

## Blacks, whites or greys?

### Conditional transfers and gender equality in Latin America

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#### Abstract

*To what extent do conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs, the “star” programs of the new generation of Latin American public policy, promote or inhibit greater degrees of gender equality? Using a novel theoretical-empirical tool for the study of gender equality, and based on primary and secondary information, our analysis compares the CCT programs of three countries with contrasting social policy regimes, Chile, Costa Rica and El Salvador. In terms of gender equality, we find that the CCT programs are based on assumptions that exacerbate the traditional division of labour between women and men, but they also have the potential to change it.*

*Key words: Welfare regime, social policy, cash transfer, gender, social equality.*

#### Introduction

The role of women and gender relations have set foot in the public debate on social policy in Latin America, incorporating voices and actors outside the traditional organizations that promote gender equality. Conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs have detonated this debate. Despite differences in their exact design, these programs have the common element of a government's subsidy to poor families on the condition that the mothers send their children to school and health checks.

Although the relative importance of such programs in total social spending is very small compared to other sectors of social policy, their importance is rooted in the fact

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that they form the epicentre of a new generation of social policy. The programs are based on the idea that the poverty cycle can be broken in the short and long run through a transfer and sustained investments in human capital, with the conditionality as a way to incentivize this investment but also placing “emphasis on the participants’ active management of their risk through ‘co-responsibility’ [...] where beneficiaries contribute their labour for the implementation of projects” (Molyneux, 2006: 434). Evaluations of different CCT programs have generally been positive in terms of school attendance and nutrition indicators (Valencia, 2008; Villatoro, 2005), and based on the acclaimed experiences from Mexico (*Progresas/Oportunidades*), Brasil (*Bolsa Familiar*) and Chile (*Chile Solidario*), the CCT programs spread to the rest of the global South (Valencia, 2008; Villatoro, 2005 and 2007). That said, there is no evidence that the programs do effectively break the intergenerational poverty circle (see Villatoro (2005) for a detailed discussion on the effects of CCT programs in Latin America).

Discussions on whether these programs actually help combat poverty, how and amongst whom, go hand in hand with the question whether it is ‘appropriate’, ‘fair’ or ‘necessary’ to mobilize the time and energy of millions of mothers with them just being an instrument, rather than a subject of policy. Therefore, independently of their effectiveness, the CCTs have had the great virtue of highlighting the importance of gender as a mediator of the relationship between the State and society (Molyneux, 2007).

Despite an abundance of evaluations of CCT programs, a serious limitation is the lack an explicit multidimensional notion of equity/equality in available assessments. The traditional division of labour between male income providers and female caretakers brings with it a hierarchy through which women’s subordination is created and recreated. At the same time, we know that subordination takes place in various different ways, not just economically (e.g. sexual or in terms of time-use). Current approaches to the effects of CCTs on gender inequality as a binary category are truly inappropriate. Instead, we must disaggregate gender (in)equality by dimensions, and determine how conditional transfers shape each of them. Is social policy promoting

changes in the traditional sexual division of labour? Or, on the contrary, is the sexual division of labour being put to the service of the State? Or perhaps both at the same time, and if this should be the case, how so?

To answer these questions, this study focuses on the effects the CCT programs have on gender equality using a multidimensional and innovative tool, by analyzing the cases of *Chile Solidario* in Chile, *Avancemos* in Costa Rica and *Red Solidaria* in El Salvador, three countries with very contrasting social policy regimes.

In the next section, the CCT programs are briefly introduced followed by a discussion on the relation between social policy and gender equity. Then, we present our methodological tool to analyse the gender effects of these programs. Our main analysis follows, after which we formulate conclusions and policy implications.

**CCT programs in Chile, Costa Rica and El Salvador**

The CCT programs we use for our analysis, *Chile Solidario* in Chile, *Avancemos* in Costa Rica and *Red Solidaria* in El Salvador, are inserted in three remarkably contrasting social policy and welfare regimes (Martínez Franzoni, 2008). These vary significantly in terms of how effective

**Box 1. Chile Solidario (Chile)**

The *Sistema de Protección y Promoción Social Chile Solidario* (short: “*Chile Solidario*”), was created in 2002 under the administration of Ricardo Lagos (2000-06). It is a CCT program aimed at families in extreme poverty, for which the program provides preferential access to the national, regional and local network of social transfers and services, depending on the specific characteristics and needs (Gobierno de Chile, 2006 and 2009). The transfers vary between US\$ 5.9 and 19.8 a month. According to CEPAL (2007), *Chile Solidario* reached 6.45% of the total population in 2005, and mobilized 0.1% of GDP. In November 2008, the government of Chile reported to have reached 332,995 families with the program.

It is implemented by the municipalities and starts with the *Programa Puente* (Bridge Program). This combines psychosocial support with a conditional cash transfer for 24 months and comes accompanied with a “coach”, or *Apoyo Familiar*. The *Programa Puente* also provides the preferential access to the broader network of social services in areas of healthcare, education, employment, housing and justice, which imply compromises from the Ministry of Planning (MIDEPLAN). The second component consists of cash transfers, among which: *Subsidio Único Familiar* (family subsidy), for all boys and girls under 18 years of age; the *Pensión Asistencial de Vejez* (pension for the elderly), for all personas over 65 years; the *Pensión Asistencial de Invalidez* (disability insurance) for those eligible; and the *Subsidio de Agua Potable (fund to cover costs of water)*, which covers 100% of the water bill for the first 15 cubic meters of monthly consumption.

domestic labour markets are to absorb and remunerate the labour force, without the need for a large part of the population to emigrate. In Chile and Costa Rica this capacity is relatively high, while it is low in El Salvador. Second, they vary in terms of the strength and role of social policies. Chile and Costa Rica invest a considerable amount of resources per capita in social policy (at average US\$ 936 and 700 between

**Box 2. *Avancemos* (Costa Rica)**

This CCT program began to be implemented in 2006 under the Arias administration (2006-2010). It is based on an integration of two programs. On the one hand, the system of scholarships operated by *Fondo Nacional de Becas* (FONABE), situated in the Ministry of Education since the Pacheco administration (2002-2006), and, on the other hand, the cash transfers meant to combat poverty operated from the *Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social* (IMAS). The program combines a cash transfer to youngsters from familias with little resources that are enrolled in secondary education, in exchange for their continued presence in the education system.

The management of resources depends on whether the transfer comes from IMAS or from FONABE: the first considers the mother as the administrator of the funds, whereas the second transfers the money directly to the teenagers. However, currently the funds are being transferred to IMAS as the sole administrator. In October 2008, *Avancemos* reached 130,586 students (Secretaría Técnica del Programa *AVANCEMOS*, 2008). Unfortunately, for reasons of comparison, CEPAL (2007) lacks data on the weight of the program in GDP, but does report data for the *Superémonos* pilot program that preceded *Avancemos*. This program presented 0.02% of GDP in 2005.

2000 and 2005, in 1997 dollars), while El Salvador spends very little (US\$ 82) (CEPAL, 2007).

Finally, the quality of spending is very different (Filgueira, 2004, Martínez, 2008). In Chile, social policy emphasizes work productivity and a

commercial management of social risks except for the poorest, for whom the State provides basic goods and services. In Costa Rica, on the other hand, the State provides social services to a much larger sector of the population, including the middle class, mainly but not only through criteria related to formal salaried work. Finally, in El Salvador, public policies have very little capacity for redistribution. Public policy, more through the lack of it than through their functioning, promotes a big role for unpaid female work and family strategies in the management of social risks.

Thus, in Chile and Costa Rica, the CCT programs are part of a relatively strong social policy regime with a central role for the State. They differ, however, in that *Chile Solidario* (Box 1) helps poor families reach and extensive array of mostly targeted social policies, while *Avancemos* (Box 2) is part of a relative universal set of social

policies and aims at preventing dropouts in secondary education. In El Salvador, on the other hand, *Red Solidaria* (Box 3) is for many people a first encounter with State public policy.

### **Social policy and gender equity**

#### **Box 3. *Red Solidaria* (El Salvador)**

This program started in 2005 under the Antonio Saca administration (2005-2009). Initially, children of rural communities under 13 years formed the target population, but shortly after this was extended to all families with children under 15 years of age and that had not completed 6<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school. The cash transfer is conditioned on the school assistance and health checks of the children, with a maximum of 2 or 3 per family, and is given to the mother who have to ensure their children's participation in school and the health checks (either of these or both depending on the age of the children); and besides they themselves have to participate in capacity building programs. According to the Government of El Salvador, in the period 2005-2008, 83,654 families received the health and education vouchers, which varied between US\$ 15 and 20 a month and represented 0.023% of GDP in 2006 (CEPAL, 2007).

Besides the transfers, the program includes an increase in the supply of public services to communities without schools or health care services, and the training of adults through literacy campaign circles and productive capacity building proposal (these last with much less actual implementation). To implement the different components of the CCT program, follow-up and family support, *Red Solidaria* functions based on the contracting of NGOs that work hand in hand with local networks.

While the State has a key role in extracting and distributing resources, and regulating the functioning of the market in general and the labour market in particular (Tilly, 2000), it also has a regulatory function in other dimensions of social life. Such regulations involve relations and conflict between capital and labour, between citizens and State and between men and women (Macaulay, 2000).

Molyneux (2000) argues that States have positioned themselves in a variety of different ways with respect to inequality, sometimes by designing policy to diminish or eliminate it. State intervention can help transform or maintain the historic sexual division of labour between men and women by the expansion of rights or by social policy. That is, they can tilt the balance in favor of gender equity, or can inhibit change. Therefore, the State and gender should be understood as interrelated variables.

Views on how women should enter social policy are deeply marked by different understandings of gender equity (Fraser, 1994). "Feminists have so far associated gender equity with either equality or difference, where equality means treating

women exactly like men, and where difference means treating women differently insofar they differ from men. Theorists have debated the relative merits of these two approaches as if they represented two antithetical poles of an absolute dichotomy” (Fraser, 1994:594). She shows that neither provides a feasible conception of gender equity, since the sameness approach disadvantages women by assuming “the male as the norm” (idem), while the difference approach reinforces male/female stereotypes.

Out of this debate come different visions on what kind of model social policy should promote to challenge the traditional male breadwinner, female caregiver model: the universal breadwinner (sameness) or the dual caregiver (difference). Orloff (2005) shows how maternalism took up a central role in challenging patriarchal ideologies and practices linking women's "difference" to inequality, dependency and exclusion from politics (Orloff, 2009). Maternalism may be defined as “ideologies and discourses which exalted women's capacity to mother and applied to society as a whole the values they attached to that role: care, nurturance and morality” (Koven and Michel in Orloff, 2009). However, with a shift to policies that support the “adult worker family,” with both men and women expected to be in paid employment (Lewis in Orloff, 2009), Orloff wonders if we are witnessing a “farewell to maternalism”.

However, in possibly the most remarkable theoretical and philosophical contributions for addressing gender equity, Fraser argues to overcome the impasse in the sameness/difference. Instead, she proposes to “conceptualize gender equity as a complex, not a simple, idea [...] comprising a plurality of distinct normative principles [which] will include some notions associated with the equality side of the debate, as well as some associated with the difference side. It will also encompass still other normative ideas that neither side has accorded due weight” (idem: 595). She claims that for a social policy, or a social policy regime to be gender equitable, it has to meet five distinct normative principles: antipoverty, antiexploitation, antimarginalization, the principles of equal income, equal leisure time and equal respect and finally, antiandrocentrism. Fraser explains that it could well be that one social policy regime performs well in one principle, but performs poorly in another.

The effects of social policy on gender have been much more extensively studied in the global North than in Latin America. There, social-democratic states are generally, although with some limitations (Ruggie in Orloff, 1996) considered more friendly towards women as compared to liberal and corporative states (Taylor-Goby and Gustafsson in Orloff, 1996). In these countries, the principle of universalism and high levels of decommodification, create the best conditions for individual independence and thereby attend the different social demands. According to Esping-Andersen (1990) these states promote paid work amongst women, but at the same time cater for care demands associated with this work.

Sainsbury (1996) argues that it is fundamental to study the eligibility criteria of social policy, while Orloff (1996) stresses the importance to study the effects of social policy on domestic work and care, usually not taken into account when social policy is designed, and proposes two criteria to complement the evaluation of social policy with a gender perspective: the effect it has on women's access to paid work and the capacity to form and maintain autonomously a household. Other researchers have focused on the outlining of traditional roles between male providers and female caregivers (Lewis, 1992), women's confinement to the domestic sphere (Rosaldo en Walby (1997), heterosexuality (MacKinnon, 1989), and sexual violence (Brownmiller, 1975).

However, more in line with the complex conceptualization of gender equity that Fraser forwards, Walby (1997) criticizes these works for generally valuing gender inequality as a function of a single dimension of analysis. She argues that to understand social policy's impact on gender equality it is imperative to take a multidimensional approach. Walby considers a limited number of "patriarchal structures" that must be analyzed in a simultaneous way: paid work, domestic production, public policy, violence, sexuality and cultural institutions, which, combined with Fraser's gender equity principles, we will use as the base for our empirical tool.

For the case of Latin America, Molyneux (2000) shows that the State has had a very determinant, although not univocal or homogeneous, role with respect to gender equity through its influence on family configurations, marked by two very conflictive stages. A first stage of State-family relations reflects an inertia in public policy formation with respect to the transformations of social practices. Under the boom of the import substitution model between 1930 and 1950, the Latin American “populist corporatism” surged in countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. In this context, the State’s intervention in the economy and welfare came along corporatist social and labour relations that were very unfavourable to women, creating large wage gaps and discouraging labour market participation.

On the one hand, the State explicitly recognized the civil and political rights of women, but on the other hand, distributive inequalities were accentuated through a paternalist expansion of the State’s role. Women were eligible for social benefits only as dependents of their husbands. What’s more, Molyneux shows that behind the development of social policy, there was a cultural construction that tended to strengthen the manliness/masculinity (and therefore the male provider model) as being a “national pride”. This legitimated the female subordination by the man, and reproduced the traditional notion of the family. More recently, to a large extent triggered by the economic crisis of the 1980s, women have massively flooded into the labour market, but social policy continues to be tailored to a family model that applies only to two out of every ten families.

In a second stage, it became clear that the mere existence of public policy that favors gender equity within the family, is in and of itself not enough to guarantee that changes actually take place in the intended way (Molyneux, 2000). For example, as of the late 1980s, in the context of the political transformations towards democracy, there were important advances in terms of the recognition of women’s rights, such as divorce or the allocation of political quotas in popularly elected posts. However, at the same time, the neoliberal economic reforms fell disproportionately on the shoulders of especially poor women. The retrenchment of the State in the regulation of the economy and the provision of social services, which was taken over by the market,

NGOs and families, resulted in distributive changes that generally affected women in a negative way.

Now, the CCT programs have had the virtue of bringing gender discussions to the social policy debate in Latin America. All the CCT programs entail at least two components: transfers and conditionalities. Debates concerning the role of CCTs and gender equity lead to different views depending on which of these they focus. There is some consensus that the fact that the money is transferred to women may have some positive effects in terms of women's self-esteem and economic autonomy (Molyneux, 2006; Serrano, 2005c and d; López, 2004 (in Serrano)). However, evaluators do not agree on the effect the conditioning component has on gender equity. First, it is argued that the CCTs perpetuate traditional gender roles, in which women carry out "care" activities and men do not (Molyneux, 2006; Serrano, 2005c; Daeren, 2005 (in Serrano)). Second, that the fact that transfers go to women does not necessarily mean it increases their control over the household resources (Molyneux, 2006; Serrano, 2005c). Finally, the transfers are said to increase women's workload because of the conditionalities that come with the CCT programs (idem). However, while the programs do perpetuate a vision of female care giving, the reality is that in some countries with CCT programs, like Nicaragua, the vast majority of targeted households are headed by women, and generally lack a permanent male presence (Martínez and Voorend, forthcoming).

## **Methodology**

Below we introduce a novel tool for empirical research, the main strength being that it allows for a complex, multidimensional analysis of gender inequality. In doing so, it allows us to break down not only the analysis but also policy recommendations.

### ***Instrument for empirical analysis: social structures and principles***

The theoretical-methodological instrument that we propose combines the rich contributions of the groundbreaking work of two feminist scholars who argue for a complex conceptualization of gender equity, Silvia Walby (1997) and Nancy Fraser

(1994). To translate these theoretical conceptualizations of gender equity into a multidimensional empirical tool, we analyse the gender equity principles Fraser proposes<sup>2</sup> for the analysis of social policy in three of the social structures that Walby puts forward to analyse gender: paid work, public policy and the domestic sphere<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, we are interested in determining a social program's performance in each of Fraser's principles. That is, to what extent does the social program help to reduce poverty among women, their exploitation, marginalization and to what extent does it promote gender equality in income, time and respect?

We do not expect to find a social policy that is completely equal, or completely unequal with regards to the gender relations. Following Fraser, we expect to find degrees of (in)equality, instead of plain presence or absence of (in)equality. Second, a policy that performs well in one of the principles does not necessarily perform well in the others (Fraser, 1994). For example, hypothetically, some policy may help women out of poverty, but may perform poorly in terms of the equality of income between men and women. This is consistent with the idea that we are before *constellations of practices*, instead of *cumulative/additive indices*.

Below, we provide details as to how each of the dimensions are related to each of the proposed principles to explore relation with the gender order. In Table 1, these relations are summarized.

*Anti-poverty*: This principle implies establishing the conditions to commodify the labour force of the poorest women. Also, it requires considering their access to transfers and public services as a mechanism to create degrees of autonomy between their welfare and their access to the labour market. Given that care work is principally a female responsibility and a nonpaid activity, it is important to know whether public policy assumes care as a private responsibility, or rather assumes an active role in delegating care, from the family to different collective spheres.

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<sup>2</sup> We use all her gender equity principles, save the *anti-androcentrism* principle, which we consider as a balance of gender relations as a whole.

<sup>3</sup> We argue that the other three dimensions that Walby proposes -violence, sexuality and cultural institutions- cut through the first three, and therefore as something that we have to analyse.

*Anti-exploitation:* This principle relates to the conditions in which female labour market participation takes place, like a life free of sexual harassment. It involves determining to what extent decommodification takes place based on maternalist assumptions through which women access public resources strictly or primarily in their quality of mother, the responsibilities of care are considered exclusively theirs, and social programs reproduce and strengthen these assumptions. It implies considering domestic violence, both in terms of normative frameworks that consider it a public affair, as well as the effective application of the laws.

Table 1. Welfare regimes and gender orders: Dimensions and principles for the analysis of gender equality in CCT programs

Dimensions				
		Paid work	Public policy	Domestic sphere
Gender equality principles	Anti-poverty	Access to paid work	Affirmative action in access to social policy	--
	Anti-exploitation	-Working days and stability -Prevention and sanction of sexual harassment	Overcoming maternalist assumptions	Total female workload Life free of violence
	Anti-marginalization	Labour desegregation	Affirmative action in access to social services	Participation in decisions about use of resources
	Leisure time equality	--	Demand the reorganization of roles in the domestic sphere	Reorganization of time use and gender roles
	Equality in monetary and social income	Reduction in income gaps		--
	Equality of respect	Valuation of female work and capacities	Equal treatment and paradigms by/among public servants	--

*Anti-marginalization:* This principle requires identifying the degrees of women’s confinement to “female” jobs. It involves dealing with the degree of occupational segregation; the symbolic and material conditions through which public policy promotes measures aimed at single mothers or female household heads, and to what extent there is a social infrastructure of care – whether this involves the State, the

communities or other institutions such as international agencies –; and the degree to which these effectively move care outside the domestic sphere.

*Equality of monetary and social income:* This refers to the gaps in remuneration for the same work between men and women; to the gaps in social income, that is, to transfers and public services, principally (although not only) by the State, that in turn allow for different degrees and types of decommodification; and the monetary gaps produced as a result of the formal a practical dissolution of couples.

*Leisure-time equality:* For this principle we consider the demand for unpaid female work these programs demand, in the understanding that if these programs increase such demand, they also increase the total load of female work.

*Equality of respect:* Beyond the monetary aspects, are women and their labour skills equally valued as skills associated with male jobs? And it refers to domestic work as a criterion of entitlement to public policy, instead of economic dependence on the partner.

### ***Main propositions***

To make this tool for the analysis of gender equality in the CCT programs of Chile, Costa Rica and El Salvador operational, we propose several propositions based on the literature on CCTs that are related to the dimensions and principles we forward in table 4. These propositions (Table 5) relate to the specific (combating poverty) and indirect (gender-related) objectives of the CCT programs, and form the basis of our empirical analysis. They propositions take the form of: *“The CCT programs have a positive-negative effect on poverty/gender equity, because...”*.

Formulating propositions allows us to confront the different aspects of the problem with the available empirical evidence, thus passing from the theoretical to the empirical. Also, considering the policy implications for reformulation of programs that the analysis might have, the propositions allow us to think on different scenarios depending on which of the gender equality dimensions are to be prioritized.

Table 5. CCTs: principal propositions for analysis by objectives

		Principal objective: poverty alleviation		Secondary objective: Gender equality	
		Positive effects	Negative effects	Positive effects	Negative effects
Transfers		<p>-Assign resources with higher degrees of autonomy than previous transfer programs and there are explicit criteria known by the population.</p> <p>-Increase the expectation of the population with regards to the State's role.</p>	<p>-Given its charity-like approach, the programs involve gratitude towards the state instead of strengthening of citizenship.</p> <p>-There is a tension between the conditionality and higher degrees of economic autonomy of adults.</p> <p>-On the one hand, investments are made in girls, but on the other, the traditional role of the mother is reinforced.</p>	<p>-The transfers (and other components of the programs like capacity building) allow for higher autonomy, status and self-esteem.</p> <p>-Make visible the central role that women play in care and in the administration of family resources.</p>	<p>-Does not promote empowerment, which would require generation of own incomes.</p> <p>-Make women responsible for the managing of poverty without changing the sexual division of labour in the household.</p> <p>-Neglect the possible effects the transfers might have on domestic violence.</p> <p>-Increase the tensions for time use.</p> <p>-When it promotes participation, this is only individual.</p>
	Services	<p>-Improve access to services (school enrolment and assistance, and health checks including for pregnant women).</p>	<p>-Girls will have the same structural limitations that their mothers face today in terms of access to paid quality work.</p> <p>-The programs achieve improvements in education at the most, but do not extend to make a link to the productive and employment aspects.</p>	<p>-Encourage the access of girls to education, and herewith reduce the gaps in school assistance between boys and girls.</p>	<p>-Promote equity between girls and boys, but maternalism between adults, who are only "transmission mechanisms", not beneficiaries.</p>

Source: Own elaboration based on Molyneux (2006; 2007).

Given that the programs under analysis are anchored strongly in international political environments, we expect to find that they share several aspects which are due to similar processes of public policy formation. However, we also expect to find important differences, because of the interaction of the cash transfer programs with the rest of the social policy regime, and, more broadly, with labour markets and family organization. That is, with the particular welfare regime of each country.

### ***The available data***

We base our empirical analysis on material from secondary sources (analyses of the programs) but also from primary sources (in the form of interviews and focal groups) (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend, 2008). In the case of *Chile Solidario*, we have an important amount and variety of studies done from outside the State's institutions at our disposal. Given the richness of these secondary sources, we carried out interviews instead of focal groups. In the case of *Red Solidaria*, we carried out focal groups and used four studies by external consultants hired by the program. In the case of *Avancemos* we only have one study done by a control organ of the Costa Rican State. For this CCT, our research was limited by political turmoil. The program and its "leaders" were linked to the incorrect use of program funds, which has caused some of them to resign. This has led to considerable reluctance to speak publically about the program. Therefore, we complemented the case study with a thorough revision of the two main newspapers of the country.

For each dimension, below, we present the main propositions that the literature brings up (often contradictory) and the balance we make in the light of the available empirical evidence. For reasons of space, we cannot present the entire analysis (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend, 2008) and have to do with a summary.

### **CCTs and gender equality: More, less or...depends?**

Based on the proposed instrument and the 17 propositions that it provided in combination with the literature on CCTs, we assess to what extent the CCT programs – *Chile Solidario* in Chile, *Avancemos* in Costa Rica and *Red Solidaria* in El Salvador –

promote or restrain gender equality in each of the three countries. In order to simplify the presentation of our results, we group propositions according to the gender equality principles that guide our research. For each, we summarize the possible positive and negative impacts on gender the CCT programs may have, and present a balance of the collected evidence.

### ***Access to paid work (anti-poverty principle)***

*Proposition based on CCT literature:* The CCTs allow for some degree of (State-led) decommodification through the access to the cash transfers. However, the focus of these programs is on human capital formation rather than demand-side barriers that limit the absorption of the labour force. The programs incorporate capacity building at the most, but do not make the link with productive structures and employment. Therefore, the boys and girls that receive the transfers today, will tomorrow most likely face the same structural barriers to enter labour markets that their parents are facing now.

*Empirical balance:* In none of the three cases under review do the programs influence the conditions to access the labour market. The programs typically centre on social policy and not labour policy. That is, the programs assume that in one way or another employment will be generated by external factors, as an automatic effect of increases in human capital, and employment creation is thus not incorporated in the program design. However, there are differences in the way the programs make links to employment.

In *Chile Solidario* this link is the most determined and explicit, and tries to promote insertion into the labour force. There are “good improvements in terms of labour insertion” (Palma and Urzúa, 2005: 29. Own translation), but the results are less encouraging in terms of quality of employment and income generation for the women who benefit from the capacity building elements of the CCT programs. “For now, we don’t observe an impact in the number of people that have a stable job” (Galasso, 2006). Also, concerning the link with employment, the labour insertion tends to take

place in the informal sector of the economy (Ferre, 2005). This has negative consequences for the objectives of the CCT program in the long run, given that “the informal sector and small scale agricultural activities are related directly to poverty, which suggests that not any kind of employment suffices to combat poverty” (Cohen et al., 2006: 204. Own translation). Also, to a limited extent this program provides for care services that facilitate the insertion of women into the labour market. It does not, however, promote a reorganization of gender roles, although it does recognize, at least formally, that the female labour insertion implies dealing with care demands, especially from children.

*Red Solidaria* does consider components of capacity building and, albeit almost exclusively on paper, labour insertion. There have been some attempts in terms of capacity building components, which have been very positively valued by the target population. At the same time, there is no clear link between these capacity building initiatives and employment and production. The vast majority of the women that receive the transfers are housewives (78%) and those that do have paid work are either self employed or active in the informal sector (Góchez, 2008:18). *Red Solidaria* does have a link to micro credit initiatives, which for many provides the essential capital to make small business investments. However, in general, the articulation with productive initiatives has been missing. Furthermore, the responsibility for care and non-paid domestic work has been treated consistently as the exclusive responsibility of the mothers in the program.

Finally, in *Avancemos* the productive part does not feature at all. There are no direct efforts to improve labour insertion, as it focuses almost exclusively on the education dimension. That said, in the medium run, there is a component that provides an economic stimulus to distinguished students to encourage them to finish tertiary educations for which there is unmet demand in the labour market. However, the program has little impact on gender roles in the short or medium run.

Although the differences between CCT programs reflect differences in design that could easily be adapted, making the link between such programs and the creation of

employment implies much more complex and structural changes in the respective welfare regimes. Given the current more protective role of the State in terms of social policy in Costa Rica, these changes could be easier to be established there than in El Salvador or Chile. That said, there is huge policy momentum for change in El Salvador with the change of ideological leaning of the party in power (FMLN lead by Funes). Where the country traditionally has had an informal, familiar welfare regime the CCT program is for many the first experience with State social policy. With the change of government, there is a huge challenge to extend this successful CCT program to the creation of a more extensive, basic universal social policy regime and new links with the market and the family.

***Affirmative action in social policy (anti-poverty and anti-marginalization principles)***

*Proposition based on CCT literature:* The CCT programs allow for higher degrees of autonomy, more status and self-esteem amongst women. There is a consensus that women should receive the transfer. Furthermore, the conditionalities can increase women's access to social services. The programs improve the access to or the duration of the period in the education system, and the access to health care of children; but also of pregnant women, in some cases even with periodic gynaecological checks. However, while these programs promote equality between boys and girls, they only turn to women in their role of mothers and caretakers of the children they aim to reach, and therefore these mothers only access the secondary benefits of the programs.

*Empirical balance:* The programs have in common that by giving the transfers to the women, they acknowledge their central importance in the administration of household funds. Riquelme and Valenzuela (2005) argue that it is positive that the transfer goes to the female head of household because it is a sign of recognition of the woman's importance in the household, and their central role in the management of resources in the household (Henríquez and Reza, 2005). That said, they do so to different extents. In El Salvador and Chile, this is very much emphasized and exploited

in the media, while this is much less so in Costa Rica. Over 9 out of every 10 people who receive a CCT in Chile and El Salvador are women. This is similar in Costa Rica, but much less evident given the differences in design (see boxes 1 through 3), and initially the subsidy was directly transferred to the teenagers.

The programs also have in common that they demand a compensation for the transfer, the conditionality. In Chile and El Salvador this conditionality contributes to an improved access to social services for adult women, because of the way the programs are designed. In El Salvador the program represents new services for women to access, while *Chile Solidario* provides for affirmative action, with preferential access for women to already existing services. Another difference lies in the extent to which the programs are linked to the rest of the social policy regime. In Chile, the offer of transfers and services through *Chile Solidario* is much larger than is the case in *Red Solidaria* in El Salvador, because of the much more ambitious design of *Chile Solidario*, through which a large range of services are connected to the program. In Costa Rica, however, *Avanceamos* does not imply an increased access of women to social services, because of a slightly different design of the program. Since the transfers are for young people with a certain degree of independency from their mothers, and these young people are the recipients of the transfers<sup>4</sup>, this group sees their access to social services improved, and not the mothers. Finally, in all three cases, the transfers come hand in hand with ideas of what it has to be spent on. In El Salvador, the idea is that the money is generally meant for spending on food, while in Chile and Costa Rica the money is thought to be for tools or materials related to school assistance.

Given that the CCT programs do not distinguish between boys and girls, they contribute to the access to social services of both. The affirmative action component in the access to education and health care services is thus implemented in terms of socioeconomic status but not in terms of gender: the transfers are directed indiscriminately to boys and girls of poor families. However, in practice, women

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<sup>4</sup> Initially, the transfer went to these youngsters, but because of the experiences in CCT programs like *Red Solidaria*, the argument was raised that the investment was more effective if transferred to the mother. Now, the administration of the subsidy depends on where it comes from IMAS or FONABE: The first gives the money to the mothers, while the second gives it directly to the youngsters.

generally take more advantage of this increase in access to services than men (see the next proposition). Given the historically low coverage of social services in the communities where *Red Solidaria* is now executed, in El Salvador the program has clearly involved an increase in access to social services, even though these services are basic and often unstable (as is the case with some health checks that are periodic but somewhat erratic).

***Reduction in the gaps in the access to social income (equality of income principle)***

*Proposition based on CCT literature:* The CCT programs reduce the gaps in access to social income and increase the expectations the population has of the role of the State in the redistribution of resources. However, the means-tested focus that the programs are based on tends to generate gratitude amongst recipients instead of a strengthening of citizenship or the notion of rights.

*Empirical balance:* The three CCT programs effectively manage to reduce socioeconomic gaps in the access to social income. However, this reduction is qualitatively distinct between CCT programs depending on the welfare regime in which they are embedded. The target population of *Chile Solidario* already had access to social services, and the CCT program serves as an efficient articulation between different programs. Something similar is now happening in Costa Rica, where large parts of the population already has access to social policies. Conversely, through *Red Solidaria*, despite all its limitation in terms of infrastructure, human resources, and quality and range of services, the State has increased its reach to a rural population that was previously without access to any kind of social services.

Given that historically the population in Latin America has had very limited or zero experience with the State in a redistribution role, the political use of the program heavily influences the way the population perceives the transfers and services, which are much more linked to the notion of “help” than that of rights. In Chile, it seems that the program is embedded in pre-existing expectations with respect to the State’s role, while in El Salvador it tends to strengthen a perception of gratitude towards the

President of the Republic, who is directly associated with the CCT. In Costa Rica, *Avancemos* is a very specific program in the framework of a protective State and a population with high expectations concerning its role in redistribution. In general, the political returns of the CCT programs go to the respective government administrations (although this is clearer in El Salvador and Costa Rica than in Chile), regardless of the targeting criteria used.

### ***Overcoming maternal assumptions (anti-exploitation principle)***

*Proposition based on CCT literature:* On the one hand, the fact that the transfer is given to women makes evident the central role women play in the administration of resources and the care of boys and girls in the household. But on the other hand, the State strengthens the traditional role of women in the household. First, the conditionality is generally demanded from women, and they are the ones that have to dedicate their time to meeting them. Second, the measures that effectively address adult women typically do so in their role as mothers and caretakers instead of workers (and much less so as citizens).

*Empirical balance:* By giving the transfer to women, the CCT programs comprise a recognition of the central role women play in the administration of household resources and care management but does indeed come accompanied with strong maternalist assumptions reflected in the conditionalities and the available services for these women. These maternalist assumptions are present in all three programs. However, they seem more evident in El Salvador than in Chile and Costa Rica, because in *Red Solidaria* the conditionalities go beyond the health care checks and education assistance and include the capacitating of women focusing on the preparation of food, hygiene, and the care of their children. These kinds of themes, aimed at creating “better mothers”, clash with the idea of creating more autonomy amongst women.

Although it is true that the programs, in particular *Red Solidaria*, do consider the participation of men as being entitled or co-responsible, in practice their presence is almost non-existent. The program almost exclusively focuses on improving the role of

women in the household. In general, in the services provided in the programs' frameworks, women are considered in their reproductive role (in the case of the healthcare programs, this translates mainly in pregnancy care, delivery and post-delivery care) or of caretakers specifically. *Chile Solidario*, however, explicitly includes the presence of working mothers as a scenario for State intervention (Henríquez and Reca, 2005). In Costa Rica, the mothers are (increasingly) incorporated as recipients of the transfers, to avoid the teenagers spending the money on unnecessary items, such as cell phones and videogames, but apart from this, the program does not intend to "resocialize" them as mothers.

Thus, the degree of this maternalism in the programs varies across the three countries under review. In El Salvador, the degree of maternalism is much higher than in Chile, and intermediate in Costa Rica. But in the case of El Salvador, one could ask what is more important. *Red Solidaria* implies serious benefits for these same women, and it seems more important that through the CCT programs the access to social services is expanded (and measured) than the fact that they imply maternalist assumptions. Especially given the historically limited role of the State (not to say: absence) in terms of redistribution, *Red Solidaria* represents major progress. That does not mean that measures should not be included to improve access to own income, for which a bigger range of services directed at education, childcare and credit would be necessary. In the case of Chile and El Salvador, the criticism of these maternalist assumptions could have more weight, given their already far more developed social policy regimes.

### ***Reorganization of gender roles (leisure-time equality principle)***

*Proposition based on CCT literature:* The conditionality –that is, the compensation demanded in exchange for the cash transfer–, could in theory be used for a transformation of the sexual division of labour in the household. However, the programs re-strengthen the women's exclusive responsibility for the few resources available, and leave intact the traditional organization of domestic work and care. In doing so, the CCT programs increase the already important tensions that women experience in the use of their time.

*Empirical balance:* The three programs share the common paradigm that women carry the main responsibility for domestic work and care. They are centred on making the most use of the sexual division of labour instead of trying to transform it and, therefore, reproduce the female and male roles in the domestic sphere. The demand of extra non-paid work that comes with the CCT programs, in the form of taking children to school, and health care checks and the assistance at the capacity building programs, could or could not generate tensions in the time use of women, depending on the labour context that the CCT programs are embedded in. In Chile, among the target population of *Chile Solidario* the strong assumption of the State that women stay at home and do not insert themselves in the labour market, can create serious tensions (Carrera, 2008). In El Salvador, this tension is minimal because the rural mothers who are targeted generally do not have paid work (Góchez, 2008). What does create tensions for time use for these women is the lack of services: in communities where there is no running water or electricity, women dedicate a lot of time on activities such as gathering firewood and preparing meals (Gallardo, 2008). In *Red Solidaria*, although the transfer goes to the woman, the “co-responsibility is signed by both the mother and the father. Also, [male participation] in the capacity building component is encouraged” (Ávalos, 2008. Own translation). In reality, however, it is mostly the women that attend these workshops and assume the responsibility for the conditionalities of the programs.

What’s more, in many cases, they conceive the program as an opportunity to develop capacities that may consequently allow them to have their own income. Although the women in *Red Solidaria* generally consider the program an interruption of their household chores, it is mostly seen as a welcome and worthwhile interruption. In *Avancemos*, time use is hardly a controversial point given that the conditionality does not involve the women’s time, but is directly aimed at the youngsters’ school assistance. Here, the difference in design makes up for an important distinction, since mother’s involvement in teenager’s school lives takes on a very different form, and might imply less time.

***Equal treatment and paradigms on the part of civil servants (equality of respect principle)***

*Proposition based on CCT literature:* The programs allow for a distribution of resources leaving aside the patronage system typical of the previous transfer programs: there are explicit criteria and the population knows them. However, means-tested and “social help” criteria persist to determine people’s access to these social programs<sup>5</sup>.

*Empirical balance:* The targeting of the programs happens under relatively transparent conditions. In *Red Solidaria* “the targeting is done through a geographic poverty map, which prevents discretionary expansion of political nature” (Feitosa de Britto, 2008: 23. Own translation). In *Chile Solidario*, targeting is based on a points system calculated from a survey form. Only in Costa Rica’s *Avancemos* the selection of the teenagers has been much less clear, mainly because criteria vary between the executors of the program: “The target population must be qualified in condition of poverty, vulnerability, risk or social exclusion, according to the criteria and selection instruments of the executing entities” (CGR, 2008:6). *Avancemos* is also different from the other programs in that it does not seem to break with historic forms of resource allocation practices in similar programs, specifically related to patronage. Very recently, the program made it to the news, when a delegate of the party in office (Partido Liberación Nacional) was accused of “receiving in the office...[personal] requests for student scholarships, housing subsidies and jobs”.

The target population of the CCT programs is caught between two contradictory trends: on the one hand, more technical support “protects” the population from arbitrary acts of patronage, on the other hand, the centralizing of expert knowledge puts them, especially the women, in a vulnerable position of “ignorance”. Given the fact that the CCT programs are designed to make the most use of the sexual and hierarchical division of labour between men and women, there is a certain conflict in using the conditionality to reorganize role in the domestic sphere.

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<sup>5</sup> because of opposition to rights based criteria.

Doing so would imply placing less importance on the central objective of the program (to know, the formation of human capital of boys and girls), and more importance on processes of transformation of the division tasks in the domestic sphere among the adult population. From this point of view, the most these programs do is to unfold a “feminism of difference”, which socially values women, but using those tasks related to reproduction and care as a starting point for this valuation. That said, there exists a social devaluation with respect to women given that they “don’t have knowledge” on a whole variety of issues (ranging from food to sexual and reproductive rights), whereas the civil servants that attend them do. This is more evident in *Red Solidaria* than in *Chile Solidario* and *Avancemos*. At the same time, the way in which the traditional paradigm reaches the target population depends on the technical capacities and institutions of the State. For example, in Chile Solidario the family support is very personal and can come directly from the State or from the municipality. The personal interpretation thus influences the way in which it is communicated to the family. That is, there is not necessarily a degree of homogeneity of the interpretation of such paradigm. In El Salvador, the presence of non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the CCT program is much larger than in Chile and Costa Rica, which also influences the way women are valued and traditional paradigms are communicated. It thus also depends on whether its intervention is direct (as in Costa Rica), or indirect through NGOs (as in El Salvador).

## **Conclusions**

Based on a novel theoretical-empirical instrument, we have explored the relation between conditional cash transfers and gender equality. Below, we try to make up a balance of the differences and similarities between these programs in their effects on gender equality. Table 2 consolidates the main ideas from the analysis presented above in a very schematic way.

In general, in terms of its design, there is a high degree of homogeneity between the CCT programs in general and the cases of Chile, Costa Rica and El Salvador, in particular. First, all three CCT programs promote affirmative action in women’s access

to social policy, in particular through the access to government cash transfers. The access to education and health care services is, on the other hand, promoted universally amongst boys and girls. Second, the programs are based on the maternalist assumption that the responsibility of the care for children is the woman's and only partially, if at all, do they consider women as workers, and even less so, men as caretakers. Therefore, and third, none of the programs promotes a reorganization of roles in the domestic sphere. Instead, the program leaves this reorganization of roles up to the specific preferences of the family. What's more, the programs depart from and make the most use of the generically constructed capacities, in specific that women know better how to manage household resources and the care of children.

Fourth, the programs share a technical bias in terms of who "knows" how to do what, both in their design as their implementation, and value women in their role as mothers and not necessarily in their role as citizens or workers. Finally, in practice the programs have a weak link to employment projects and other employment encouragements, and when they do try to strengthen this link, access to employment is conceived as an automatic product of improvements in human capital on the supply side, and not as a demand-side issue.

The most important differences between the CCT programs allude to, first, the degree in which the link is made with employment and production. This is higher in Chile's *Chile Solidario* and El Salvador's *Red Solidaria*, where explicit elements in the program try to strengthen this link, than in Costa Rica's *Avancemos*. Second, there are differences in the extent to which the CCT programs are directed to adult women on their own terms, beyond just being the recipient of the cash transfer and being responsible for the conditionalities being met. This involvement of women is again larger in *Chile Solidario* and *Red Solidaria* than in *Avancemos*. Third, while in general the women are incorporated in the programs in their role as mothers, there are different degrees in which the CCT programs consider the possibility of the presence of female workers (*Chile Solidario*) or of male caretakers (*Red Solidaria* on paper).

Table 2 Cash transfers in Chile, Costa Rica and El Salvador: a multidimensional balance of gender equality

(1)	(2)	(3)			(4)	(5)
Principles	Propositions to determine performance	Chile	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Common features shared by the 3 CCT programs:	Differences between the CCT programs:
Anti-Poverty	1. More employment and access to income for women	Yes in general, not for women in particular	Marginal	Marginal	They do not provide for employment generation.	Different degrees, however minimal, of linking the CCT program with income generation
	2. Affirmative action in access to social policy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Conditionality combines access to education and healthcare services	Differ in whether they prioritize adult's women's Access to social services or not
Anti - exploitation	3. Overcoming maternalist assumptions	To some extent (considers women as workers)	No	On paper, (considering men as caretakers)	Women's access to social services mainly in their reproductive role	Minimal differences in the extent to which women are considered as income providers and men as caretakers
Anti Marginalization	4. Affirmative action for women in the access to education and healthcare services	No	No	No	The affirmative action is basically socioeconomic, not gender related.	Wider range of transfers and services in Chile and much less in El Salvador
Leisure-time equality	5. Reorganization of the sexual division of labour	No	No	No	The programs make use of, instead of transforming the traditional sexual division of labour	Tensions in time use vary according to labour environments
Equality in respect	6. Equal treatment and paradigms on the part of civil servants	Yes and no	Yes and no	Yes and no	The programs reflect a certain "feminism of difference"	Variations in implementation, extent to which this is done through the State's own technical capacity and institutions, influencing the notions of gender "on the ground"
Equality in (social) income	7. Reductions in the income gaps between men and women	Yes	NN	Yes	In general, there is a higher decommodification for women	The extent of this decommodification varies between programs

Source: Own elaboration

Fourth, there are differences in the tension in time use that the women experience because of the CCT programs. This tension is higher in urban areas, where women more often have to combine paid and non-paid work, than in rural areas. Fifth, the programs differ in the extent to which government civil servants are actually the ones carrying out the program, instead of local governments or NGOs.

In El Salvador, the program is much more dependent on NGO support and local government, whereas in Costa Rica this is not at all the case. *Chile Solidario* is in between the two, with implementation both at the central and the local level. Independently of what is written on paper in the program designs, the higher the diversity of actors that participate in the implementation, the higher as well the heterogeneity of visions in terms of gender relations.

Finally, there is a difference in the amount of the transfers and the variety of social services the programs offer those who take part in them, and therefore in the degrees of decommodification of the social needs that the programs allow for. This level of decommodification is highest in Chile and lowest in El Salvador.

In making up a balance of the different dimensions we used for analysis, it becomes clear that the effects conditional cash transfer programs have on gender relations are not black, nor white, but rather show various shades of grey. And exactly for this reason, starting from these greys, the CCT programs have the potential to be reformulated in such a way that they can transform, instead of strengthening gender inequalities. Doing so would imply changes on the “inside” of the programs, in their design, as well as changes outside the programs, in their links with other social and labour policy. The main political step needed for this is to attach the same importance to women as is currently attached to the children. For some, this concern for the women in the CCTs and gender equality is and always will be a matter of principle. For others, it is instrumental for meeting the objectives that the programs intend to reach in the medium term for those that are children today, but adults tomorrow. In either case, it is necessary and possible to define “critical paths” from within the CCT programs to combat poverty, exploitation, marginalization, inequality and lack of respect.

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