intellectuals, economists, politicians, and those who opposed the President have interpreted the decision as part of presidential 2022 pre-election moves to gain support. Former Minister of Social Development, Tereza Campello, not only opposes ABP but also claims that Bolsa Família's essence was lost in the new program by removing local counties involvement in the operation management, without training local representatives to the changes in the program to help people (Uol, 2021). Further concerns, such as lack of transparency, poor budget planning, heats the ongoing debate intentionality of the new program.

Diving deeper into the challenges of ABP for young women claimants, the vocabulary used is worth noting. The terminology of the program's standards and specifications is couched in difficult language, and this can restrict access and understanding from the first moments of social assistance, discouraging and confusing potential claimants, including the young women who are the main focus. In Chapter 4, *In Person Data Collection: Where theory meets reality*, the information provided by government and how new applicants go around to learn about the program are discussed. In the everyday processes at registered government welfare offices, the program and information are not being executed digitally or in the same hybrid form as announced on the official government website

The stated goal of ABP is to combat poverty and extreme poverty of families, and to tackle the consequences in this respect of the Covid19 pandemic (*Governo do Brasil*, 2022a). In Chapter 6, I suggest that much more would need to be done to achieve these goals, beyond

increasing the levels of financial benefit paid out to recipients. There are many factors that are out of young women’s control that must be considered in designing the program. How will families dependent on welfare retire in their old age, since they currently are not working and therefore will be ineligible to receive the monthly pension? (Fieldwork Interview, August 13th, 2022). In addition, the cost of living in Rio de Janeiro is extremely high due to inflation and tourism. The cost of food and lack of accessibility of medication, are combined in poor people’s lives with natural disasters, financial insecurities, and the consequences of direct violence, all building a situation of trauma. No government can resolve all these challenges, but by looking into these various problems, it is hoped that solutions can be found to make poor people’s lives easier, for young women in particular.

1.4 From Bolsa Família to Auxílio Brasil

Bolsa Família was created with the purpose of unifying social development and welfare provisions to better achieve social inclusion. Four social programs combined in BFP was established by 34th Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Merging in 2004 into a unified social programs hub (Azevedo, 2014). The initiative was the idea of the Governor of Goiás, Marconi Perillo (Guarabyra, 2013). The current welfare program increased to a total of 9 different welfare provisions under the ABP umbrella (as shown in Appendix 2). ABP embraced an even larger population than BFP (*Governo do Brasil*, 2022b). Not only due to the additional programs added, but also due to adjustment upwards of the poverty line, making more families eligible for welfare benefits. This is shown in Table 1 below. According to the government registration data from February 2022, at that time 18.05 million families were beneficiaries of ABP (*Governo do Brasil*, 2022b). Families who were already part of the BFP (14.4 million) migrated automatically to the new system, Auxílio Brasil (*TV Cidade Verde*, 2021). Therefore, no new registration was needed for families who were beneficiaries of the former BFP. Following the end of extraordinary benefits created to boost the economy during the Covid19 pandemic, the increase of the amount of ABP was approved on 27 April 2022, with the minimum payment being R\$400 (117 euros, 1EUR=5.12) per person (*Ministério da Cidadania*, 2022). A few months later, in August 2022 the benefit was again increased to R\$600 (117 euros, 1EUR=5.12) per month. However, as argued by Julião (2022), this measure appeared to be electoral, since it was due to expire in December 2022.

Table 1 Poverty and Extreme Poverty Index Bolsa Familia versus Auxílio Brasil

Poverty Index	Assistance Amount per Person / Month
Extreme Poverty - BFP	R\$89 = 17,37 euros
Extreme Poverty – ABP	R\$105 = 20,50 euros
Poverty Line – BFP	R\$178 = 34,75 euros
Poverty Line – ABP	R\$ 210 = 41 euros

Source: Governo do Brasil, 2022d. Currency conversion: 1EUR=5.12

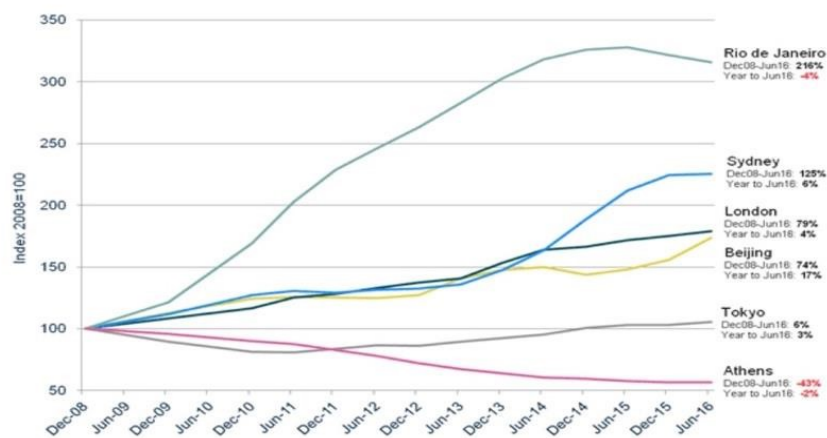
The benefit composition is based on each family structure. The nine social programs under the ABP umbrella, have unique criteria that are specific to target groups. All those registered in Auxílio Brasil are entitled to other basic assistance of R\$600. However, families build up the composition of their total benefit on top of the minimum of R\$600 on the basis of matching with criteria that apply to various kinds of benefits within the program, if any. The list of the nine social programs under ABP can be found in Appendix 1. The information

regarding benefits is quite volatile and difficult to understand, and as I have tried to follow Auxílio Brasil's ongoing adjustments, I came to understand why the way information is presented could cause persistent misunderstandings, based on outdated and informally sourced information.

1.5 Background and Justification

Observing Rio de Janeiro state, as shown in Figure 1, this state has had the most rapid residential price growth from June 2012 to 2016, even compared to other cities that hosted the Olympics (Tostevin, 2016). In the same city where slums grow rapidly due to the lack of infrastructure, the financial opportunities for the lower working class remain poor in terms of income levels relative to the cost of living.

CITY-WIDE RESIDENTIAL MARKET PERFORMANCE SINCE 2008



Source: Savills World Research

Figure 1 Market Performance

The government approach to poverty does not consider the actual cost of living in each state or city. Rio de Janeiro is so expensive that it may be that assistance available under federal social programs, including ABP, does not stretch far enough. The *cesta básica* (basic staples food basket) costs approximately R\$300 approximately 58,54 euros for a month (*Cesta Basica*, n.d.) and this without meat, vegetables, or fruits. With the current R\$600 per month for individuals experiencing unemployment, this amount can barely feed them, let alone pay their rent. Welfare benefits will not make a significant impact on the multitude of problems that cause and reenforce poverty and extreme poverty. In addition, with the problematization of the amount of the benefit in relation to taxation and inflation, is unclear how families will be able to count on the amount of the benefit from January 2023. ABP has become a political affair subjected and voted upon political campaigns instead of the act lifting those from poverty. Ever since the name change and the extinction of BFP, there have been concerns about whether the program would continue or not under the next administration elected in December 2022 (Fieldwork Interview, August 2022).

Ricardo Paes de Barros, an economist, scholar, professor, and researcher at INSPER, adds to the discussion around poverty by stating that whilst ABP is more generous than BFP, it is unsustainable due to its approach of supporting individuals only to the point where

employment is achieved, when the claimant is punished for this achievement with the loss of the benefit (Insper, 2022). Barros also mentions that the problem in Brazil is not so much a lack of money in the government, but the need for its careful management to better serve and support the people (Insper, 2022). Mismanagement of resources perpetuates difficult lives for those most in need, who find it difficult to access resources, including welfare, and their health finding it almost impossible to save on the low wages and benefits they receive (Barros, et al., 2021, p.67).

To assess poverty on a daily basis requires personalized criteria that ideally should be based on involving the community in forms of participation where claimants and potential claimants can indicate those among them who most need financial support and other forms of help (Insper, 2022). One of the features discontinued, the social development part of BFP. However, many politicians and upper-class Cariocas used to receive BFP, which shows that previous program was not as pro-development or pro-poor as the news presents (Fieldwork Interview, Cintia, July 14th, 2022). Following the same example, ABP also carried on the fraudulent activities by paying individuals outside of the poverty line criteria. De Barros expressed the opinion that ABP should be similarly focused, departing from the dynamic of vaccination of Covid19 to cover the old first, so that more may be given to fewer individuals by targeting the poorest and the most vulnerable (Insper, 2022). Which would revive the debate over the poverty level that was raised above. Who gets to decide who is poor and who is not, and by which criteria or measurements of income? What would be a qualification for being poor in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil? Not owning a property, not having a car, and being unemployed? In Chapter 5, I share the opinions of the young women of who they think should first receive welfare payments, and how, in their view, the program should filter eligibility.

Although all these distinct but interconnected concepts are critical to the development of poor communities in Brazil, zooming in on young women's experiences reveals an even more unequal picture. The gender statistics report conducted by IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) in 2021 showed social indicators of women in Brazil in comparison to men during the pandemic. From the five indicators¹ we can statistically demonstrate how women in Brazil are still the most affected by poverty and social exclusion in many areas. In 2019, economic participation levels were 73.7% for men and 54.2% for women (IBGE, 2021). This was a measure of those willing to work, looking for a job, and withing the working age of 15 years old and above. This showed that it was more difficult for women – including young women - to enter the workforce. The picture is as shown in Figure 2.

Women are still mainly the ones responsible for raising the family in Brazil and based on Ricardo de Barros perspective, women should be receiving benefits not only in priority to men, but also at higher rates, given these responsibilities (Insper, 2022). The research shows that during the pandemic the *care economy* (Figure 3) was heavily supported by black Brazilian women, who not only worked in lower paid jobs but also cared for family members in addition to house cleaning jobs, when compared to males and white Brazilian women (IBGE, 2021). In average women in the Southeast of Brazil spent 22,1 hours weekly caring for people and/or taking care of the home for people of 14 years old or higher, compared to 10,5 hours per week for men during the same period (IBGE, 2021).

¹ Economic structures, participation in productive activities and access to resources; Education; Health and related services; Public life and decision-making; and Human rights of women and girls (IBGE, 2021).

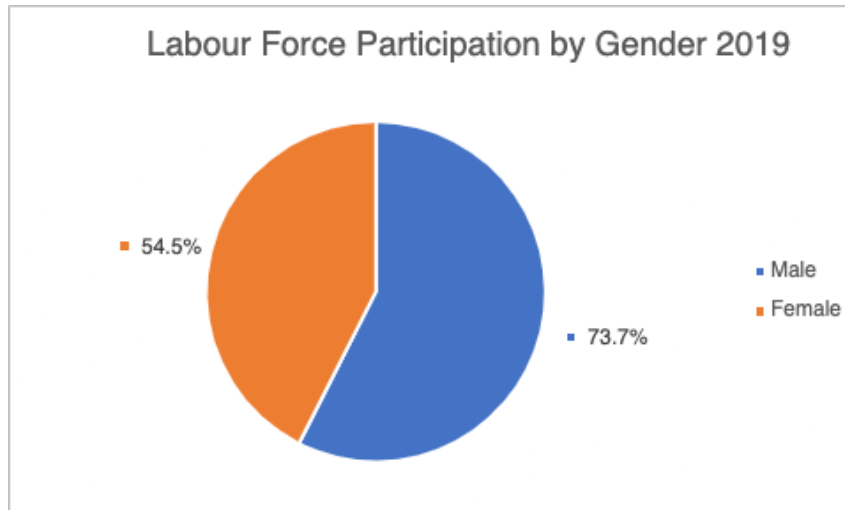


Figure 2 Gender Labour from People of 15 Years Old and Above

Source: IBGE, 2021.

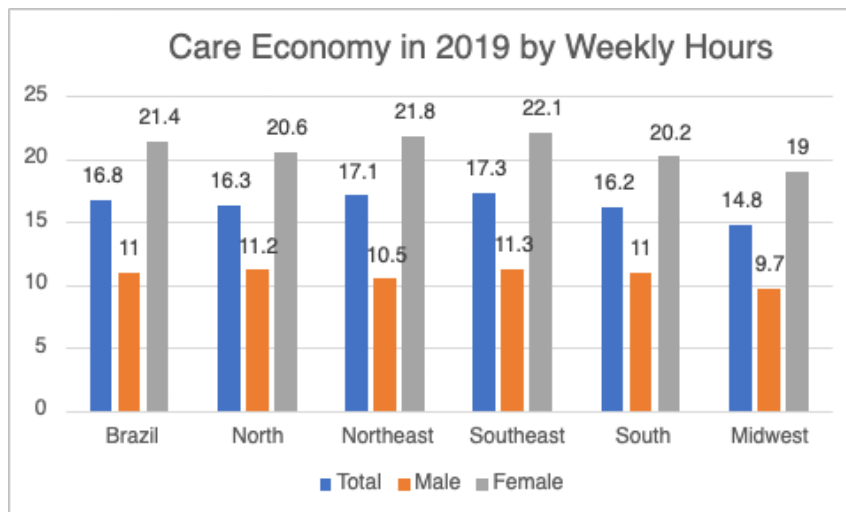


Figure 3 Care Economy in Brazil in Hours Weekly Caring for 14 Years and Up

Source: IBGE, 2021.

The lives of women, especially black women have more responsibilities than males. This study is interested to analyse how such young women navigate access to welfare, given that their everyday lives involve raising children, perhaps working, and also carrying out their duties outside the home. How do they manage with the same amount of ABP benefit when they have so many more responsibilities, it would seem, than men?

1.6 Objectives and Research (Sub)Questions

Main Question

Is the reformed Auxílio Brasil, leading to further social exclusion or to social inclusion of the poor, taking the case of young women in the program or seeking access to the program?

Sub-questions

- How do young women access and experience *Auxílio Brasil*?

- Why are young women not using the digital platforms provided as part of the 'hybrid' access system?
- Is *Auxílio Brasil* financial support alone sufficient to lift young women who manage to access support out of poverty and extreme poverty?

1.7 Perspective and Motivation

The age group and gender of the research informants were chosen to investigate the uniqueness of young women's experience with the main welfare system in Brazil, whilst going through the process of becoming adults in poor communities in Rio. As a young woman myself I once was in their shoes growing up believing the political promises by government representatives. The frustration from the current administration is not unprecedented. I too became frustrated and sceptical of Brazil's social inclusion programs as a teenager living in a 'war zone' with shootings every day. I was tired of seeing my parents work hard yet at the end of the month not being able to afford even a simple day out without worrying about tomorrow. They worked long hours, but it seemed however hard they worked, they never managed to earn more than barely enough. Someone else – and the economic system - was deciding both the low salary and the high costs of living. It seemed as if the 'system' was setting us up to live limited lives, as if consciously. If it was not for education, I would not be writing this research paper (RP).

This research subject was formed out of giving back a sense of social justice to those who are not as privileged as I was to escape the circumstances of poverty, in order to enjoy security, social inclusion, and job opportunities. As a class representative I believe with my exposure to both sides – those living below the poverty line and the middle classes – that I can contribute by examining how welfare interacts with on-going systems of oppression. I am interested in how life-chances for other young women from similar backgrounds to my own, can be improved on, for example through access to welfare benefits. I want to use my tools of escape, including education, to highlight the experiences of these young women. Though time has passed, similar problems remain, including the lack of representation. My history is not an exception but a possibility to all women and girls in Rio de Janeiro. In order for that to be possible, tested and proved policies must be in place to equip and encourage young women to continue with their education, and their future work. In order to eradicate the barriers and bias that are ingrained, I want this study to serve as a conduit between those young women, policy makers and state leaders. What they understand by an improvement of their lives looks different for each young woman and should not be defined for them by others but by themselves, through opportunities and choices. Although it may sound idealistic, I see it as a means of empowering people (Foucault, 1982) so they can make use of their unique talents to benefit themselves, their families, and their country. My objective is to help improve life for my female friends and family members still living in Brazil, and especially those living in poverty. Despite the fact that I love my country, there is too much structural injustice for there to be social peace. For the same reason, I left my country, and want to return, but this time equipped with suggestions for ways to improve the economic and social structure, making it less unequal, especially for young women.

1.8 Methodology

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative data, but relies mainly on a qualitative, interpretative method to examine young women's experiences of accessing, or seeking to access, a new welfare system in Brazil. In light of the theoretical approach to this issue and in

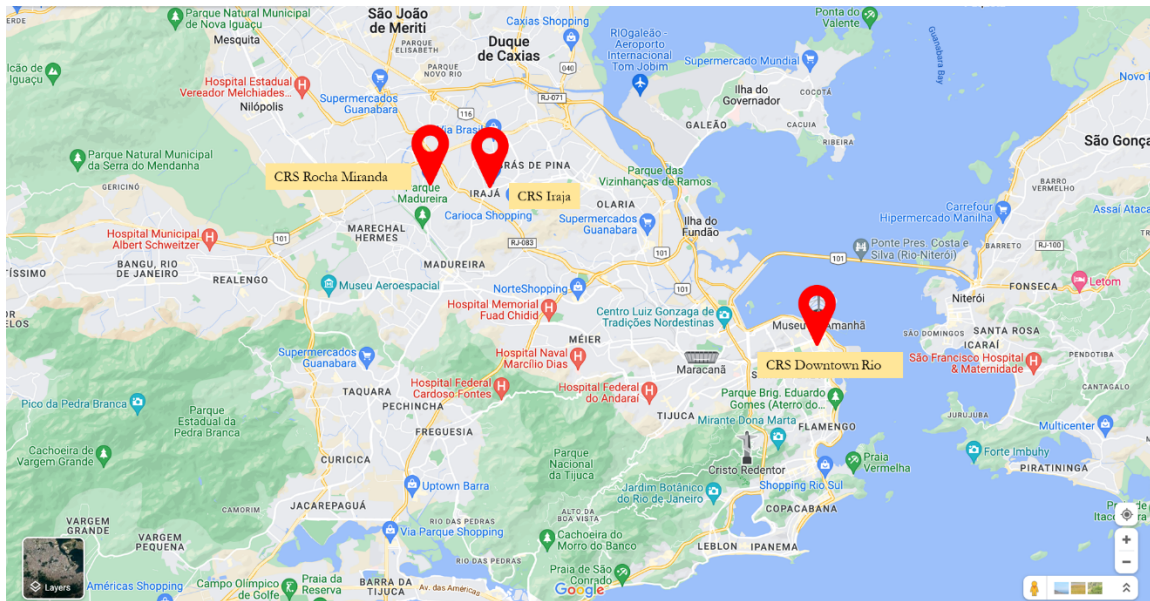
order to answer the research question, the research strategy will be carried out in three ways: (1) comprehending the generation of the group data (2004 to 1985) and its challenges; (2) the level of education and technical skills; and (3) unpacking the support systems available to young women claimants and beneficiaries. Thematic analysis will be undertaken of narratives, to examine young women's experiences from their own perspectives. The welfare of women living in difficult environments is affected by many forms of insecurity regarding health care, sexuality, fair pay and so on. Their responsibilities and obligations in the community increase the expectations of them and shrinks the time they have available. Considering the weight that most poor women carry, this research adopts dignity lenses to interpret their experiences with Auxílio Brazil welfare benefits, with the goal of promoting accessibility and social inclusiveness.

The participants (19 in total) ranged in ages from 18 to 37 years old in Rio de Janeiro's north-western suburbs (see Appendix 10), were introduced to the study while waiting to be helped at the Single Registry Office (CRAS). Each young woman was invited to take part in an informal individual interview, to consider this sensitive subject and their families' unique circumstances. A questionnaire with 5-10 questions was tried out as a pilot (Appendix 2) to establish whether the questions could elicit content relevant to all participants' experiences. The primary data mainly consisted of these informal interviews outside CRAS offices (CO). Later, one focus group discussions were held, centred on findings of the pilot questionnaire. Themes have been looked for throughout the narrative accounts, and conceptualized theories have been examined to help uncover patterns in behaviour. Combining evidence from different methods I seek to triangulate young women's experiences under the new hybrid or digital welfare system. Humanising these young women is crucial to the development of this case study, and to proposing ways and means to improve their experiences in social assistance or welfare programs in future.

1.8.1 Informant Profiles

The approach chosen was to engage young women in conversation at three different Cos: Rocha Miranda, Irajá, and Downtown Rio (see Map 1) at the end of their registration process. Interview questions can be found Appendix 2. The wait time for the young women to be helped was also the time we would wait to meet them outside. Some offices had a quick turnaround of around fifteen minutes. In others, registration could take up to forty-five minutes. At the first two offices, interviews were conducted in the morning, at the third office in mid-afternoon. These different times were not intentionally planned but related to transport and distance from my home. Interaction and engagement of participants was generally higher in the mornings than in the afternoons. There were also noticeable age group differences between various COs. Downtown Rio had a much younger age profile on average than the other two locations (see Appendix 10). The majority in Downtown Rio CO were young mothers with new-born babies, which made it more difficult for them to stay and chat because their babies needed their attention. Women at the lower end of the selected age range (18-37 years old) had the highest rejection rates when invited to be interviewed. Winning their trust was possible only by engaging with them as participants in the research, emphasizing that I realised on their valuable empirical experiences in the topic to complete my research.

Map 1 Fieldwork CRAS Locations in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Source: Google Maps, Rio de Janeiro 2022 (edited by author).

Additional interviews brought up different perspectives on the main topic further discussed in Chapter 5. In Brazil, there is free health care for those in need, sponsored by the government, just as are public education, and higher education. When the government fails to fulfil their responsibilities to care for their people, the impact is disastrous and affects all areas of their lives. Although poverty through government welfare ABP, is the focus of this study, welfare benefits are not the only government sector vulnerable families depend on. Those who can afford are able to pay for security, health care, and education, others cannot afford this, and this brings us to the inequality that we seek to connect with young women's lives, an inequality that we seek to lessen.

Although discouragement and poverty are part of everyone's lives in Rio, there were also so many enthusiastic and hopeful people I encountered on the way during fieldwork. I spoke with a community leader of the Babylonia slum Adriano Paraiso, located in one of the richest parts of the city, Copacabana. Interesting to point out that even those who live in an area designated as a slum can have a good quality of life and live in a secure neighbourhood. Those who live in slums in Copacabana have much higher education levels and better security than a slum in the north, poorer side of town. Nonetheless, all favela members do share similar values and pride in their own integrity and self-reliance. As one interviewee mentioned: *"People want to pay their bills; they don't want it for free. But it's too expensive. When the bill is for a fair amount, the families voluntarily come forward."* (Fieldwork Interview, Adriano Paraiso, August 21st, 2022).

1.9 Chapter Outline

This chapter has provided a summary of the background to the ABP from 2004 to 2022. To the statement of the research problem are added the intellectual and personal motivations for studying this particular topic. Including a detailed breakdown of the ABP benefits, some limitations of the research, and brief gender statistical data from Brazilian National Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2021). Concepts and theories relevant to the topic are expanded on further in Chapter 2, through analyses of debates drawn from academic and policy literature. In Chapter 3, the online technical elements of the designed registration process are shown in detail, with a step-by-step outline of how individuals were expected to apply for

ABP. Using a participatory Field Diary, the technical theoretical outline is compared to women's experience and reality. In chapter 4, young women's empirical experiences are explored, and key themes highlighted. Comparing government accounts, in theory with the experienced reality is shown both in Chapter 3 and throughout Chapter 4 as well. In Chapter 5, we analyse the program from a more political perspective. Fieldwork interviews with politician, favela community leaders, health care government worker, current Executive Undersecretary of the Secretary of State for Infrastructure, and Magé county government teacher. In conclusion, Chapter 6 includes a summary of the most noteworthy ideas and suggestions made by research participants.

Chapter 2 | Literature Review: Current State of Research Around the Problem

2.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I introduce different theories of poverty and its influence on Brazilians' lives. I introduce some debates between scholars, economists, and policy experts, on the subject of Brazilian welfare governance. And often complicated administrative procedures governing access to welfare in Brazil. The aim of this chapter is to raise awareness of what lies underneath the iceberg of poverty and why young women in particular are affected. Even before we meet these young women, whose experiences are described in later chapters, we examine some of the circumstances they live under (public school education, health care, violence, and job opportunity) and which are beyond their individual or collective control.

2.2 Poverty Then and Now

Poverty is not only about not having enough to eat, or being unable to pay bills, but it also means a combination of these limitations with forms of structural violence that one faces every day and over time. There is now a wealth of information and accessible studies on income inequalities and uneven income and wealth distribution in Brazil, much of it relatively recent. In one 1995 study, Ricardo Paes de Barros shares the realization that up to that time, there were almost no systematic studies of different measures of levels of inequality and how such measures intertwined with longer-term poverty. Scholars approach inequality from different angles: Barros (1995) has looked at a range of socioeconomic variables; earlier, Langoni (1973) believed that the conditions of inequality in Brazil were mainly due to unequal income distribution through job markets. Meanwhile, De Souza (1979) viewed inequalities as being based more on variable levels of education (Barros, 1995, p.1). All of those are indeed a part of the overall equation that influences the degree and levels of increase or reductions of inequality gaps.

Analysing recent reports of wealth and distribution of income from Global Wealth Reports (2021), show tremendous inequality gaps. Although reports are mainly economic growth-oriented, they can indicate something about the management of resources by government and about income distribution. According to the Global Wealth Report, the Covid19 pandemic prompted an increase in wealth of the 1% to 56.1 million new millionaires worldwide by the end of 2020 (Global Wealth Reports, 2021, p.20). This is terrible but interesting fact shows that a tiny portion of the world's population made money as millions of others perished, lost their jobs, were unable to support their families, and were cooped up in their houses due to dread of the virus. Reports on Brazil, however, could not be as elaborate and in-depth due to a lack of transparency on the part of the government around public data (Global Wealth Reports, 2021, p.35). On the basis of the data available, Gini² analyses show that Brazil continues to be at the top in global terms, having the most unequal concentration of resources among the top 1% of the population internationally (Global Wealth Reports, 2021, p.24). In 2020, the 1% group in Brazil controlled 49.6% of all resources in the country (Global Wealth Reports, 2021, p.24). Administrations have come and gone, but although

² A statistical indicator of economic inequality in a population. The coefficient gauges how income is distributed among a population's constituents. Similar measures have also been used to measure the distribution of wealth (CFI, 2018).

policies have changed, the problem remains. Ultimately, all political parties share the same leadership limitations.

2.3 Conceptualization of Employment, Education and Gender in Brazil

“To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transformation action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity.” (Freire, 2018, p.47)

Due to the consequences of income distribution inequality more people have been exposed to poverty and extreme poverty as scarcity has risen. Following this issue, Medeiros (2015) conducted a survey in 2006-2012 where it an increase in the population of people living in poverty was noted, as well as a lack of the governance and economic factors required to support those poor communities. Also, a factor in the rising inequality gap is the lack of job opportunities for the least educated, which ties up with income inequalities, and circles back to low levels of education of individuals from certain communities. All these issues are interconnected in a circle of poverty that is not easy to break out of. Barros discusses the levels of opportunity available, as based on levels of education (Insper, 2022). However, even behind the issue of job opportunities are multiple other dimensions of poverty that are not seen but which can weigh heavily on the poor, including traumas, the lack of emotional support, broken family structures, frequent exposure to violence and so on, discussed further in later session in this chapter (Mello, 2012). During data collection in Rio de Janeiro, had the privilege to speak with Councilman Professor Uoston, who so brilliantly commented:

“[There is a] very intriguing education system in Brazil. All poor children go to public schools (up to high school). Middle class children go to private schools. Public higher education is the most valued institution in the country. Yet those who are admitted are middle class students. Public school background students [generally] attend private higher education which does not require a test evaluation to get in.”(Fieldwork Interview, Councilman Uoston, August 18th, 2022).

In other words, private school students are instructed and trained to compete to enter the public universities in Brazil, while public schools do not have the same set of goals for their pupils, who later are more likely to pay for private education. In the online article, *Consequences of violation of the right to education*, Barros (2021) shares the view that education is a basic and internationally recognised human right. This is also recognized by the Brazilian Federal government under Article 208 of the Constitution, which states:

The duty of the State with education will be carried out by ensuring I. compulsory and free basic education between 4 (four) and 17 (seventeen) years of age, even guaranteeing its is freely offered to all who did not have access to it at their own (school) age³ (Governo do Brasil, 1988).

The goal of basic free education for children from 4 to 17 years old was first adopted in 1988, and reinforced by the third goal of *Plano Nacional de Educação* (National Education Plan) which states that the country would:

³ Original statement in Portuguese: *O dever do Estado com a educação será efetivado mediante a garantia de: I. educação básica obrigatória e gratuita dos 4 (quatro) aos 17 (dezesete) anos de idade, assegurada inclusive sua oferta gratuita para todos os que a ela não tiveram acesso na idade própria* (Governo do Brasil, 1988).

By 2016, universalize school attendance for the entire population from 15 to 17 years and, until the end of the period of validity of this National Education Plan (PNE), raise the net rate of enrolment in high school to 85%⁴ (Barros, et al, 2021, p.13)

According to one study, in 2018 the percentage of young adults in Brazil who would not complete their basic (primary and secondary school) ion by the age of 16 years old, was around 17%, totalling 560.000 people (Barros, et al., 2021, p. 25). Based on the predictions in Table 2, the percentages of basic level education will improve, but even in 2030, 8 per cent of all Brazilians will not have completed their schooling (Barros, et al., 2021, p. 25).

Table 2 Estimative of Basic Education Accomplishment Among 16 Years Old in Brazil

Year	Number of teens 16 years old (millions)	Percentage of teens who will not complete basic education	Number of teens who will not complete basic education (millions)
2008	3,4	32%	1,09
2018	3,3	17%	0,56
2024	3,0	11%	0,34
2030	2,9	8%	0,22

Source: Barros, et al., 2021, p.25.

Comparison of countries with percentages of graduated students in 2018 can be found in Figure 4. Brazil is located in the far right, and the table shows that only 17% of the population within the age group of 25 – 64 years graduated with higher education, 0.8% with a master’s degree, and 0.2% with a PhD degree (Saldaña, 2019). In the realm of job market, Figure 5 shows that higher education indeed has an influence and effect in the level of jobs which reflects and impacts the level of income.

The importance of the level of education achieved was one of six themes that arose from informal interviews with young women in Rio. Discussed in more details in Chapter 4, out of nineteen young women interviewed (see Appendix 10), only four had a high school diploma (see Figure 6). The correlation between job opportunities and the level of education expected in the Brazilian job market was very evident, supporting the assertion of negative effects of lack of education. Even while it provides for them, the fundamental structural problem is deeper and is also inter-generational. Moreover, as demonstrated in Figure 4 and Figure 5, the difficulty of job market penetration is a problem not only for those experiencing food insecurity but for higher degree diploma holder as well.

⁴ Statement in Portuguese: *Universalizar, até 2016, o atendimento escolar para toda a população de 15 a 17 anos e elevar, até o final do período de vigência deste PNE, a taxa líquida de matrículas no ensino médio para 85%* (Barros, et al., 2021,p.25).

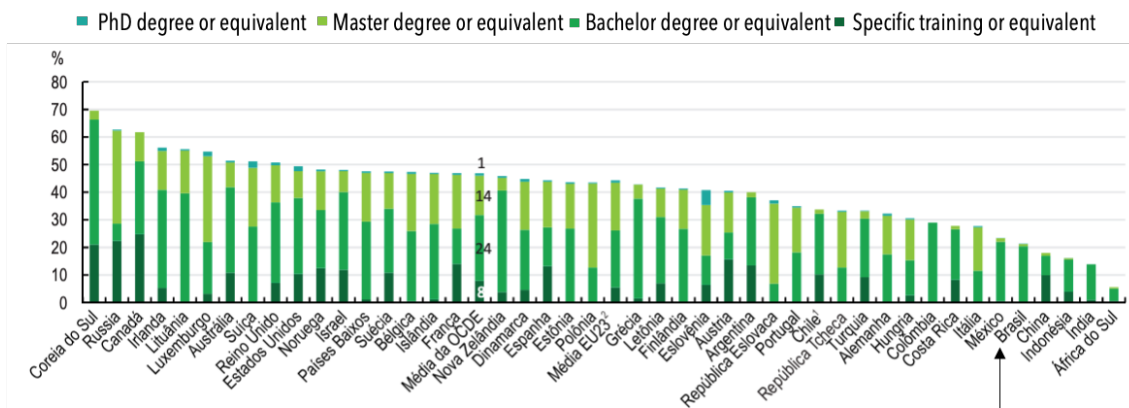


Figure 4 Population Age Group 25-64 with Higher Education Worldwide

Source: Ministry of Education, 2019, p.8.

Although Brazil has the lowest level of higher education compared to other countries as shown in Figure 4, it has the most unequal level of educational requirement in the job criteria shown in Figure 5. This makes the Brazilian job market very difficult to penetrate compared to other countries like The Netherlands (*Países Baixos*) where young adults with bachelor's degree have more access to the job market (Seen in Figure 5). The impact of higher education on young women is especially significant. In 2017, 82% of young women between 25 and 34 with higher education were employed, compared with 63% of young women of the same age group with just high school level educational attainment and just 45% of young women with only a middle school level diploma were employed. For young men, the percentages were 89%,84%,76% respectively, so that education level was relatively much more significant for young women (Ministry of Education, 2019). Evident gender injustice through androcentrism, the persuasive assessment of things deemed to be "feminine" based on the authoritative construction of norms that favor occupations linked to masculinity (Fraser, 1998, p.2).

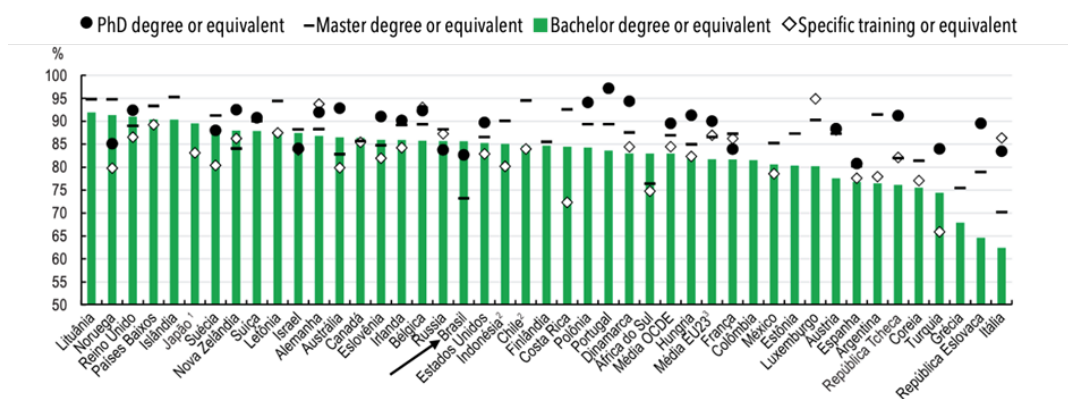


Figure 5 Level of Education Expectation in the Job market Worldwide

Source: Ministry of Education, 2019, p.9.

To explain the reasons behind such high educational expectations for young women in the job market in Brazil, where the majority of the population will not finish or cannot afford to access higher education, is a difficult task. Competitive and extremely high levels of education are demanded by most employers, and this makes it very challenging to access well-paid and permanent professional jobs, especially for young women who do not progress to higher education. Another important element that adds to levels of poverty is access to

food. During the pandemic there was an increase of 23% in overall food prices, observed just between March 2020 and March 2021 (Garcia, 2021). Rice and beans, the main Brazilian staples, went up as a consequence of the pandemic (Garcia, 2021). According to the economist Matheus Peçanha, during the pandemic the dollar was relatively strong and this motivated exportation of food crops, further increasing domestic food prices within Brazil (Garcia, 2021). The price of rice increased by 61% and beans by 69%, well above the overall average inflation for food prices (Garcia, 2021), again these figures are for the period from March 2020 to March 2021. This robbed poorer Brazilians of affordable meals for their families' tables, squeezing their low incomes through disproportionate price increases of staples. In sum, education, income level, and food accessibility are interconnected in the complex development and intensification of poverty.

Along with a lack of investment in public education, and poor job opportunities, the decline in food security affected the whole country at different levels during the pandemic (Rocha Bianchi, et al., 2021). For example, there were no improvements in the salaries of public-school teachers. A drop in school registration and attendance, and narrowing job opportunities, were reflected in a narrowing of sources of income and a decline in family income (Rocha Bianchi, et al., 2021). Moreover, the increased cost of already humble family meals - rice and beans especially - during the pandemic, limited food consumption especially for the most vulnerable families in Brazil (Garcia, 2021). Combined with rapid property price growth as observed in Rio before and after the Olympics (Tostevin, 2016), this complex of factors created a zero-sum game. In this context, the power over (Weber, 1914, p. 256 – 263) of government economic management is tethered to resistance from actors under the oppression of such helpless dominion structure. Resulting in a loss of trust and legitimacy towards authorities and increasing of violence.

2.4 Violence and Social Development

According to studies by Yvonne Bezerra de Mello, children exposed to violence will developed cognitive development disabilities (Mello, 2012, p. 40). Mello (2012) has identified five adverse effects of exposure to violence in children (4 -11 years old): physical, emotional, cognitive, psychosocial, and sexual (p.40). In Rio alone, there are 1,000+ slums giving residence to 1.5 million people (Catalytic Communities, 2014). Nearly all slums are occupied by armed drug lords, who operate through an illegitimate parallel power structure (Weber, 1914, p. 256–263) where justice is imposed by their own use of force and threat (Mello, 2012, p. 40). These drug lord groups are in constant war for territory, and deaths through shootings between drug lords and with the police are a daily occurrence for those who live in the *favelas*. All the young women in this study lived in slums, and all their children were and are exposed to violence daily. This can be through TV, daily conversation, radio, and personal witnessing of violence. Mello (2012) developed her own pedagogy after similar findings of learning difficulties among children aged 4 -11, both in Africa and South America (p.40).

Table 2 shows the low percentage of Brazilians finishing middle and high school. Different theories could be used in an attempt to explain such low educational achievement. As a Brazilian I wonder why Brazilians leave school early, do not get and cannot get secure jobs, and can only afford to live in high-risk areas. Many will get involved in drug dealing, their life expectancy being around 21. The rest depends on government for food and then pass on the custom to younger generations. Where there is poverty in Rio, violence is also present. The *favelas*' structure is yet to be taken in consideration in policy making. For example, according to Councilman Uoston, slums in Rio are only accessible via 'owners.' He shares:

"...to campaign in the favela is only possible through the authorization of the slum's owner at a fee established by them." (Fieldwork Interview, August 18th, 2022).

Those who live in the slums are not governed by government alone but through this illegitimate parallel power structure. All individual interviews presented traumatic effect and/or consequences of violence in their lives.

“...the growth of violence in poor urban communities globally is grossly underestimated, with governments failing to remedy the problem through public policies for disadvantaged children and young people.” (Mello, 2012, p.40)

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2018), Paulo Freire brings to light the empowering, revolutionary concept of learning realms that are not and should not be one-way. Both teachers and students are producing valuable knowledge that enriches their lives (Freire, 2018, p.44). Freire criticizes current norms and structures (Freire, 2018, p.43), and advocates centring education on students and their needs. *Uerê– Mello* pedagogy complements Freire’s (2018) epistemology of students and lecturers. Moreover, she dives deep into the daily lives of the oppressed to identify common cognitive patterns that through learning can transforming the daily reality of children and adults traumatized by violence. Through Mello’s (2012) approach each person should be analysed on a case-to-case basis to identify their unique struggle so that possible solutions can be found. Not understanding causes and effects of violence in the lives of Brazilians dismisses their needs and prevents effective social change.

Communication among slum communities, based on trust and spread through informal channels is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Solidarity is important, and despite oppression from economic factors and gang violence, there is ‘power with’ inside these communities through informal and trusted networks of information exchange (Foucault, 1982).

2.5 Young Women’s Identities in Brazil

The findings and experiences of the participants in the research could potentially enhance the lives of both male and female in Rio de Janeiro Brazil. However, focusing on young women this research highlights and acknowledges the challenges that are unique to women, problematizing the complexity of accessing social programs in Brazil by embracing the intersectionality of being a poor woman. One goal of this research is to reduce the burden on young women of completing the registration to access welfare payments under ABP, so that poor, young women can cope with their other responsibilities in their full daily lives.

The roles of women in Brazilian culture are quite similar to that in other poor countries, where historically the father or the man of the house was formerly the main or even sole breadwinner. Yet today, the greatest part of the responsibility for the home and the children lies with mothers or the women of the household. The book *Women in Brazil*, written by Caipora women's group in 1993, shares how migration of many families from the Northeast of Brazil to Southeast, Rio de Janeiro took place. In the history of Brazil, migration was very common with families moving to try and find the jobs they were unable to find in their own cities. Being forced to travel for work, they sent back part of their earnings to their family left behind in small towns or rural areas. The lines of gender responsibility in the household were formerly quite strict, as men would leave to find jobs, and women would remain, being responsible for raising children. That is not a new finding. In fact, this was the reality, and in some ways such power inequalities still apply today. However, this role description no longer applies to the many poor women who are raising children on their own and end up as the sole or main breadwinner. The government of Brazil has failed so far to create new welfare policies that acknowledges the complexity of the family structures, or how women, regardless of their marital status, are taking on the main responsibilities as heads of households which men once assumed.

Philosopher, feminist, activist, professor, and one of the most important voices in the realm of gender and racism in Brazil, Djamilia Ribeiro in online interview tackles not only the time and space of being a woman, but also the situation of black women in Brazil (Fuks, n.d.). As a philosopher, Ribeiro reflects on how being black and a woman in Brazil, “*it is as if something is missing, and that is the ‘norm’ of being white and male.*” (Ribeiro in interview at *Sempre um papo*, 2018). Within the scope of this research the social and economic roles of men and women are taken as equal by the Auxílio Brazil program, given the identical qualification criteria. These criteria are related to income and not gender roles or responsibilities. Even within poverty and extreme poverty, men still occupy a place of privilege, giving them access to public spaces and the opportunity to hold dominion over narratives and to exercise power that impacts the social interactions of men and women and consequently their inter-relationships (Ribeiro in interview at *Sempre um papo*, 2018).

Ribeiro’s positionality takes us into the topic of the effects of white representation and how this obscures the stories of more socially disadvantaged and non-white groups (Ribeiro in interview at *Sempre um papo*, 2018). Including in unequal race relations, we can see the impact of how men dominate over women to limit the spaces for free expression whilst restricting participation. Ribeiro goes on to mention that “*privileged people don't want to listen, because people will make uncomfortable comments.*” (Ribeiro in interview at *Sempre um papo*, 2018). This statement is not only accurate in conversations around racism, but in any forms of unequal power relations, for example in relation to gender. The Ribeiro’s perspective bridges the ideology of the Caipora Women’s (1993), which is to encourage us to “*listen to the voices of the past*” (Ribeiro in interview at *Sempre um papo*, 2018). Moreover, it is seen as necessary and important to comprehend the challenges of older women too, who birthed and brought up the younger generation whom I will be focusing on in my research. The inter-generational cycle of poverty still influences the challenges young women are going through today, including in relation to finances and digital technologies (Fieldwork Interviews, July 14th – July 28th, 2022). Interacting with the world through what has been the normal situation whilst growing up, including inequality, abuse, violence, anger, lack of opportunity, distrust in the government and so on, could impact how relationships and choices develop today. During fieldwork in Rio, I had the privilege to listen from older women who had previous experience in poverty and described what their top priorities would be. Tackling financial vulnerability, greater security and education were their three top concerns for their families.

The Caipora women's group uses participatory methodologies and methods to describe women’s trajectories when navigating the process of migration, housing, women's rights, domestic violence, motherhood, poverty, taking part in the workforce, and when challenging government oppression. Such a range of different economic, caring, and social activities have built up the resilience and identity of poor and Afro-Brazilian women (Caipora Women's Group, 1993, p. 2-11). During the 1990s, the dynamics between couples in Brazil were characterized by women expressing that they were very frustrated with the irregular way in which men would provide for their families (Caipora Women's Group, 1993, p. 13-20). As previously said, in practice women often ended up being the ones responsible for providing the household income and raising a family. This makes this study so important because it shows that even several decades ago, many poor women in Brazilian society already had more duties and responsibilities than men. As a result, hearing from them is critical for the development and reconstruction of society today, as it makes it possible to reflect on the invisibility of poor women’s everyday struggles. Their empowerment depends on the social structures of race and class, and the intersectionality of the place where they belong. Power and control have been the main drive for those with accumulation of resources. Whoever control the masses controls the narrative (Ribeiro in interview at *Sempre um papo*, 2018). Additionally, women have historically been marginalized, which has led to a disproportionately masculine

view of social life (Marshall, 1994, p. 9). Modernity was based on male experience (Marshall, 1994, p. 9).

2.6 Risk, Modernity and Social Policy

Our current post-modern period is strongly impacted by pre-modern thought and viewpoints. Some authors and philosophers would argue whether we have even achieved modernity in the first place (Giddens, 1993, p.289-281). From the 18th century, the world observed decision making developed through quantitative analyses, consequentially social policies (Kemshall, 2002). Numbers and economic accumulation were used to justify decisions and we still see the influences of such processes today as we measure economic and social successes and failures. Tradition has been a theme throughout in theories about social life and social policies. In the book *Risk, social policy, and welfare*, Kemshall (2002) quotes Beck (1998:12) who states that: “*Risk begins when tradition ends*” (Kemshall, 2002, p.7). Social perspectives have shifted from a focus on tradition and fate to innovation, modernity, and risk. Since the 18th century, risk has been viewed as a key indicator of economic progress and a central preoccupation of society which no longer involves distributing wealth alone, but also risk (Kemshall, 2002, p.6). Responsibility and risk are intertwined. For some, risks come with advantages, for example, for stock markets and for others risk creates dependency on social policies which fill the gaps for those who ‘fail’ to thrive (Kemshall, 2002, p.6 and 19).

The sense of security that risk prevention has given to individuals have changed the fear of the unknown, of fate, and of God Himself. Encouraging individuals to make their own choices based on risks calculations to obtain desired outcomes is part of the logic of a market economy based on profit calculations (Kemshall, 2002, p.14). The danger of economic empowerment is that social welfare is viewed in negative terms since it can be viewed through the capitalist lens as part of risk prevention. “*Individuals then gain access to services on the basis of their risk level, or risks are calculated in order to prevent them from falling through safety nets.*” (Kemshall, 2002, p.14). The consequence of such values and beliefs is the marginalization of minorities and women whose numbers justify the current social and economic policies that harm them. Modernization enhances many areas of our lives and has been the basis for rising government resources. At the same time, rapid and constant changes in technology and globalization leave vulnerable groups behind in the job market and in investment. Most of us can agree on principles of freedom, equality, inclusion, justice, and patriotism, as long as these principles are kept general and nonspecific. Once we enter into concrete details, of who gets what, our surface accord begins to show signs of strain (Jackson, 2017, p.2). The welfare agenda in modernity can be both as a tool of oppression and as a response to workers’ historic demands for protection and advancement irrespective of fortune or fate (Kemshall, 2002, p.18). Meanwhile, poor communities remain vulnerable to risks chosen by the wealthy and powerful, and by government authorities without reference to the needs and priorities of those who are structurally most at risk.

2.7 Conclusion

From Freire (2018) to Kemshall (2002), oppression and opportunity are tethered to many different areas in an individual’s lives which impacts their psychological, social, and economic well-being. The failure to address such pivotal elements and foster transformation in policies produces the multitude of issues covered in this Chapter. Currently there are 30+ social programs available for poor communities in Brazil (*Secretaria de Desenvolvimento Social do Estado de São Paulo*, n.d.). In 2020, there was a 300% increase in the cost of such social assistance in Brazil, totalling R\$ 423,6 billion (82.7 billion euros at 1 euro=5.12 reais) also due the

pandemic (Russi, 2021). Yet vulnerable families are still hungry, dependent, and oppressed. Radical top-down and bottom-up transformation is proposed to reintegrate dignity to those experiencing poverty.

Chapter 3 | Auxílio Brasil as Hybrid Welfare: Registration and Access

3.1 Introduction

The Bolsonaro administration created two brand new apps for the Auxílio Brasil welfare program: Single Registry (*CadÚnico*) and Auxílio Brasil. In this chapter, we follow the registration process through the digital apps set up and (poorly) publicized by the government through their websites. BFP, the previous welfare program, used to conduct full in-person interviews, filling in forms and running a paper documentation check. I examine how these two new apps propose to organise the registration process. In addition, I reflect through young women's empirical welfare registration experiences in contrast with government's attempts with ABP digitalisation.

3.2 Background

We start with the implementation of the ABP digitally since it was introduced in 2022. The *Cadastro Único* app is intended to serve as a pre-registration app., and this on-line form is supposed to be completed before it is followed by an in-person walk-in to the local CO. *Cadastro Único* is a pool where beneficiaries who seek to get financial support from the government have to register, so they can be assessed for selection for support through various welfare programs, each based on specific criteria of eligibility. The Auxílio Brasil app is dedicated to following up full registration with information about benefit approval, payment schedule, and the history of payments.

In 2004, with very limited internet access and no apps available until 2008, the BFP concept was developed (Strain, 2017). It is interesting to note that, only 14 years after the first app was created, families living in poverty and extreme poverty are expected to have access to smartphones navigating government welfare. BFP registration method in the beginning was through forms, see Appendix 3, then moved to computerization where social workers would ask questions and fill it out for the beneficiaries, which is how is currently done.

3.3 *Cadastro Único* App Pre-Registration

The initiative here was to start the process of pre-registration at home. The two apps advised to download is *Cadastro Único* (*CadÚnico*) and Auxílio Brasil. Starting with *CadÚnico* by consultation the Brazilian Social Security Number (CPF), see Appendix 5, to check if the person is eligible for registration and if already in the system, to access their account. Further app registration steps are found in Appendix 6 and participatory interaction with the app are found in Appendix 7.

3.4 In Person Registration

According to the instructions from *CadÚnico*, applicants should transition to in-person registration to finalize their process after submitting their information. The CO is the only physical place responsible for all social assistance programs of the Brazilian government. There is also a phone number, 121 available from the Ministry of Citizenship to answer

question and concerns about all information regarding the social assistance programs of the government (*Governo do Brasil*, 2022a). Cras offices are spread in different provinces in each state, one office to each local neighbourhood. The last stage of the process is designed to provide original documentation, to verify the authenticity of these documents and thus to prevent fraud.

According to fieldwork interviews, all nineteen women found their information through informal avenues that instruct them to go in person to the local CO with all their documents. Government social workers at COs also advise people to proceed in this manner. Furthermore, the government language used to explain their programs and processes are so complex that the young women sought their information through informal means, including social media, family, and friends. Currently, the only process of registration used for ABP is in person. This is the same process that families used to register in BFP. Fancy apps have been set up, paid for through taxpayers' money, but they are not being used. In Chapter 4 we discuss further the implications of this disconnect in communication and information between young women and the government website and apps, a gap young women face in their striving for social inclusion.

3.5 Auxílio Brasil App

In the Auxílio Brasil app the beneficiary will be able to follow the process of payment schedule and status (rejected, paused, approved, paid) as well as a history of all previous payments. After registration, each participant is issued an ID called NIS, which is used as a reference to know when the assistance will be paid by the last digit of the Social Admission Number (NIS) (See Appendix 8). Social programs in Brasil are paid through the Federal bank *Caixa Econômica*. At this stage the Auxílio Brasil app and CAIXA TEM are the apps which have the following up process, which is payment scheduling and approval. Although one app should complement the other, information in the CAIXA TEM currently is sufficient to skip the need of Auxílio Brasil app.

3.6 Government Information vs. Reality

As described in this chapter so far, the digital portal and apps of Auxílio Brasil sound and look very straightforward and interactive, and relatively easy to use. The transition from a well-known type of in-person registration, through direct interaction in an office, towards partial online access, was especially intended to smooth the path to accessing ABP for applicants. The on-line, digital system sounded good in principle, as advertised in the government website designed for these purposes. I was concerned that in the judgment of the government, families living under conditions of poverty and extreme poverty, some might not own a smartphone or have internet access and would be too busy seeking to put food on the table. However, from the very first interviews, I learned that none of the digitalization registration efforts that had been marketed and paid for by government and placed on-line were actually being used by the young women claimants. Following that important finding, interview questions had to be re-structured, so I shifted the main focus from young women's digital inclusion in a new 'hybrid' welfare program, to how young women actually negotiated their need for information and for pathways in seeking to access welfare provisions under ABP.

According to the findings of fieldwork, not one of the 19 young women interviewed had ever used the *CadÚnico* app, to begin the registration process, or even seemed to know

about it. The whole group knew about the Auxílio Brasil app, but it was not used that much. This discovery of fieldwork and more are displayed in the five themes highlighted in Figure 6. Here are some of the remarks from the young women when asked their interaction and feedback with government procedures and digitalization:

“People can easily fall into cracks of the internet.” “Internet knowledge does restrict people.” “In the email CRAS sent me, they told me to bring my documents in person at the same time to download the app. I came in person.” “The app is not intuitive; people cannot follow what they supposed to do in there.” “No one to ask questions, in case of confusion while in the app.” “It is not enough to have a pre-registration app when we still have to come in person regardless to show documentation.” “Would prefer if the whole process was online and the option of in person for those who needs it.” “We have to wait either way we register, there is no difference.” “If it was all online, I wouldn’t have to spend the night in the line with my children that I don’t have anyone to leave while I am here.” (Fieldwork Interviews, July 14th – July 28th, 2022)

Additionally, it was unanimously expressed among the nineteen women to keep both telephone and in-person customer assistance to individuals who can or prefer face-to-face interactions. This visible disconnect between the government and applicants, shows lack of representation and efficiency in the welfare program. The failure of effective management, communication, and staff training has significantly taken a toll on those young women’s lives and all others who uses the same avenue to seek for assistance. The program was too ambitious to transition existent families at the same time as admitting others nationwide, through the view of the economist De Barros (Insper, 2022). Same social workers passing on information in the same cultural manner that was with BFP. Similar roll over practice was the information accessibility, which is mainly provided by word of mouth, by Cras staff, or by a neighbour or family member. None of the participants mentioned the government website as a place where they seek information. We discuss further in session Chapter 4.

3.7 Accessing Auxílio Brasil Money

Caixa Econômica Federal, which translates directly as Federal Economic Box, manages all financial operations for government payments in Brazil, including those for all its employees. Beneficiaries of any social program registered in Brazil will receive their money through CAIXA. Some young women I spoke with already had the app, CAIXA TEM from COVID-19 emergency fund relief and even after the fund stopped, they kept the app. The migration of COVID-19 emergency fund relief to ABP also carry over families to the welfare program.

An additional program added to the Auxílio Brasil which relates to the money received in the program is the designated credit. Families can request loans at a ‘lower’ interest rate because there is less danger of default due to the amount of the instalments is directly deducted from the ABP benefit itself (Governo do Brasil, 2022d). The initiative of the government is to give opportunity of loans, there were only available to government employees, pensioners, and retirees, as well as those working in the private sector to families in the welfare program starting August 2022. However, politics and critics disagrees, including former Ceará governor, Ciro Gomes who shared in his social media that such loan to families under financial vulnerability sounds almost irresistible (Yahoo! *Noticias*, 2022). Loans with annual fee at 79%, applicants will compromise 40% of their ABP benefit of R\$600 (117 euros, 1EUR=5.12) for up to 24 months of instalments (Yahoo! *Noticias*, 2022). Many of beneficiaries are in debt already, promotion of inclusion through deeper debts are not opportunity equality but false means of oppression. In Chapter 5 we discuss further the implication of the politics in social welfare.

3.8 Conclusion

The two apps created to optimize the ABP currently has no direct registration improvement in the lives of the beneficiaries. The program has achieved the recognition of the change of management and political parties, like intended, not through the modernization and inclusion of all through internet network and scope. The registration of ABP still follows under the shadow of BFP registration policy which is, in person registration.

Chapter 4 | In Person Data Collection: Where theory meets reality

4.1 Introduction

This chapter shares, examines, and discusses important findings from data gathered during fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro. Individual interviews, participatory observations, and casual conversations with community members enhanced this research and promoted curiosity. More upon from the political standpoint in Chapter 5. Young women's experiences are highlighted and presented in a way that reflects their personalities, pain, challenges, identities, and suggestions to the program. Additionally, just as the last chapter contrasted government marketing and on-line procedures with the realities of face-to-face practices and systems, this chapter too highlights the beauty of fieldwork exposure of daily realities. I also show some of the key characteristics (Table 3) of the young women I interviewed. This chapter responds to the study question and sub-questions while also revealing the perspectives of the young women through their participation, representation, and stories.

4.2 Cras Offices Group Data

The young women who were the focus of this study were strategized on how to locate and to interact, as well as the environment that allowed communication with them in their busy schedule. The most effective method to find those young women was to meet them at the government assistance centre, the CO. Each neighbourhood has their own CO where the government staff are to aid residents of that zip code. Upon arrival, social workers check documentation and addresses of claimants to find out if they are in the right Cras location, and if any documentation is missing. If they are at the correct office, a ticket is given, and they wait for their turn. For those who arrive after all tickets of the day are given, will have to return another day. The number of daily tickets is based on the capacity of each office. The number of tickets varies also per day and how much assistance each individual needs.

Table 3 List of 19 Research Participants Common Characteristics

Young Women's Profile
In debt
Generational poverty
Young unplanned mothers
Lives in high-risk areas in the city
Daily exposure to violence
In and out of jobs
Fighting for a different future for their children

Source: Fieldwork Interviews July 14th – August 28th, 2022 (created by author).

The dynamic of each CO is different. We went to three different offices: Rocha Miranda, Irajá, and Downtown Rio (see Map 1). Two located in the north area of the city and one in centre. Some neighbourhoods are more crowded than other, which does not provide even access to assistance for all claimants. However, generally COs are understaffed given all the

people that seeks help. They also reject service for many claimants daily. In recent months, in order to ensure access to staff within the office, claimants have been camping outside COs throughout the night. Mothers with children, elderly people can all be seen on the ground, sleeping, and waiting in the line for the office to open the next day. *“I was lucky today, I arrived at 5am and was able to be seen at 10am.”*(Fieldwork, Julia, July 18th, 2022). Sometimes there are more than one hundred people waiting, sometimes less. Some people have the support from a friend or a family member to take turns in the queue. Accessing Cras services has become a sort of gamble, and many people who are not fully aware of the criteria under the new system may queue for hours, only to be sent away without success.

Considering the crisis of long queues, I conducted individuals interview on the streets after the women had been helped in the office, or during their cigarette breaks. At two of the three COs I went to, I formally asked for permission to conduct interviews. Both offices rejected my request and advised me to email the city or go in person to the Ministry of Social Development of Rio de Janeiro. Out of curiosity, I went to the office of Ministry of Social Development, but no personnel responsible was present. In one of the COs, the director herself came out to investigate my interviews, and I used that opportunity to informally interview her as well and all the social workers that came after her to their cigarette break.

4.3 Visualising Key Findings: Family and Routes to Welfare

The key themes that stood out in the interviews are found in this session (see Figure 6). Interestingly, all nineteen young women freely shared their family composition in our interviews. The topic pattern and the similarity of the answers stood out among other themes. First finding was that all but one was married, three had a partner involved in their lives and fourteen were single mothers. All young women did not have a secure income source and yet all but one, are the breadwinners of the family. Most women were unemployed single mother raising their children alone. *“The Auxilio Brasil helps me to feed my kids.”* *“I am doing this for my children.”* (Fieldwork, Marinalva, July 20th, 2022). Were common remarks from women we spoke. The main drive for applying for ABP were linked to the wellbeing of their kids. *“I have been through a lot, and I want to provide a different future to my son.”*(Fieldwork, Rafaela, July 20th, 2022). Their mainly support system are grandmothers but also limited from generational financial vulnerability. Grandmother are also living to survive. Generations in a repetitive cycle taking on multitudes of responsibilities that they can afford.

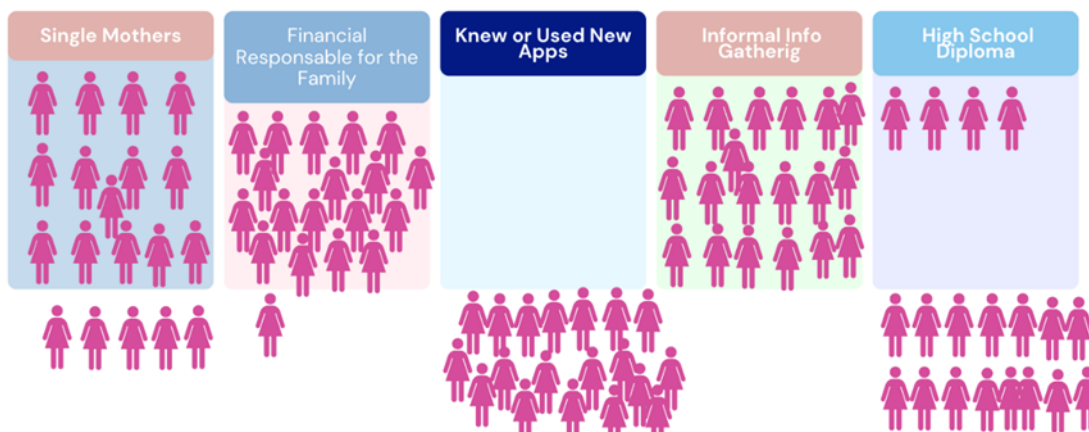


Figure 6 Data Collection: Key Themes

Source: Fieldwork Interviews July 14th – July 28th, 2022 (created by author).

The third remarkable finding was the non-existent usage and awareness of the *Cadastro Único* app, and the no maximized Auxílio Brasil app. This was described and discussed in Chapter 3. Both apps were created with their main purpose being to serve the population as inclusive tools to facilitate registration onto the program. Forth theme, was seen through young women negotiation access to information. Instead of using the government website and relevant apps, they gather welfare information through their own informal networks of family and friends (mostly females). Women's trust behaviour are shaped by specific needs associated to poverty (Burton, et al., 2009, p.1121). They emphasized the importance of trust in these networks on which they relied for information. There is not one specific method which the young women informants used to find information; they simply asked around in their own environment, based on their knowledge of those they asked and local information flows. Source credibility is evaluated by the consistency of positive feedback and through comparative content analysis. When a person is proven accurate by multiple people, he/she becomes a source of information for the whole community.

Trust is on the basis of trial and error and is culturally negotiated to seek help with issues that are not well understood. In poor communities in Rio, trust is like a currency. A couple of the young women mentioned having trusted friends with documents and help with the ABP application and are still not sure what was done precisely in the process. Both were confused about their current status and the overall processes. They had both camped overnight to seek answers in person. And the last theme, the lack of education of almost all the informants tends to increase their vulnerability and dependency on those they trust to help them. Additionally, oppression was reported as experienced by some young women, from members of their own communities who were also socially excluded. All of them were affected in some way by social injustices, reinforced by structural violence ingrained in Brazil's bureaucratic political system. Furthermore, the job network for young women is communicated almost entirely through informal information networks. The '*bico*' (informal small tasks jobs paid in cash) are not advertised publicly but spread by word of mouth. And yet, a '*factor that is closely related to with women's entry in employment.*' (Raheim & Bolden, 1995, p.145). The ecosystem of circular informal information and familiar cultural ways of leaving is a strong characteristic of low-income communities. Such bonding is not seen in upper class. Low-income families can be found in favelas, or the surrounding areas, information and assistance cannot reach them due to state restrictions brought on by drug lords. Such communities need one another for survival. Although, internet breaks that barrier lack of technological expertise prevents their use.

4.4 Examples from Experience: 3 Profiles

From the 19 women experiences, three interviews stood out. Although it does not include all sample data, it represents dramatically different viewpoints that demonstrate the need for an appropriate and updated strategy to better serve the community. These three profiles could serve as a starting point for considering restructured forms of information management and communication around ABP. More information on the 19 women's profile is found on Table 3. The experiences and observations of the young women in the sample will be used in a collaborative sharing process with the aim of enhancing ABP processes and the capacity of welfare offices to deal with current demand and future issues (Johnston in White, 1999, p.323). Engaging the young women claimants' experiences into the conversation promotes participation, inclusion, and fair representation.

Among the group of nineteen women, different experiences were recorded. The same event was described from a range of different perspectives. One was not considered more important than the other, and all enriched the overall picture, giving room for improvement

and encouragement. Here I describe the experience of three different women in the ABP, three women from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and education levels, all applying for the same welfare program. First, Julia is appreciative of being a part of the program and satisfied with the way it operates. Second, Carmen had a terrible experience and feels the program has mistreated her. Isabel challenges the welfare basis of the program and has some problems with the system itself. I present each young woman's story in turn.

Meet Julia, black single mother of four, in her early thirties and unemployed. She has no support from family member nor from the father of her children. She exercises both parental roles for her children. Julia dropped out of middle school when she became pregnant with her first child and has not returned since. To survive and to feed her children, the family have been in and out of shelter and at times have been homeless on the north side of Rio. For Julia, her life's purpose is to survive for her children. Welfare is a means to this end. The assistance from ABP complements her income from the informal jobs she finds from time to time. The changes in policies from food distribution to benefit in cash has given autonomy to beneficiaries (Gomes de Brito & Rosa Costa, 2017). While negotiating the job market, she is unable to find a better job due to her poor level of education and there is no one else to care for the children while she is away. When the children are in school, she uses the time to work at *bicos* (informal jobs). All the money she earns goes to bills and pay for what the children need. For Julia, her existence at this moment in time is not about her own needs but providing for those depending on her.

In fact, all the young women but one shared that their life is involved around the roles they have in their environment and society, their first and the main role being as mothers. When I asked Julia what she would do differently to improve the program, she answered

“Look, I don't see any problem with the program. Some people demand too much, but we need to thank God for the little they are giving us, because I know the things, I have been through in this life” (Fieldwork Interview, Julia, July 18th, 2022).

Even with the hard and challenging circumstances she is living through, this interviewee was so gracious in all that she shared. This was in spite of the fact it had taken her 10 hours in a queue to be helped at the CO, after she had arrived at 5am, and had waited without food and water. She presented her experience to me through the lenses of gratitude and even though she recognised that the system is not perfect, the fact that she was able to receive financial assistance, was sufficient to support her and her children during the tough times they had been facing in life till now.

Carmen is a brunette, single mother of one son who moved to Rio de Janeiro, less than a year ago, from Pará, a state in the north of the country. Like many other migrant residents, she had moved to Rio in the hope of finding a better job. She currently does not have custody of her son, due to her financial constraints. ABP was presented as a short-term solution by a friend from the same state in Brazil. Carmen shared her story with tears in her eye from sadness at leaving her family behind and finding no better opportunities in Rio. I interviewed her twice, before and after her CO visit. Her experience before being helped showed resilience in her hope of being able to access extra cash every month so as not to go hungry. She has informal jobs, like many other young women I spoke with. She stands out from the crowd by her appearance, being different from those from of Rio and dressed differently than Cariocas. Julia had a long naturally straight black hair, fit, a fashionable outfit, in sum she is differently beautiful than others in Rio. Her experience after being helped changed to *“They embarrassed me. I feel very uncomfortable the way they looked at me”* (Fieldwork Interview, Carmen, July 22nd, 2022). Social workers at Cras at downtown Rio may have a stereotype of how poor women should look and dress. Carmen did not meet their culture poverty appearance and she reported that this led to comments and strange looks as she was being helped. The tension became so great that one of the social workers, told her she should not be there because

“...it doesn't look like you need help like the others.” (Fieldwork Interview, Carmen, July 22nd, 2022). She was perceived to be beautiful and not visually impacted by structural violence like the others. Carmen felt she had to beg for the social workers to believe her and be allowed to proceed with her registration. Her feedback prior to her interactions with social workers was directed to the means of communication of the government and advertisement. *“If I knew I was eligible sooner I would have applied. I felt that others need more than I do, but when I found out the criteria, I realized that I am one of them.”* (Fieldwork Interview, Carmen, July 22nd, 2022). Along with communication disconnection she also finds that is extremely important to train and advise social workers to not shame and embarrass those seeking help. *“They are not there to judge who needs it or not, they are there to follow the instructions from the government.”* (Fieldwork Interview, Carmen, July 22nd, 2022).

Isabel is a white mid-thirties single mother of 2 adolescents' boys. She initially registered to BFP at the end of the program, in 2019 and soon after getting a job, the benefit was automatically cancelled. When she lost that job, she again found herself in need of assistance and applied to ABP. She is currently waiting to be approved so her benefit can resume. She is between the two polarized experiences of Julia and Carmen, because in her case she may not be as much in need of government welfare assistance as the others. As I interview her, she organizes her small stand in front of CO where she sells coffee, snacks, candy, and cigarettes to those waiting. During our interview, people come to her for information and counsel. Very outspoken and a strong personality, people gather around Isabel to hear her advice. When I asked, if her purchasing power using the amount of the benefit, would enhance their lives her reply was

“It will help a little... as you can see, I work on the street and sometimes I don't sell anything, and everything is very expensive. What would meet my needs would be an opportunity from the government for people to have a signed contract job. I'm against Auxílio Brasil. Instead of giving money to people, they should give work opportunities. A lot of people want to find work but are unable to get it” (Fieldwork Interview, Isabel, July 20th, 2022).

Isabel believes in bottom-up empowerment by giving dignity through job opportunity to work provided by the government, instead of just transfer of money. Women we interviewed expressed the same concern, non-existent alternative inclusion through earning instead of receiving. Isabel has skills, energy, and confidence she can walk on her feet once that door is open.

4.5 Conclusion

Fieldwork data collecting revealed that the reality of ABP registration and expectations did not match the theory portrayed on the government websites. Similar experiences were observed among interviews which foster a profile of families in need in Rio. Common traits founded were optimism for their children's future through education, resiliency, bargaining abilities, inability to understand official language, exposure to structure and physical violence, while being financially responsible for their families as single mothers. From young women's imperial experiences and perspectives this Chapter presented alternatives solutions to current problems in the welfare system.

Chapter 5 | Fostering Individual Responsibility in Politics

5.1 Introduction

The inevitable subject of politics and its influences is analysed in this chapter through the lens of social justice, as defined by young women and other actors in Rio. In this chapter I return to broad topics affecting all Brazilians, including education, jobs, public (in)security, violence, and the political system. Highlights from interviews with a politician, favela community leaders, a government health worker, the current Executive Undersecretary of State for Infrastructure, and Magé county teacher added representation from both sides of the political spectrum. I brought some of the young women's inquiries and concerns raised in interviews, to these political actors, to gain government and expert responses. At the end of the chapter, I offer up critical analyses and suggestions from respondents, using problems as the means to imagine improvements.

5.2 The Gaps Within: Welfare and Politics

From the creation of ABP, the program has been criticized by many different institutions and individuals, nationally and internationally. During the transition from BFP to ABP, Bolsonaro expressed his desire to make his mark by removing the opposition party's public policies (Alvarenga, 2022). The interest of the regime in re-election was apparent. For example, the higher payment on ABP had an expiration date of December 2022, by when the following president could be elected. Leaving families unsure if they will be able to continue finding support on the welfare. One government teacher from a county outside of Rio, she sees the future of ABP into 2 outcomes from this presidential election between Lula and Bolsonaro: Since Lula has won, it seems that ABP will be changed, either back to BFP or perhaps with a different name. The name change will not ensure that the new program is poverty-reduction focused, concerned with wellbeing of poor families who depend on welfare. According to the government teacher, who prefers to have her name not mentioned in the study, even educational is politicised. According to her, in the state sector, teachers who agree to show visible support for candidates receive grants for their public schools. For the ones who decline, they are buried in paperwork when they need assistance from the state.

The former administration was very proud that ABP supported more families than its predecessor; some changes in poverty and extreme poverty indices expanded the scope of those eligible for these benefits. However, this rapid increase caused hiccups in the system, resulting in confusion about hybrid technologies involved, and chaos in overcrowded CRAS offices, as well as a government website crash (too many users accessing at the same time) and so on (Globo, 2021). *"They get scared from what they hear around and assume it will affect them while nothing changed on their end."* (Fieldwork Interview, Social worker at Irajá CRAS, July 20th, 2022). From the young women's perspective, I sensed a common responsibility to the most needy. When I asked Marcelle and Cintia what they would do differently, here is what they replied:

"The money should go to who actually needs it. Search the people who are getting the money and not using it towards the family. Some moms get the money and do not spend with their kids." (Fieldwork Interview, Marcelle, July 18th, 2022).

"I don't think is right this money to be used in any other thing but the children." (Fieldwork Interview, Cintia, July 14th, 2022).

All young women interviewed in this research said benefits should be aimed at prioritizing children. They showed a high level of integrity when it came to the duty of providing for their families based on how and where they spend their money. Many wanted more accountability from those who received benefits. They reported knowing people who according to their lifestyle did not seem truly in need of the assistance, and who lied in interview questions (See Appendix 4) at the Cras office. *“Interview answers are not checked. The only thing that needs to be proven is the kid school level and where they live”* (Fieldwork Interview, Cintia, July 14th, 2022)

However, the criticism that stood out most in the individual interviews with the young women was related to the lack of job opportunities. All nineteen women agreed that the amount is not enough to eat and afford housing. In BFP welfare policy, those who found jobs were automatically removed from the program. In ABP the benefit were supposed to continue after one got a job (Roma, 2022). In reality, beneficiaries could be removed from the program when they found a job, according to Ana Beatriz (Fieldwork Interview, July 28th, 2022). When family members lose their jobs, they will be sent to start the registration process. As discussed in Chapter 2, the level of education along with experience are hiring criteria for good employment. Unfortunately, low-income communities are not equipped with high quality education in public schools. Working around the system to make a decent living for their families, all nineteen women were left with not much choice but to seek informal jobs, to add to their minimal welfare income.

In the interview with the Executive Undersecretary of the Secretary of State for Infrastructure in Rio, she shared the challenges her office goes through to find qualified workers. According to her, all state construction is outsourced to cut costs. The private sector too seeks profits first, hires low-income community members without qualification nor experience to work for the state of Rio. At state level there are shortages of government staff with experience and knowledge of civil engineering for example. *“We have resources but not qualified personnel to search for skilled companies.”* (Fieldwork Interview, Executive Undersecretary, July 29th, 2022). A disaster she adds, finding herself responsible for training and searching for qualified workers on top of her daily responsibilities. Similar scenario was shared with retired government nurse, Rita Miranda (Fieldwork Interview, August 8th, 2022). She shared that towards her last years working for the hospital SUS in Bonsucesso, the state no longer hired full-time employees.

“Outsourced workers flooded the hospital; we were a very small group of full-time workers training staff while caring for patients in the hospital. It was very worrisome because they had no medical training and had no idea of what they were doing.” (Fieldwork Interview, Miranda, August 8th, 2022).

According to Miranda, all workers hired were from high-risk areas in Rio, without academic education, nor experience. On top of the crisis in the public health sector by lack of supplies and medication in hospitals in Rio. Community leaders aware of the disconnection between state and quality of public education have gathered ideas on how equip and empower their members. Adriano Paraiso, leader at Babilônia slum, formed a group of males and females within the slum to be trained by a history professor at Federal University of Rio (UFRJ) (Fieldwork Interview, Adriano Paraiso, August 21st, 2022). The group of young males and females learned the history of the hill of which they live and currently works as tour guides through an organization formed in the slum, *Amastourbabichapeu*. I interviewed Filipe Sena, a tour guide in Babilônia, on a slum tour. He revealed that the alternative to working as a tour guide would be to steal like his brother, who was killed by the police. (Fieldwork Interview, August 23rd, 2022). Baiana, a 65-year-old community activist from the Honório Gurgel neighbourhood, began serving her neighbourhood by engaging with the private sector to distribute essentials and to support people in need. Today, she uses her network with the political and private sector to empower her community by encouraging children and parents to resume their academic education. Through her non-profit Baiana provides training

lessons through government training programs: Working Brazil and National Industrial Learning Service (*Trabalha Brasil* and *Senai*) (Fieldwork Interview, July 29th, 2022). Both examples, of empowerment bottom-up approach, power with (Foucault, 1982) by Paraiso and Baiana, circles back in the importance of education to foster individual's independence.

Participants in this research wants the opportunity to work, the state has job openings but cannot find qualified professionals. The public-school education is poorly funded by the government, teachers are not paid, strikes harms children education. Parents are frustrated for lack of resources to invest in their children's future. Children loses interest in learning and eventually leaves. When no jobs available, illegal activities might sound as the only logical path to take. Drug lords have a high hiring rate due to short life expectancy, increasing violence in the city. For those who chooses resilience, seen through examples of the young women in this research, from both broken systems, fights to survive.

5.3 Politics of Social Inclusion

The whole creation of the ABP raises debates of the motives behind it, instead of improving already implemented BFP. *"We missed a great opportunity to improve Bolsa Familia"* Barros reported (Insper, 2022). The major critique raised from young women mentioned in the session above was the lack of opportunity to earn their income. Young women from lower-income families want to work but are unable to use their special talents to help others because there is no development support system in place. Example of a common concern, *"...the money is too little; I can't barely pay rent. I need a job. I am against Auxílio Brasil even though I have applied and waiting to be approved."* (Fieldwork Interview, Isabel, July 20th, 2022). According to Isabel, the resources used to keep people in their oppressed social state should be used to train those seeking for assistance to get on their feet with dignity. Isabel goes on to share that she would have a parallel assistance where she would register people's skills to best fit them in appropriate job opportunity. In addition, a pool of jobs would be accessible specially for qualified Auxílio Brasil beneficiaries. Moving further, Isabel also takes in consideration the younger generation, that must be taken serious by the government by the quality of public school and adding career trainings seen in private schools.

Social inclusion for young women sounded differently from the welfare policies and debates among politicians. Those mothers want safe lives for their families, earn their living, and experience emotional security through their human rights respected. The small cash given by the government is not enough to attend to social inclusion and their needs. Transfer of money is not perceived by the young women as empowerment neither development. *"An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this false 'generosity."* (Freire, 2018, p.44). Families transferred to ABP from BSP were in the programs for many years, which describes the frustration and valid critiques raised in this Chapter. The expectation from the young women is to have support from a transparent government through welfare program genuinely caring for them through promoting active participation in the policies regarding their lives. For example:

"[They] need to help people quicker. The process can be long, and some people are in the line for months in need of assistance." *"Do everything online! They only work during the week and working hours. I don't have day-care to leave my kids and can't miss work."* *"There is no bathroom available to us and Cras social workers are very frustrated."* *"Social worker should go into everyone's home to see if they are who they said they were."* (Fieldwork Interviews, July 14th – July 28th, 2022)

According to young women interviewed for this study, political will is lacking in important characteristics such as accountability, top-down empowerment (job opportunity, security, education, and health care), and social inclusion development.

5.4 What if?

“One day, I hope there will be an instrument that will end 90% of the laws”

These words were from Rio Councilman, Professor Uoston where he shared hope and challenges as a politician in Brazil. According to Uoston, the reality of politics in Brazil is set in a way that laws hold back the community improvements and social inclusion. As an example, City Council role in paper is to hold the city’s major and federal government accountable for budget expenditures based on the plans and projects set before the mandate. Each neighborhood has a Council from different field sectors, responsible for the improvements of his/her area. In real life that is not what is done, time is spent in little tasks due distracting from the bigger picture. Frustrated with the task as law inspector which did not allow time and space to invest time in the executive. During his three mandates he saw politicians elected eager to empower and help the people, and quitting discouraged and frustrated with the Brazilian political system.

Professor Uoston actual name spelling Washington changed his name to make it easier for voters to communicate. A professor of biology at a university, he began his political career after years of not seeing his community succeed. He served involuntarily as all of his neighbors' designated emergency driver because he was the only one who owned a car. Many advances were achieved after 23 years in politics, but yet many people still face the same difficulties he joined politics to change. He calls it *“modern slaves”* where the population is in zero-sum game. The prices are set so high, knowingly majority just do not have money to afford. He goes on to share that slavery has not ended, it is a pretend. The characteristic of the oppressor is to keep people uninformed so that decisions that involves their lives will not be challenged nor understood by people. Highly criticized by public money expenditure transparency, he continues to fight for social justice within the political realm. Due to comparable grievances to those expressed here by a politician, the Brazilian population has little faith in their political institutions.

According to Uoston, Brazil's incredible issues have a solution that can be discovered inside the challenge itself. Key political suggestions shared in the interview were the creation of a parallel support system to any implementation of a policy, to aid those involved. As an example, before taking international delivery companies to court demanding better working conditions and minimum wage according to Brazil’s standards, anticipate a possible unemployment outcome (Fieldwork Interview, Councilman Uoston, August 18th, 2022). Discrimination and diversity in workplace and in politics be treated from decency basis, not a math problem to have a certain number met in paper. Moreover, to hold accountable politics for the management of public money, as private companies would towards any employee. Furthermore, violence is proven not to be solved with violence. The cycle of lack of opportunity from no education makes irresistible an offer to enter illegal activities to voting bribery, perpetuating and worsen the problems we see in Brazil. Without education and reliable source of information the villain becomes the hero *“What prevails is more the effect and not the reason, not the truth but what enters the folklore of the people in Brazil.”* (Fieldwork Interview, Councilman Uoston, August 18th, 2022). The population is so desperate and deprived of their basic needs that compromised their integrity to any appealing offer without evaluating the consequences long-term.

5.5 Conclusion

Similar frustration and concerns by the young women in chapter 4 are added through the perspective of political realm in this Chapter. Different levels of frustration and injustice

and yet towards the same target, the political system in Brazil. Young women's perspective regarding political aspects of the program and their lives in general, demonstrated intellectual positionality. Government staff and politician experience highlighted the necessity of transformation within the political system, ranging from current laws to those in abusing the system and neglecting their people. Despite population strong opinion against those in power, there are evidence of different political sectors willing to contribute to others in need.

Chapter 6 | Conclusion

The stories and findings in this research supports and highlights the importance of women in Brazil. According to fieldwork interviews from young women in Rio, welfare programs and job opportunity are not yet developed to support their unique challenges circumstances. The World Bank has given its predictions for how the incoming administration in Brazil could reduce poverty (Carraça, 2022). The top priority of the projections is the recovery of education programs, as noted in this research, education is viewed as the future for participants' children. Adult education is also a priority of non-profits in Rio, with the goal of empowering parents while supporting and raising their children. The second highest priority is the reintegration of women into the labour force, as well as social programs to assist them (Carraça, 2022). As caregivers, women bear numerous duties in their families and communities. Though this study cannot provide definitive solutions to the question of social (ex)inclusion in Brazil, it has provided evidence and facts that demonstrate the relevance of women's empowerment in improving the lives of their families and all others who benefits through their care.

Aiming pivotal change in the welfare in Brazil, three suggestions arouse from young women's feedback in fieldwork interviews. Three keys suggestion arouse from the young women feedback collected from the interviews about ABP. First, integration of systems already in place by working in partnership with resident association and local government family clinics and public schools for verification and confirmation of documentation. Most who are part of ABP also uses public health care, have their children in public schools, and live in high-risk communities which documentation check is part of the registration and procedure. One of the top reasons why COs have long queues are for documentation check. Fraud is a problem in Brazil and there are people who takes advantage of the system which explains the in-person verification. Using public schools, public local clinics, along with records from residents' association would reduce the queues, enhance credibility and rigor to the verification of the individual, and increase the difficulty to fraudulent registrations. Second and the boldest suggestion is to switch the giving to earning. All participants shared how the benefit helps but does not alleviate the fear and the reality of falling back to poverty or extreme poverty. ABP as well as BFP helped to the short-term need of the families. Media has a big role in dissecting the complexity of the changes, to which beneficiaries must pay attention. Besides this, Brazil's political history of polarisation has built a barrier to recipients, so that many do not know what and who can be trusted for advice, support, and accurate information. This can create resistance and scepticism and inevitably produces divisions. As a result, impacts on the sources of information and trust that vulnerable people turn to, potentially exposing them to exploitation and providing them with false information that makes their problems even worst.

A very important perspective to consider is that eventually the youth group of 2022 will be an elder in 30 years from now. Without contributing towards their retirement funds from lack of employment will result in a crisis where millions of families will not have pension to live by (Fieldwork Interview, August 13th, 2022). My proposal is the increasement of the amount to minimum wage which does readjust with inflation, and hire the rich, skilled, and knowledgeable millions of Brazilian currently in the program to work at registered local businesses. All participants in this research and all other that I had the privileged to speak, shared the same feeling towards the dignity of earning by their own hands (Fieldwork Interview, July 14th – July 28th, 2022). The participant in this research wants to contribute, pay their bills, and live a life of integrity. Giving jobs instead of transfer of money will invest in their future, will cover deductions to build their pension accounts, and will move local economy.

Eventually this initiative would inspire families to move forward to seek better and higher pay opportunities. For those who are happy with the system as it is and the money they are making, and have no motives to look further, will continue working and adding to society. This second initiative will also tackle towards fraudulent recipients.

The third and last suggestion is to work and change operation and communication management by training staff in COs to eliminate poverty stereotype; Add weekend business hours so people have the option that works on their time and unique circumstances; Add preferred lines for moms and elderly; Hire more social workers to prevent burn outs from overloading staff; And translation on government websites content to promote inclusion and participation of those who are trying to reach. There are many inspiring people in Brazil ready and willing to work hard to help others and to provide for their families. Specially women, which have multiple responsibilities in their families and in the community. All suggestions and discussions from fieldwork are a result of conversation with those who are actively participating in the registration process and experiencing the pain from unequal entry opportunity. There is no conclusion to the key aspect to social inclusion and exclusion in Brazil but a different strategy and transformation mindset to look at people with dignity. Because the truth is we are all exposed to the unknown and it could be us in their place. This note is more philosophic than practical but to change where we stand, we must start small from our values to neighbour and finally at work. *“Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society?”* (Freire, 2018, p.45)

Appendices

Appendix 1 Auxílio Brasil New Measures Families' Requirement Criteria

Types of Benefits	Who can apply	How much
Benefit of First Child	Families with children from 0 to 36 months	R\$130 (approx.24 euros) per member (limited to 5 benefits)
Family Compositional Benefit	Families with pregnant women or members from 3 to 21 years of age	R\$65 (approx. 18 euros) per member (limited to 5 benefits)
Benefit of Overcoming Extreme Poverty	Families with per capita monthly income equal to or less than the extreme poverty line	individually calculated value for each family
School Sports Aid	Students between 12 and 18 years of families benefiting from Auxílio Brasil who stand out in Brazilian school games	R\$100 (approx. 18 euros) + one portion of R\$1000 (approx. 187 euros)
Junior Science Initiation Scholarship	Students from families receiving Auxílio Brasil who excel in national academic and scientific competitions	R\$100 (approx. 18 euros) + one portion of R\$1000 (approx. 187 euros)
Citizen Child Aid	Families who have a child from 0 to 48 months who do not find a place in public or private day care centers	R\$200 (approx.37 euros) Partial shift and R\$300 (approx. 56 euros) full shift
Rural Productive Inclusion Aid	Family farmers enrolled in the single register (CRAS)	R\$200 (Approx.37 euros) per family
Transitional Compensatory Benefit	Families benefiting from Bolsa Família that have had a reduction in the amount received	Individually calculated value for each family
Urban Productive Inclusion Aid	Families benefiting from Bolsa Família that have a reduction in the amount received	Individually calculated value for each family

Source: <https://fdr.com.br/2022/06/16/Auxílio-brasil-saiba-quando-voce-pode-receber-mais-que-r-400-na-sua-mensalidade/>

Appendix 2 Pilot Interview Questions

Pilot questions to individual interviews:

1. Quantas vezes você já esteve nesse escritório de cadastramento? (How many times have you been in person to this office?)
2. Alguém te Auxíliou no processo de cadastramento do aplicativo? (Has anyone helped you in the process of registering in the app?)
3. O que voce acha do processo do cadastramento do Auxílio Brasil, começar pelo celular? (What do you think of the process of registering to Auxílio Brasil, which starts by phone?)
4. O que você espera atingir com o Auxílio Brasil? (What are your expectations of the Auxílio Brasil?)
5. O que você faria diferente? Processo de cadastramento e do programa em si? (What would wish was done differently? In the registration process and in the program itself?)

Pilot questions to individual interviews after feedback:

1. Quantas vezes você já esteve nesse escritório de cadastramento? (How many times have you been in person to this office?)

2. Alguém te Auxiliou no processo de cadastramento do aplicativo? (Has anyone helped you in the process of registering in the app?)
3. O que voce acha do processo do cadastramento do Auxílio Brasil, começar pelo celular? (What do you think of the process of registering to Auxílio Brasil, which starts by phone?)
4. Qual a sua representação na estrutura orçamentária da sua família? (What is your representation in your family's budget structure?)
 - a. What is the effective perception of income received in improving or worsening your purchasing needs?
5. O que você faria diferente? Processo de cadastramento e do programa em si? (What would you do differently? In the registration process and in the program itself?)

Pilot questions to focus group discussion:

1. Qual é a cultura Brasileira associada à mulheres? (What is the Brazilian culture associated to women?)
 - a. A cultura e diferente para a mulher rica e a pobre? (Is the culture different between rich and poor woman?)
2. Na sua opinião quais são os indicadores mais importantes para a mulher? (In your opinion what are the most important indicators to woman?)
3. O que o governo do Rio poderia fazer melhor para o bem estar da mulher? (What could the state of Rio do better to enhance woman's welfare?)
4. O que a sociedade carioca poderia fazer ou agir diferente para influenciar o bem estar dos cariocas? (What society could do or act differently to influence the well-being of Cariocas?)
5. Se dinheiro não fosse problema, o que você seria? Qual profissão você se vê atuando? (If money wasn't a problem, what would you do for living? Which profession do you see yourself?)

Pilot questions to focus group discussion after feedback:

1. Qual é a cultura Brasileira associada as mulheres que precisam de assistência do govorno? (What is the Brazilian culture associated with woman who receives assistance from the government?)
 - a. Qual diferença você vê entre mulheres que tem acesso ao Auxílio? (What is the difference among women who received the benefit from the government?)
2. Na sua opinião, quais são os indicadores de bem estar mais importantes para a mulher?(in your opinion what are the most important indicators of well-being to women?)
3. O que o governo do Rio poderia fazer melhor para o bem estar da mulher? (what could the state of Rio do better to enhance women's welfare?)
4. O que a sociedade Carioca poderia agir diferente para influenciar o bem estar? (What society could do or act differently to influence your being of Cariocas?)
5. Se dinheiro nao fosse problema, o que você seria? Qual a profissão você se vê atuando? (If money wasn't a problem, what would you do for living? Which profession do you see yourself?)

Appendix 3 Bolsa Familia Registration Form

B.F.S.F. Programa Bolsa Família
Bolsa Família Formulário-padrão de Gestão de Benefícios - FPOB
 Formulário Único

1. Identificação do Formulário-padrão de Gestão de Benefícios - FPOB (campo obrigatório)
 Número do FPOB: / / Data: / / UF: Município: _____

2. Informações do Responsável Legal da Família (campo obrigatório)
 Assunto: Escolha apenas um dos Programas abaixo, marcando um (X) na opção desejada.
 Bolsa Família Bolsa Escola Bolsa Alimentação Cartão Alimentação Auxílio-Gás

3. Seleção da Atividade de Gestão de Benefícios (Campo obrigatório)
 Assunto: Escolha a opção mais adequada abaixo, marcando um (X) na opção desejada.
 I - Bloqueio de benefícios II - Desbloqueio de benefícios III - Cancelamento de benefícios IV - Reversão de cancelamento de benefícios V - Reversão da suspensão de benefícios

4. Seleção do Motivo de Atividade de Gestão de Benefícios (campo obrigatório)
 Motivo de bloqueio (preencher apenas para casos de bloqueio, marcando a situação e averiguar):
 I - Trabalho infantil na família II - Averiguação de acúmulo de benefícios financeiros do PBF com o PETI III - Decisão Judicial IV - Duplicidade Cadastral V - Renda per capita superior ao limite do PBF VI - Falcamento de toda a família VII - Família não inscrita no endereço do CadÚnico VIII - Família não inscrita no endereço do CadÚnico

5. Observação (campo facultativo)
 Insira aqui breve justificativa para a atividade de gestão de benefícios, citando os documentos comprobatórios preferencialmente parecer de assistência social ou de fiscalização.

6. Responsável no município pelo preenchimento (campo obrigatório)
 Nome completo: _____ Assinatura: _____

7. Responsável no município pela autorização (campo obrigatório)
 Nome completo: _____ Assinatura: _____

ATENÇÃO: Formulários encaminhados ao MDG sem Ofício não serão processados.

B.F.S.F. Programa Bolsa Família
Bolsa Família Formulário-padrão de Gestão de Benefícios - FPOB
 Formulário Único

1. Identificação do Formulário-padrão de Gestão de Benefícios - FPOB (campo obrigatório)
 Número do FPOB: / / Data: / / UF: Município: _____

2. Informações do Responsável Legal da Família (campo obrigatório)
 Assunto: Escolha apenas um dos Programas abaixo, marcando um (X) na opção desejada.
 Bolsa Família Bolsa Escola Bolsa Alimentação Cartão Alimentação Auxílio-Gás

3. Seleção da Atividade de Gestão de Benefícios (Campo obrigatório)
 Assunto: Escolha a opção mais adequada abaixo, marcando um (X) na opção desejada.
 I - Bloqueio de benefícios II - Desbloqueio de benefícios III - Cancelamento de benefícios IV - Reversão de cancelamento de benefícios V - Reversão da suspensão de benefícios

4. Seleção do Motivo de Atividade de Gestão de Benefícios (campo obrigatório)
 Motivo de bloqueio (preencher apenas para casos de bloqueio, marcando a situação e averiguar):
 I - Trabalho infantil na família II - Averiguação de acúmulo de benefícios financeiros do PBF com o PETI III - Decisão Judicial IV - Duplicidade Cadastral V - Renda per capita superior ao limite do PBF VI - Falcamento de toda a família VII - Família não inscrita no endereço do CadÚnico VIII - Família não inscrita no endereço do CadÚnico

5. Observação (campo facultativo)
 Insira aqui breve justificativa para a atividade de gestão de benefícios, citando os documentos comprobatórios preferencialmente parecer de assistência social ou de fiscalização.

6. Responsável no município pelo preenchimento (campo obrigatório)
 Nome completo: _____ Assinatura: _____

7. Responsável no município pela autorização (campo obrigatório)
 Nome completo: _____ Assinatura: _____

ATENÇÃO: Formulários encaminhados ao MDG sem Ofício não serão processados.

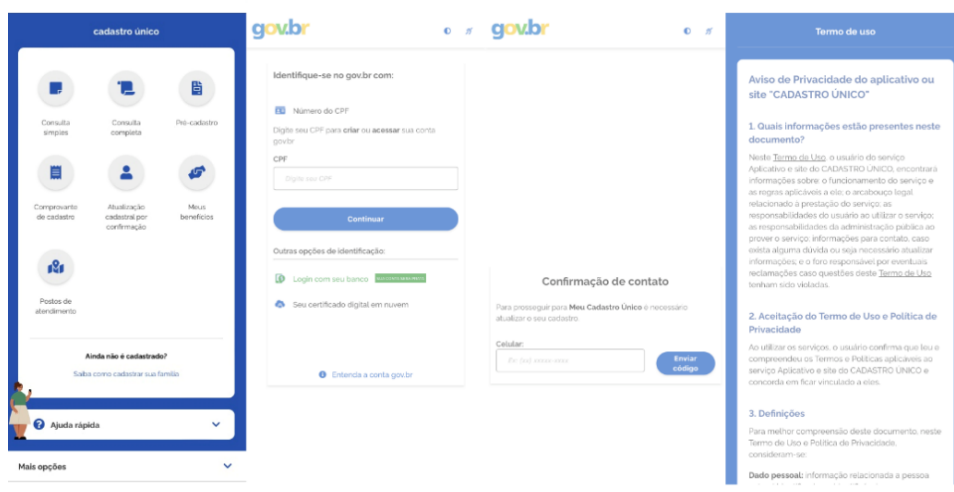
Source: <http://sosbolsafamilia.blogspot.com/2011/02/download-de-formulario-padrao-de-gestao.html>

Appendix 4 Examples of Cras Interview Questions

1. Do you pay rent where you live?
2. Do you have your own home?
3. Does your house have tile floor?
4. In your neighbourhood has public garbage pick-up?
5. How many rooms are in your house?
6. Does people sell gas (to cook) in your street?
7. How much is the groceries bill per month? Electric bill, water bill?
8. Do you work?

Appendix 5 Government Apps User Interfaces

Pre-Registration *Cadastro Único*

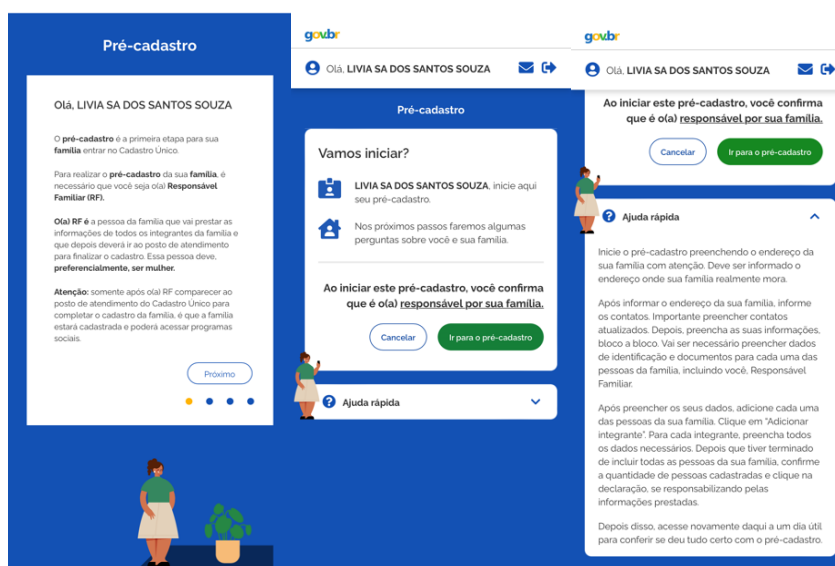


Source: *Cadastro Único* App

Appendix 6 CadÚnico App Registration Steps

Followed by a valid phone number to enhance security confirmation while accessing sensitive information. Before proceeding to filling the forms, applicants are invited to read extensive privacy disclaimers. After submitting pre-registration information, the applicant is advised to check back again in one business day to confirm all information is in order, so they can proceed to registration in person at Cras. Every two years an audit will be conducted, and the families are required to present an update of their income level and children updated circumstances (school registration) to determine rather the family will continue in the program or not. If a family's income remains below the poverty line and extreme poverty line, the benefit will be continued. The data update every 2 years is also a feature available in the *CadÚnico* app.

Appendix 7 Pre-registration and Form Instructions



Source: *Cadastro Único* App

Appendix 8 Auxílio Brasil App Interface

The participant in the screenshots below has a NIS ending of number 6 and her monthly payment is set for the end of each month (approximately 24th of each month).

The screenshot displays the 'Auxílio Brasil' app interface. The top navigation bar includes 'Auxílio Brasil', 'Parcelas', and 'Calendário de pagamentos'. The main content area is divided into three sections:

- Benefício liberado:** A blue banner with a lock icon and text: 'Disponível para saque a partir do dia 24 de jun de 2022'. Below it, a message from the Brazilian Government and a 'Ver Parcelas' button.
- PARCELAS LIBERADAS:** A list of released payments:
 - JUNHO DE 2022: AUXILIO BRASIL, R\$ 107,00 (Validade: 24/06/2022 à 27/10/2022)
 - JUNHO DE 2022: BENEF EXTRAORDINARIO, R\$ 293,00 (Validade: 24/06/2022 à 27/10/2022)
 - DEMAIS PARCELAS:
 - MAIO DE 2022: AUXILIO BRASIL, R\$ 106,00 (Credito Em Conta em 25 de Maio de 2022)
 - MAIO DE 2022: BENEF EXTRAORDINARIO, R\$ 294,00 (Credito Em Conta em 25 de Maio de 2022)
 - ABRIL DE 2022: (Dados atualizados em: 07/06/2022 às 08:47)
- Calendário de pagamentos:** A table showing the payment schedule for 2022.

	Recebem a partir de	Disponível até
JAN 2022	25/01/2022	30/05/2022
FEV 2022	21/02/2022	24/06/2022
MAR 2022	25/03/2022	28/07/2022
ABR 2022	25/04/2022	26/08/2022
MAI 2022	25/05/2022	27/09/2022
JUN 2022	24/06/2022	27/10/2022
JUL 2022	25/07/2022	25/11/2022
AGO 2022	25/08/2022	28/12/2022
SET 2022	26/09/2022	27/01/2023
OUT 2022	25/10/2022	27/02/2023
NOV 2022	24/11/2022	29/03/2023
DEZ 2022	19/12/2022	24/04/2023

At the bottom, there is a navigation bar with icons for 'Benefícios', 'Calendário', and 'Mensagens'.

Source: Auxílio Brasil App

Appendix 9 Registration Document List

The screenshot shows the 'Documentos necessários' screen in the 'Cadastro Único' app. It lists the following requirements:

- Responsável Familiar (RF):**
 - CPF ou Título de Eleitor
- Outras pessoas da família (pelo menos um desses documentos):**
 - CPF
 - Título de eleitor
 - Certidão de nascimento
 - Certidão de casamento
 - Carteira de identidade (RG)
 - Carteira de trabalho
- Representante Legal (RL):**
 - CPF
 - Termo de guarda, tutela e curatela de quem será cadastrado

At the bottom, there is a 'Próximo' button and a progress indicator with four dots.

Source: Cadastro Único app

Appendix 10 List of 19 Young Women Interviewed in Brazil

Participants	Where interviewed	Date of the interview	Age Approx.
Cintia	Thomas Coelho (Neighborhood)	14/07/2022	36
Camila	Cras José Carlos Campos Office - Address: Travessa Eurides 27, Rocha Miranda, Rio de Janeiro	18/07/2022	35
Marina		18/07/2022	35
Bia		18/07/2022	35
Marcelle		18/07/2022	31
Thais		18/07/2022	23
Julia		18/07/2022	31
Isabel	Cras Rubens Corrêa Office- Address: Rua Cap. Aliatar Martins 211, Irajá - Rio de Janeiro	20/07/2022	37
Joaquina		20/07/2022	35
Adriana		20/07/2022	36
Rafaela		20/07/2022	35
Marinalva		20/07/2022	36
Lucia		20/07/2022	34
Deise		20/07/2022	33
Carmen	Cras Professora Ismênia	22/07/2022	34
Linda	Lima Martins Office-	22/07/2022	19
Selma	Address: Rua da Alfândega	22/07/2022	22
Luana	114, Centro - Rio de Janeiro	22/07/2022	35
Ana Biatriz	Thomas Coelho (Neighborhood)	28/07/2022	28

Source: Fieldwork Interviews created by author, 2022

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