

Moral Discourse in Social Policy Interfaces: A Mexican Case

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the moral dimensions inscribed in social policy discourses and the norms governing access to social protection, for example perceptions about the agency, gender roles and responsibilities of the poor and their social construction and processes of negotiation at different social interfaces. It uses the *Oportunidades* programme, the biggest antipoverty programme in Mexico, as a case study. Data collection methods were essentially qualitative and based on ethnographic field research conducted in a rural setting in the western-centre of Mexico.

This thesis makes theoretical and empirical contributions that offer new insights into the policy process at different levels of analysis. The thesis combines two general theoretical approaches: Long's actor-oriented social interface analysis and Fraser's feminist critical theory. The concept of the social interface is used at two different policy levels – design and implementation – to examine divergences between the *Oportunidades* programme's original policy plan and the contradiction and tension that this introduces in its operation on the ground. Fraser's feminist critical theory helps in understanding the gendered transformative character of the social protection policy implemented in Mexico during the last decade, and in examining the extent to which antipoverty programmes such as *Oportunidades* recognise and enhance women's social status and economic autonomy. The gendered nature of the state policy is explored through community arrangements (*faenas*) and social relations (conjugal and parent-child relationships) currently operating in rural Mexico. The thesis discusses how these social arrangements and institutions have been adapted or reinforced over the last decade since the *Oportunidades* programme was introduced.

This thesis also draws upon more specific theoretical discussions that inform the empirical analysis at different stages: for instance, Foucault's discussion of power is applied to examine state actors' discourses of control and sanction and policy recipients' resource of resistance in their everyday interaction with state institutions at the front line of policy implementation; and Lipsky's modes of discretion offered a useful entry point for the analysis of state actors' roles as street-level bureaucrats and the discretionary power that they exercise in allocating benefits.

In terms of its empirical contribution, this case study is conducted at two different levels of analysis: that of individuals and households in relation to state institutions and that of individuals in relation to households and communities. The first level of analysis mostly deals with the frontline operation of *Oportunidades*, where the moral discourse of obligation and sanction implicitly embedded in the conditionality of this programme affect interactions between rural households and state institutions causing conflict, tension and negotiation between both groups of policy actors (doctors, teachers and recipients) in their attempts to gain control of both material and discursive social policy resources. The programme has also given rise to gendered patterns of interaction between the state and family recipients. These are informed by degrees of discretion and mechanisms of intermediation, such as local actors (in this case, *enlace* municipal and *vocales*) who play a role as brokers between state authorities and policy recipients. Those processes have emerged as unintended consequences of this Conditional Cash Transfers programme's official intention and while they are outside the control of state policy they influence the operation of the programme at ground level. The second level of analysis discusses the transformative element contained within the state policy design examining how community arrangements (*faenas*) and social relations (conjugal and parent-child relationships) have been adapted (or reinforced) after over the decade since the *Oportunidades* programme was introduced in rural Mexico.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF BOXES.....	7
LIST OF FIGURES.....	7
LIST OF IMAGES.....	7
LIST OF MAPS.....	7
LIST OF PICTURES.....	8
LIST OF TABLES.....	8
ACRONYMS.....	10
GLOSSARY.....	11
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	13
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	15
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	15
1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE	16
1.2.1 <i>The origins of this thesis</i>	16
1.2.2 <i>Antipoverty programmes in social policy debate</i>	19
1.3 SCOPE OF THE THESIS AND MAIN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES.....	21
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	23
1.5 THESIS STRUCTURE	24
CHAPTER 2 THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN RURAL MEXICO	26
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	26
2. 2 CURRENT RURAL LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES.....	26
2.3 SYSTEMS OF RECIPROCITY IN RURAL MEXICO.....	28
2.3.1 <i>Community arrangements</i>	29
2.3.2 <i>The Mexican Family</i>	30
<i>Intra-household social relations</i>	31
2.4 STATE SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES.....	33
2.4.1 <i>Social Assistance programme: A brief overview</i>	33
2.4.2 <i>The Oportunidades programme</i>	35
<i>State policy implementation process</i>	36
<i>Conceptual design</i>	37
<i>Selection of the family recipients</i>	37
<i>Gender distinctive actions</i>	39
<i>Cash transfer benefits</i>	40

<i>Education, health, and nutritional benefits.....</i>	41
2.5 SUMMARY: MOVING TOWARDS AN ANALYSIS OF MORAL DIMENSIONS OF STATE POLICY	42
CHAPTER 3 CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGY	44
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	44
3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	45
3.2.1 <i>Morality.....</i>	45
3.2.2 <i>The actor-oriented approach</i>	47
<i>Social interface analysis in policy interventions</i>	49
<i>Social domains and arenas.....</i>	54
<i>Social structures at community and household level.....</i>	56
3.2.3 <i>Feminist critical theory.....</i>	57
<i>The politics of need interpretation.....</i>	58
<i>Two-dimensional social justice model.....</i>	62
3.3 METHODOLOGY.....	65
3.3.1 <i>Epistemology.....</i>	65
3.3.2 <i>Ethical concerns in the fieldwork process.....</i>	69
3.3.3 <i>Field research design</i>	71
<i>Selection of the research setting.....</i>	71
<i>Data collection methods</i>	76
3.3.4 <i>Description of the data analysis method.....</i>	82
<i>Qualitative analysis.....</i>	82
3.4 SUMMARY	86
CHAPTER 4 THE IMPLICIT MORALITY IN STATE SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY.....	88
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	88
4.2 THE ORIGINS AND RATIONALE OF ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMMES IN MEXICO	89
4.2.1 <i>The National Solidarity Programme (PRONASOL).....</i>	89
4.2.2 <i>PROGRESA</i>	92
<i>4.2.3 The main components of the Oportunidades programme</i>	95
4.3 THE MORAL FOUNDATION OF THE <i>OPORTUNIDADES</i> PROGRAMME	96
4.3.1 <i>Targeting mechanism: authoritative discourse on poor's need and policy resources.....</i>	96
<i>Social and selective construction of poor's needs</i>	99
<i>Gender discourse informing the rationale of Oportunidades' conceptual design.....</i>	103
4.3.2 <i>Co-responsibility: citizen rights vs asistencialismo; interpretative discourse at the policy design level.....</i>	105
<i>4.3.3 The introduction of conditionality as an operational element: discourses on 'cultural habits'</i>	109
4.4 SUMMARY	113

CHAPTER 5 MORAL DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE IN EVERYDAY POLICY INTERFACES.....	116
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	116
5.2 MORAL DISCOURSE OF OBLIGATION AND SANCTION AT THE FRONT LINE: IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL HOUSEHOLDS' INTERACTION WITH STATE SERVICES	117
5.2.1 <i>Use of state services by rural households</i>	117
<i>Use of state education services.....</i>	117
<i>Use of state health care services.....</i>	119
5.2.2 <i>Perceptions and opinions of the quality of services at ground level</i>	121
5.2.3 <i>Conditionality: The 'behaviour-testing' process of the Oportunidades programme at the operational front line</i>	123
5.3 GENDERED EFFECTS IN POOR RURAL HOUSEHOLDS' INTERACTION WITH STATE INSTITUTIONS AT GROUND LEVEL .	131
5.3.1 <i>Educational institutions.....</i>	131
5.3.2 <i>State health institutions</i>	138
5.4 SUMMARY	147
CHAPTER 6 EMERGENT STRUCTURES IN SOCIAL POLICY INTERFACES.....	150
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	150
6.2 THE ROLE OF LOCAL STATE ACTORS AT THE FRONT LINE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: THE IMAGE OF EFFECTIVE BROKERAGE	151
6.2.1 <i>Monthly meetings</i>	151
6.2.2 <i>Payday.....</i>	155
6.3 STATE POLICY RECIPIENTS IN A BROKER POSITION: VOCALES' ROLE AT THE GROUND LEVEL.....	161
6.3.1 <i>Faenas</i>	163
6.3.2 <i>Nutritional complement</i>	167
6.3.3 <i>Monthly meetings</i>	169
6.3.4 <i>Tipping</i>	172
6.4 SUMMARY	175
CHAPTER 7 SOCIAL POLICY AND GENDER RELATIONS AT COMMUNITY AND HOUSEHOLD LEVEL... 178	
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	178
7.2 CLASS AND GENDER DISCOURSE IN <i>OPORTUNIDADES</i> PROGRAMME FAENAS	179
7.3 THE MORAL CHARACTER OF GENDER ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION WITHIN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS	184
7.3.1 <i>Forms of household organisation.....</i>	184
7.3.2 <i>Oportunidades programme requirements: modes of compliance adopted by recipient households</i>	190
<i>Modes of compliance when support is based outside the household</i>	192
<i>Modes of compliance when support is mostly reliant on intra-household resources of cooperation.....</i>	194

<i>Compliance with Oportunidades programme targeting mechanism</i>	198
7.3.3 Women engaged in an income-earning activity	200
7.3.4 Spending the cash transfer.....	202
7.3.5 Arrangements of social space	207
7.3.6 Reproductive health	212
7.4 SUMMARY	217
CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS	220
8.1 INTRODUCTION.....	220
8.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS	221
8.2.1 <i>Individuals and households in relation to state institutions</i>	221
8.2.2 <i>Individuals in relation to households and communities</i>	225
8.3 MAIN THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS.....	227
8.4 KEY POLICY ISSUES.....	231
8.4.1 <i>The complexity of the policy process</i>	231
8.4.2 <i>The long-term effect of the notion of conditionality</i>	232
8.4.3 <i>Gendered affirmative actions</i>	234
8.5 FURTHER RESEARCH.....	235
REFERENCES.....	237
ANNEXES.....	254
ANNEX I: FOCUS GROUP GUIDES	254
ANNEX I-A. FOCUS GROUP GUIDE: WOMEN 25-45 YEARS OLD.....	254
ANNEX I-B. FOCUS GROUP GUIDE: WOMEN 18-25 YEARS OLD.....	255
ANNEX I-C. FOCUS GROUP GUIDE: MEN: 25-45 YEARS OLD.....	256
ANNEX II: HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE	257
ANNEX III: INTERVIEWS GUIDES	269
ANNEX III-A: INTERVIEW GUIDE (<i>VOCALES</i>)	269
ANNEX III-B: INTERVIEW GUIDE (DIRECTOR OF HEALTH CENTRE)	269
ANNEX III-C: INTERVIEW GUIDE (SCHOOL TEACHERS)	269
ANNEX IV: INTERVIEWS GUIDES FOR HOUSEHOLDS CASE STUDIES	270
ANNEX V: CHI SQUARE TEST OF INDEPENDENCE	273
ANNEX VI: <i>OPORTUNIDADES</i> PROGRAMME HOUSEHOLD RECIPIENTS INTERVIEWED (HOUSEHOLD HEAD, TYPE OF FAMILY, FAMILY COMPOSITION, AGES, AND MAIN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY)	274

List of Boxes

Box 1.1 The moral dimension of state social policy	21
Box 3.1: Social Actors, Agency and Power	49

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: State policymaking processes. <i>Oportunidades</i> programme: Inter-sector and institutional coordination.....	36
Figure 2.2: <i>Oportunidades</i> Programme. Numbers of boys and girls receiving the educational grants	41
Figure 2.3: The moral dimension informing the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme policy process and its long term effects	43
Figure 3.1: <i>Oportunidades</i> Programme Policy Interface Analysis.....	55
Figure 3.2: The social and institutional process of needs interpretation	60
Figure 3.3: Identification of primary domains, sub-themes and key issues	84
Figure 3.4: Relationships between Analytical Domains.....	85
Figure 4.1: Strategies to combat the ‘vicious circle’ of poverty.....	101
Figure 5.1: <i>Oportunidades</i> programme at the research site. Number of boys and girls receiving educational grants	133

List of Images

Image 6.1: Extract from the Guia de Apoyos para Vocales y Representantes de Grupo used by the vocales during the monthly meetings	169
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List of Maps

Map 3.1: Geographical Location of the Research Setting	74
Map 3.2: <i>Ejido</i> residential area.....	75

List of Pictures

Picture 6.1: The queue on an ordinary payday	157
Picture 6.2: An <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipient on payday	158
Picture 7.1: A <i>Tianguis</i> at an <i>Oportunidades</i> ' payday	197
Picture 7.2: Local State Reproductive Health Services Campaign.....	206

List of Tables

Table 2.1: <i>Oportunidades</i> programme. Number of household recipients by locality. 2010	35
Table 2.2: <i>Oportunidades</i> programme cash transfer benefits. Maximum amount per month received by recipient families. July-December, 2010. (US dollars).....	40
Table 3.1: <i>Oportunidades</i> programme examined in different social arenas.....	55
Table 3.2: Data Collection Methods and Objectives	77
Table 5.1: No. of children under 21 living in the research setting	117
Table 5.2: Number and percentage of children of <i>Oportunidades</i> recipient and non-recipient families attending school .(Distributed by school level).....	118
Table 5.3: Number and percentage of <i>Oportunidades</i> recipient and non-recipient boys and girls attending school.....	118
Table 5.4: Educational levels of household members aged 15 to 21 non-attending attending school (<i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipients and non-recipients).....	118
Table 5.5: Use of LHCS services by recipients and non-recipients of the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme (No. and % of households).....	119
Table 5.6: Patterns of use of health care services <i>Oportunidades</i> programme requirements and medical treatment (Households recipients and non-recipients).....	120
Table 5.7: Rural households' perceptions and opinions in relation to health services provided by the LHCS (Number of interviews that discuss the topic)	122
Table 5.8: Grounds for check-up exemption among <i>Oportunidades</i> recipients (No. of state policy recipients interviewed)	146

Table 7.1: Women's household responsibilities (<i>Oportunidades</i> recipients and non-recipients)	185
Table 7.2: Women's Unpaid Extra Activities (<i>Oportunidades</i> recipients and non- recipients)	186
Table 7.3: Household's main economic activity	189
Table 7.4: <i>Oportunidades</i> Programme Recipient Households. Modes of Compliance Adopted by Domestic Cycle	192
Table 7.5: Women recipients. Moral Discourses around Cash Transfers Expenditure	204
Table 7.6: The <i>Oportunidades</i> programme as a space for social interaction	208
Table 7.7: Social spaces or everyday situations where <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipients and non-recipients women interact with other women.....	210
Table 7.8: Female recipients' opinions of <i>Oportunidades</i> programme reproductive health benefits	213

ACRONYMS

BANXICO	Banco de México / Bank of Mexico
CCPNS	Consejo Consultivo del <i>Programa Nacional</i> de Solidaridad / Consultative Council of the Solidarity National Programme
CCP	Comité de Promoción Comunitaria / Committee of Communitarian Promotion
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfers
CHCS	Community Health Care Service
CNPO	Coordinación Nacional del Programa Oportunidades/ National Coordination Board for the Oportunidades Programme
LHCS	Local Health Care Service
CONAPO	Consejo Nacional de Población / Population National Council
COPLAMAR	Coordinación General del Plan Nacional de Zonas Deprimidas y Grupos Marginados / General Coordination Agency for the National Plan for Marginalised Zones
DOF	Diario Oficial de la Federación / Federation Official Bulletin
HH	Household
IMSS	Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social / Mexican Institute of Social Security
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía / National Institute of Statistics and Geography
ISSSTE	Instituto de Seguridad Social al Servicio de los Trabajadores del Estado/Government Workers' Social Security and Services Institute
PIDER	Programa Integral para el Desarrollo Rural / Integral Programme for Rural Development
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática / Democratic Revolution Party
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional / Revolutionary Institutional Party
PRONASOL	Programa Nacional de Solidaridad / National Solidarity Programme
PROGRESA	Programa de Educación, Salud y Nutrición / Education, Health and Nutrition Programme
QTCA	Qualitative thematic content analysis
RAN	Registro Agrario Nacional / National Agrarian Registry
SRA	Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria / Ministry of Agrarian Reform
SEDESOL	Secretaría de Desarrollo Social / Ministry of Social Development
SIE	Sistema de Información Económica / Economic Information System

GLOSSARY

<i>Abonero</i>	A street vendor who sells by instalment plan (e.g. household items, clothes and shoes)
<i>Asamblea Ejidal</i>	The highest authority within an ejido; composed of all the <i>ejido</i> members
<i>Asistencia</i>	Support, aid, favour
<i>Asistencialismo</i>	Spanish term that involves a negative connotation of the English term 'welfarism'
<i>Credencial del IFE</i>	Mexico's voter card; also considered official proof of ID
<i>Comisariado Ejidal</i>	Ejido's executive committee composed of president, secretary and treasurer
<i>Comisario Ejidal</i>	President of the <i>ejido</i> executive committee
<i>Comités de Solidaridad</i>	Local committees organised within poor communities and urban neighbourhoods with the aim of gaining access to PRONASOL (see below) funds (including the management of economic resources) for social infrastructure and productive projects
<i>Estrategia Contigo</i>	Operational social policy framework implemented during the former Mexican federal government's administration (2000-2006)
<i>Ejidatario</i>	A member of one of the communal land ownership schemes known as <i>ejidos</i>
<i>Ejido</i>	A system of collective land ownership in operation across rural Mexico whereby the government promotes the use of communal land shared by people living in the community.
<i>Enlace Municipal</i>	A state official directly appointed by local or municipal government who acts as a link between the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme authorities and policy recipients. The most relevant task of this local official is to provide logistical support for the activities organised within localities or municipalities where the programme is implemented.
<i>Faena</i>	Intracommunity arrangement that traditionally involves unpaid work conducted for collective benefit
<i>Jefe de Familia</i>	Spanish term for family head
<i>Guadalupe / Tonantzin</i>	Lady of Guadalupe, also known as the Virgin of Guadalupe (Spanish) or Tonantzin Guadalupe (Nahuatl): Mexico's most popular religious and cultural image
<i>Marianismo</i>	Spanish term that comes from the Virgin Mary (or 'Maria'). In essence this term is the female counterpart of 'machismo'. It is the supposed ideal of true femininity, characterized as emotional, docile and compliant, faithful and subordinate to the husband and with raised status in the community and family if they have children.
<i>Machismo</i>	Spanish term that describes a model of men's behaviour, characterized by qualities considered manly such as having a

	strong or exaggerated sense of power and the right to dominate.
<i>Migrado</i>	Mexican slang describing the status of a person (usually a man) who migrates to work in the US
<i>Nahuatl</i>	Indigenous language spoken in Central Mexico
<i>Patrón/Patrona</i>	Spanish term for a male/female boss
<i>Propina</i>	Spanish term for tip or gratuity
<i>Regidor Municipal</i>	A member of the local authority (<i>Ayuntamiento</i>). This is a political position, elected simultaneously with the local mayor.
<i>Telesecundaria</i>	A distance education system of secondary and high schooling available in rural Mexico
<i>Tianguis</i>	Nahuatl term for a street market
<i>Vocales</i>	Volunteer workers responsible for organising activities and meetings in communities and neighbourhoods where the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme operates
<i>Vocal de Control y Vigilancia</i>	<i>Oportunidades</i> programme volunteer worker responsible for publicising the day and place where payments are to be delivered to programme recipients Also monitors attendance at community meetings and other compulsory activities
<i>Vocal de Educación</i>	<i>Oportunidades</i> programme volunteer worker responsible for monitoring children's school attendance
<i>Vocal de Nutrición</i>	<i>Oportunidades</i> programme volunteer worker responsible for disseminating nutritional information to female recipients and conducting recipient household visits to ensure the children's intake of the nutritional component of the programme.
<i>Vocal de Salud</i>	<i>Oportunidades</i> programme volunteer worker responsible for circulating information about the health requirements of the programme, such as the educational health workshop and vaccination campaign.
<i>Vivir Mejor</i>	Social policy operational framework currently implemented by the 2006-2012 Mexican federal administration

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*(Si) en un día nos vamos,
en una noche baja uno a la región del misterio,
aquí sólo venimos a conocernos,
sólo estamos de paso sobre la tierra.

En paz y placer pasemos la vida: venid y gocemos.
Que no lo hagan los que viven airados: ¡la tierra es muy ancha!
¡Ojalá siempre se viviera, ojalá no hubiera uno de morir!*
(Extract from a Mexican indigenous poem; translated into Spanish by Angel María Garibay)

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Antipoverty programmes in Latin America have increasingly focused on the provision of social protection via cash transfers to poor families. The primary objective of these cash transfer programmes, often conditional on certain actions by recipients, is to raise poor families' income and their use of state education and health care services. After over a decade of implementation, these conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes have been effective in achieving many of their goals. Several evaluations give evidence of their positive impact on the accumulation of recipient families' human capital (Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2005; Largaespada, 2006; Valencia, 2008). However, they have also been subject to criticism of their selective and gendered construction of social needs: while this affirmative policy action has secured access to education, health and nutrition benefits for women, their primary role remains within the family (Chant, 2008; Molyneux, 2006). CCTs have also been shown to have a narrow, short-term vision of how families overcome poverty that reinforces cultural notions of *asistencialismo*¹ (or welfare-dependent schemes) backed by the state's long-term paternalistic attitude towards poor citizens (Hall, 2008; Rocha Menocal, 2001; Vizcarra, 2002).

The specific interpretation of the poor's needs reveals a moral dimension implicitly embedded in antipoverty programmes, in which the distribution of material benefits such as cash transfers and human capital benefits (including access to education and nutritional and health services) also involves a set of social meanings – values, norms and conventions – about who the poor are and how they behave. This construction of the agency of the poor is an ongoing process among the social actors involved in the policy process (state officials, local authorities, policy recipients and non-recipients), through the policy design and routine practices, and takes place in different spaces of interaction (e.g. local health care centres and school).

¹ The Spanish term *asistencialismo* (or its adjective *asistencialista*) involves a negative connotation of the English term 'welfarism'. As result, *asistencialismo* can be translated as 'welfare dependence' (or 'welfare dependant'). This term helps to illustrate the paternalistic relationship between the state, which designs and implements the social policy, and the policy recipients. In Latin America, the term *asistencialismo* is associated both with the notion of paternalism and with that of clientelism, this latter particularly oriented to describe the political electoral context where anti-poverty programmes tend to be used as vote-catching instruments.

This thesis examines the moral dimension inscribed in policy discourse and practices, its construction and the processes of negotiation that take place within many social interfaces, taking as a case study *Oportunidades*, the second biggest antipoverty programme in Latin America² and the most extended cash transfer programme currently operating in Mexico which covers 5.8 million poor families.

This introductory chapter comprises three main parts. The first part presents the background and rationale of the thesis and concludes with a brief overview of CCT programmes in social policy debates and explains why it is important to focus on the moral dimension that informs their design and implementation; the second part presents the research questions raised, and the last part outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background and rationale

There are two main reasons for my interest in conducting research on moral discourses in social policy interfaces. The first emerged from my growing personal motivation as I worked for over ten years as a civil servant in the Mexican national government. The second reason stemmed from the relevance of CCT programmes in terms of coverage and size in the context of state antipoverty interventions in developing countries, especially in Latin America, where the three largest programs in terms of beneficiary numbers are those in Brazil, Mexico and Colombia which together benefit more than 17 million poor families and around 85 million individuals (Bouillon and Tejerina 2007).

1.2.1 The origins of this thesis

As a civil servant I had the opportunity to be involved with the team responsible for designing and implementing two cash transfer programmes: the National Solidarity Programme (PRONASOL) (1992-1994) and the Direct Support to the Countryside Programme (PROCAMPO) (2000-2001).

Both programmes were designed in the context of the structural adjustments implemented in Mexico during the 1980s and early '90s. PRONASOL (1989-1994) was the first large-scale anti-poverty programme in Mexico that addressed diverse areas of social policy such as infrastructure for public health services and schools and cash transfers for children attending school (see Chapter 4).

PROCAMPO was first implemented in late 1993 and is still in operation. It provides an income transfer payment per unit of area of cropland that replaced previous Mexican government schemes guaranteeing the price of grain and oilseed that ran until the mid-1990s.

² *Bolsa Familia* (family grant) is the biggest antipoverty programme in Latin America and offers social protection benefits to 11.1 million poor Brazilian families (Hall, 2008).

The driver of this programme was the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Mexico signed with the US and Canada, and its main intention was to subsidise domestic producers in line with subsidies received by their foreign competitors (Bonnis & Legg, 1997; Sadoulet, de Janvry & Davis, 2001).

In my work for PRONASOL I became particularly interested in understanding the policy makers' perceptions of poverty, of the poor themselves, the causes of their poverty and possible solutions. I became aware of how the traditional cultural patterns of the poor and their lack of interest in investing in human capital tend to be perceived as one of the main causes of poverty by policymakers working at the policy design level (see Chapter 4). Therefore elite policy designers tend to emphasise the important role that education can play in reducing poverty. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, while other structural causes such as gendered access to labour market opportunities are also determining factors in overcoming poverty (Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2009; Lopez-Castro & Diaz-Gomez, 2002), they were not taken into account as primary objectives in the design of this programme.

Poverty is seen as a cultural rather than a structural problem, and this is not restricted to elite Mexican policymakers: authors such as Reis and Moore (2005) summarise cross-national case studies in Bangladesh, Brazil, Haiti, the Philippines and South Africa on the attitudes of developing nations' elites to issues of poverty and inequality. Their key findings emphasise how elites assume that education can raise the quality of human resources and is linked to economic prosperity. Elite perceptions of education as the entry point for poverty reduction mostly focus on government ability to construct schools, and this distracts attention from other aspects of the provision of social protection benefits to poor people such as the quality of the state services themselves and how these services are perceived by poor families. Elite policymakers' constricted view of how poor families organise themselves to overcome poverty is reflected in the currently gendered pattern of interaction between state institutions and poor family recipients of state social protection programmes, as I argue in Chapter 5.

At the end of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's administration (1988-1994) PRONASOL became the centre of debate in political and academic circles due to its political electoral agenda. As I explain in Chapter 4, although this programme was initially conceived as a state-planned intervention focusing on ensuring basic living conditions for the poor, its operational structure resembled the long-established corporative and vote-catching mechanisms that had characterised state social policy in Mexico for decades. The literature published (Cornelius, 2004; Cornelius, Craig & Fox, 1994; Dresser, 1994; Mackinlay, 2004) about this programme led me to develop a critical perspective on the top-down antipoverty programmes, which I reflect in the empirical analysis presented in this thesis.

My critical approach to the antipoverty policies currently operating in Mexico such as the *Oportunidades* programme (which constitutes the case study of this thesis), is not restricted to discussion of the moral *asistencialista* (or welfare-dependent) discourse implicitly embedded in the design of such programmes that label the poor as the main policy recipient of state social protection schemes (Chapter 4). The empirical discussion also extends to the transformative character of the *Oportunidades* programme and its gendered effects at the community and household levels (Chapter 7).

While working in PROCAMPO I also became interested in the idea of policy interface analysis. I had the opportunity to directly supervise the implementation of the programme in rural areas in Mexico's Northeast and Central Regions, and through the supervision work I conducted in various rural areas of the country I observed the intricate and varied forms of organisation involved in the frontline operation of state-planned interventions, and how these forms of organisation generate heterogeneous patterns of everyday policy implementation. The diverse forms of organisation that I observed were a response not just to social actors' agency but also to the social context in which the policy was being implemented, rather than reflecting the implementation plan designed in advance by the national government office.

These experiences introduced me to ideas about policy processes and models of policy-making. In national government offices there is a tendency to split policy-making and their implementation process in a top-down linear model. Policymakers often tend to assume that state-planned interventions follow a 'divided, dichotomous and linear sequence from policy to implementation' (Clay & Schaffer, 1986:147). The division between policy design and the implementation process is mostly attributed to decision makers' sense, with the politics surrounding policy decision-making activities and policy implementation understood merely as an administrative process (Grindle & Thomas, 1990). This linear policy model perceives all policy actors, recipients included, as agents with roles set in advance. Their autonomy is neglected and the relevance of local structures (i.e. municipal government authorities and community organisations) to the policy process is undermined (Long, 2001) (see also Chapter 6).

This linear model assumes a dichotomous implementation outcome: successful when some of the predefined goals are achieved or unsuccessful if policies do not achieve what they are intended to achieve. Blame for the failure of the policy is not often attributed to the design itself: poor management in the implementation process is more often seen as the main cause of the lack of accomplishment of the top-down, predefined set of goals (Juma & Clark, 1995). However, in my experience this perception of the policy process is not realistic, as everyday policy implementation practices are very complex and not linear in nature (Long, 2001).

Through my experience at work I also became aware that the design and implementation of state interventions is an intertwined – rather than divided and dichotomous – process and that top-down planned interventions change as they move from national bureaucracies to the local level at which they are implemented: ‘Policy implementers interact with policymakers by adapting new policies, co-opting the embodied project designs or simply ignoring new policies’ (Juma & Clark, 1995:123). Therefore, based on my experience of working for the Mexican national government I am convinced that frontline implementers are crucial actors in policy initiatives. Lipsky (1980) emphasizes that actors who work in ‘street level bureaucracies’ have a role to play. Frontline policy operators are not merely devices in an automatic transfer from the policy design level to outcome in practice (at the community and household level, for example). Due to the constraints they face working at the local level, Lipsky (ibid) argues that street level bureaucrats may exercise considerable flexibility when implementing top-down instructions.

In my work I developed an interest in policy interface analysis with a particular emphasis on frontline policy operation and its links with the policy design and outcomes, including the analysis of intended and unintended effects of state policy interventions (Chapters 5 and 6).

1.2.2 Antipoverty programmes in social policy debate

CCTs is my interest in the relevance of cash transfer programmes in the social protection policy arena, in Latin America and more widely.

Antipoverty programmes in the form of CCTs have increasingly defined the agenda for social policy in Latin American context since the 1990s. Currently at least ten countries in the region are implementing such programmes (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008; Feitosa de Britto, 2008).

Several factors explain the expansion of CCTs in the Latin American region in this relatively short time period (ibid). Firstly, ‘[i]nternational leverage seems to be the key factor explaining the replication of these initiatives in other Latin American countries’ (Feitosa de Britto, 2008:190). The ‘lost decade’, as it is called the 1980s due to the negative social outcomes of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) implemented in the region, the persistence of poverty and inequality in many Latin American countries and the international consensus on the Millennium Development Goals have ‘invigorated the attempts to tackle poverty and to provide, at least rhetorically, a more inclusive face’ for social policy interventions (Tabbush, 2009:290). Secondly, these new antipoverty programmes constitute an innovative multidimensional effort to combat poverty in a single intervention, addressing different factors that have been assessed as generating persistent poverty. CCTs are seen as having a great deal of potential to tackle one of the key determinant factors in chronic poverty in Latin America: the lack of poor families’ investment in human capital which is particularly

reflected in low levels of children's school attendance (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008). Thirdly, these programmes also fit into the mainstream discourse on poverty reduction: since the 1980s their design has included targeting criteria that identify households in extreme or persistent poverty and the introduction of the notion of co-responsibility (and its operational element, conditionality³) in an attempt to overcome the notion of *asistencialismo* which has characterised social policy approaches in the past.

The popularity of CCTs is also related to the gender-affirmative action that this programme includes within its conceptual design. The most extended gender-affirmative action implemented by this programmes is the direct allocation of the cash stipends payable to the adult female (usually the mother) responsible for looking after the children living in recipient households (Bradshaw, 2008; Tabbush, 2009).

The design of Mexico's *Oportunidades* also considers two other positive gendered actions: it provides practical reproductive health benefits to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and their children aged under five and higher sums of money for girls attending secondary and high school (Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2009; SEDESOL, 2008).

Despite the positive impact of CCTs on the accumulation of recipient families' human capital (Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2005; Largaespada, 2006; Valencia, 2008) and the initial excitement about women's new social policy visibility, CCT programmes have attracted criticism about their intended purposes and their social construction of the poor's needs (Bradshaw, 2008; Chant, 2008; Farrington & Slater, 2006; Molyneux, 2006). First, the conceptual design of CCTs, which includes their three main components – a targeting mechanism, the principle of co-responsibility and the operational element, conditionality – reveals a top-down paternalist interpretation of the poor's needs in which elite policymakers often 'attribute poverty in a moralistic fashion to the passivity or indolence of the poor' (Reis & Moore, 2005) instead of portraying the latter as citizens actively involved in the identification of their own needs and the formulation of their own strategies to overcome poverty (Farrington & Slater, 2006; Molyneux, 2006; Vizcarra, 2002).

Second, the deliberate policy strategy targeting women as the main connection between the state and poor families has become the subject of key feminist debates which argue that despite women being actively involved in these state interventions through the fulfilment of the programmes' requirements they are merely perceived as 'conduits of policy' (Molyneux, 2006). This means that while women have a key role in linking the state with the children who are the final recipients of the CCT education, health and nutrition benefits, the

³ The difference between these two conceptual elements of antipoverty programmes is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

satisfaction of women's individuals needs is not central to the objectives of these policy interventions.

From a critical feminist standpoint the gender-transformative character of these CCTs has attracted the interest of gender and social policy researchers due to the potential effects of these initiatives in terms of the moralisation and normalisation of gender relations, the distribution of roles and the allocation of responsibilities in communities and recipient households, with women reinforced in their social roles as mothers and family caregivers (Bradshaw, 2008; Chant, 2008; Molyneux, 2006; Tabbush, 2009).

1.3 Scope of the thesis and main theoretical perspectives

This research addresses the two points of the critical perspective of antipoverty programmes showed above and offers a new and in-depth empirical exploration of the implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme in a rural setting in West Central Mexico. Male migration to the US labour market since the 1960s, as part of the diversification of household livelihoods (Wiest, 1973, 2006), and other socio-economic and cultural dynamics such as the fact that the case study was conducted within an *ejido*⁴ have provided concrete examples in which to explore the moral character of intra-community arrangements (*faenas*) and intra-household relations (conjugal and parent-child relationships), how social protection resources are controlled within them; and the way they have been adapted or reinforced after over the decade since the *Oportunidades* programme was introduced in rural Mexico (see Chapter 7).

In particular, the thesis examines the moral dimension (see Box 1.1) inscribed in policy discourse and practices with the class and gender distinction and its processes of construction and negotiation that take place in multiple spaces of social interface.

Box 1.1 The moral dimension of state social policy

The moral dimension inscribed in social policy discourses and practices direct attention to two critical points of analysis:

- Dominant discourses based on moral notions of paternalism (or *asistencialismo* in the Latin American context) that expose the processes at the design and implementation levels by which social policies construct the ideal policy recipients, interpret their needs and regulate how poor families should behave.
- The moral content in community arrangements and household relations (conjugal and parent-child relationships) in terms of the gender roles and allocation of responsibilities that control access to social protection resources; and how these social arrangements and household relationships are adapted in response to the implementation of state social protection programmes.

⁴ The *ejido* is a communal land tenure system in operation across rural Mexico (see Chapter 3).

The thesis combines two general theoretical approaches: Long's actor-oriented social interface analysis and Fraser's feminist critical perspective. Social interface analysis investigates how different policy actors, recipients and non-recipients included, often with conflicting interests, attempt to control or gain access to material and discursive social protection discourses (Long & van Der Ploeg, 1989). This research focuses on three policy interfaces: dominant discourses in the policy interface; the interlocking relationships and intentionalities of policy actors, including policy recipients; and analysis of the dynamics of conflict, ambivalence and negotiation in emergent structures at the policy interface (see Chapter 3).

In the case of the policy interface in dominant discourses, Fraser's (1989) 'politics of need interpretation' contributes to the analysis of the moral discourse inscribed in social policy design. Her critical approach to social welfare systems (*ibid*) frames the discussion of the dominant discourses informing the policymakers designing the *Oportunidades* programme. The dominant discourses of policy elites socially construct the ideal policy recipient, often as living in a nuclear, bi-parental and male-headed family, and employ a paternalistic interpretation of the poor's needs in designing the programme. As policy recipients are often perceived as passive, the state is seen as having the power to define and satisfy their needs (see Chapter 4).

The other two policy interface analyses constitute the main focus of the analysis of this thesis and they centre their attention on the frontline operation of *Oportunidades* programme. At this level of the policy process, the interface analysis focuses on the divergences between the original *Oportunidades* policy design and the conflicts and negotiations it introduces at the front line, where the moral discourse of obligation and sanction implicitly embedded in the programme's conditionality affects rural households' interactions with state institutions; and their uptake of policy resources. At this level of the policy process, the programme has given rise to gendered patterns of interaction between the state and family recipients, informed by degrees of discretion and mechanisms of intermediation exercised by local actors (*enlace municipal* and *vocales*) who play the role of broker between the state authorities and policy recipients. These processes have emerged as unintended effects of the original policy design; they remain outside the control of state policy and influence the operation of the programme at ground level (see Chapter 5 and 6).

The central idea framing this policy interface analysis is that while *Oportunidades* programme officials make use of discursive resources about the agency of those who 'deserve' to benefit from the programme, its recipients (and non-recipients) tend to harness moral discourses in order to legitimate their claim to social protection resources (Long 2001:71). Therefore one of the major tasks of a social interface analysis is to bring shed light on the moral discourses

about the poor's agency that are inscribed in the policy at the design level and to examine their implications at different levels of the policy's implementation (at the frontline, community and household levels) (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively).

The empirical analysis of the frontline level of operation presented in this thesis draws upon specific theoretical discussions that inform the empirical analysis at different stages: for instance, Foucault's (1991a; 1991b) discussion of power is applied to examine state actors' discourses of control and sanction and policy recipients' resources of resistance in their everyday interaction with state institutions at the front line of policy implementation; and Lipsky's (1980) modes of discretion offer a useful entry point for the analysis of state actors' roles as street-level bureaucrats and the discretionary power they exercise in allocating benefits.

Fraser's (2003) feminist critical theory also contributes to this research to explain the gendered transformative character of the social protection policy implemented in Mexico during the last decade. Her two-dimensional social justice model is a valuable entry point for examining the extent to which antipoverty programmes such as *Oportunidades* are sensitive to recognising and therefore enhancing women's social status and economic autonomy (see Chapter 3 and 7).

The gendered moral character informing community arrangements and household level relationships and the possible transformation (or reinforcement) of sex divided patterns of everyday social interaction through the design and implementation of state policy bring the concept of empowerment proposed by Molyneux (2008) into the discussion. This concept of empowerment helps in understanding the multi-dimensional transformative process of gender relations. Molyneux (2006, 2007, 2008) and other authors such as Adato et al(2000); Chant (2008) and Escobar & González de la Rocha (2009) also note the gendered nature of the state policy design, which is essentially confined to the provision of material benefits to poor women and deflects attention from the potential effect of this on gender relations at community and household level (see Chapter 7).

1.4 Research Questions

The main research question in this thesis is: *How is the moral dimension inscribed in state social protection policy governing access to social protection?*

This question has been addressed via a set of five specific questions at two levels:

I. Individuals and households in relation to state institutions:

- 1. How does the morality of state social policy include and exclude individuals in/from social protection?*

2. *How do poor households perceive the moral character of state social protection policies, and how does this affect their engagement with them?*
3. *How do other local actors (Oportunidades programme enlace municipal and vocales) affect the interface of programme implementation?*

II. Individuals in relation to households and communities:

4. *How does the moral content of intra-community and intra-household relations mediate access to social protection?*
5. *How have local social institutions changed in response to social protection programmes introduced in the last decade?*

1.5 Thesis structure

Chapter 2 presents the context of Mexico's current rural social protection system. First, it describes the systems of reciprocity operating in Mexican households which are central to the implementation of their livelihood and coping strategies, paying special attention to household-level conjugal and family relationships and community arrangements (*faenas*), both of which play a relevant role within the poor's security systems. The chapter concludes with an overview of the state social protection policies currently operating in rural Mexico.

Chapter 3 presents the conceptual and methodological foundations of this research and has two main sections. The conceptual framework section introduces the notion of morality and the second part of this section discusses two theoretical frameworks – Long's actor-oriented social interface analysis and Fraser's feminist critical perspective –the key concepts that inform them, and their relevance to this research. The second section of this chapter presents the methodological foundations of the research. The first part explains the study's epistemological stance, which is grounded in the social constructionist and feminist epistemological approaches, and describes the design and setting of the field research. The last section explains how the data were collected and the methods applied for the empirical analysis.

Chapters 4 to 7 describe the empirical analysis conducted in this research. Each of these empirical chapters addresses the specific research questions above and the research objectives in the following manner:

Chapter 4 focuses on the analysis of process of the design of the policy and addressing the first specific research question. The main objective in this chapter is to investigate how state social protection policy is underpinned by the moral discourses and practices (values, norms and conventions) informing elite policy designers about which social groups – and within

these, which individuals, categorised by their gender and age – should be included in or excluded from state social protection policy.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the frontline operation of the *Oportunidades* programme, addressing the second and third specific research questions. While Chapter 5 aims to examine how the moral discourses and practices (values, norms and conventions) embedded in the social protection policy design have affected rural households' interactions with state institutions and their uptake of policy resources, Chapter 6 looks at the mechanism of intermediation that operates between the state and *Oportunidades* programme recipients, in which the local actors who work as formal frontline policy implementers influence the operation of the programme on the ground.

Chapter 7 analyses the outcomes of the state policy intervention at the community and household levels. This chapter addresses the fourth and fifth research questions and looks at the morality (the cultural norms informing the allocation of roles and responsibilities) involved in community arrangements and conjugal and parent-child relationships which controls access to social protection resources, and examines how these social arrangements and household relationships have been adapted since *Oportunidades* was first introduced in rural Mexico over a decade ago.

Finally, Chapter 8 presents the conclusions of the thesis, summarises the main findings and discusses some of the key issues arising from this research.

Chapter 2 THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN RURAL MEXICO

2.1 Introduction

The resources available to Mexico's rural households for their social protection predominantly come from two main sources: first, their assets, which they obtain or increase through the implementation of diverse livelihood strategies and which include systems of reciprocity; and second, the state social protection benefits to which they have access.

The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the social protection system that currently operates in rural Mexico, firstly describing the livelihood strategies undertaken by poor Mexican families (section 2.2) and responses when they are facing adversities; secondly showing the systems of reciprocity in rural Mexico (section 2.3); and thirdly the state social protection policies implemented by the state during the last decade (section 2.4).

2. 2 Current rural livelihood strategies

In rural Mexico households' livelihood strategies are based on agriculture (cropping, keeping livestock and agricultural employment) and provide 60 percent of their total rural household income. The other 40 percent comes from non-farming activities (Cortina & De la Garza, 2004), with migrants' remittances the most important non-farm income. In the rural context where this case study was conducted household income mostly comes from agriculture (generally corn and oat crops), forestry activities and male wage-labour migration to the US (see Chapter 3).

Migration is the most important non-farming livelihood strategy. About 67 percent of migrant remittances are family-oriented (the other 33 percent is used for community activities) (ibid). Remittances are used to satisfy several needs. Family-oriented remittances are primarily used for household food and basic consumption (almost 70 percent) followed by health (8 percent) and education (4 percent) (ibid). The rest of the remittances are used for other purposes including repaying debts, buying land, paying for family parties, expanding or initiating a business, as savings and to buy farm animals (ibid:8, see at Note-Figure 1). Collective remittances are primarily spent on recreation. For instance, in the research context patron saint festivities are mostly sponsored by the money sent by migrants working in the US. Rural households obtain additional income from a diversity of informal odd jobs carried out by various members of the household (González de la Rocha, 2001). Other alternative livelihoods such as producing and trading in illegal drugs are also relevant to rural household income.

Mexico is both a major transit and producer country for illicit drugs reaching the United States. Approximately 90 percent of cocaine destined for the U.S. flows through Mexico from

its origins in South America. It continues to be a major supplier of heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine to the U.S (U.S. State Department, 2010). In general, these drugs are produced in remote rural areas of Mexico where detection and eradication are difficult and the federal government has a minimal presence (*ibid*). It is estimated that drug crops such as opium poppy (15,000 hectares) and marijuana (12, 000 hectares)⁵ are produced in the western region of Mexico, where the state Michoacán is located (the case study of this research is situated in the central north of this state; see Chapter 3). In addition, this Mexican State concentrates a high number of methamphetamine clandestine labs.

In Michoacán drug trafficking is controlled by a cartel called *La familia Michoacana* (or The *Michocana* Family); active since 2006 to the present.⁶ This cartel is known as unusually violent, even by Mexico's standard (Spagat & Murphy, 2009). Its members use murder and torture to fight other cartel rivals, while building a social base in this Mexican State. The cartel gives loans to farmers, businesses, schools and churches and it advertises its benevolence in local newspapers in order to gain social support (Universal, 2009, July 7)⁷. Notes, signed by *La Familia*, are often left on the mutilated bodies of their rivals, indicating that they are victims of 'divine justice', as the following one:

The Family doesn't kill for money. It doesn't kill women. It doesn't kill innocent people, only those who deserve to die. Know that this is divine justice

La Familia is also a religious cult-like group that celebrates family values (Tuckman, 2009). It has placed banners in areas of operations claiming that it does not tolerate substance abuse or exploitation of women and children. In 2006 when this drug cartel first appeared, an advert in some local newspapers was published formally announcing its existence and the own system of 'divine justice':

Some of our strategies are sometimes strong but this is the only way to impose order for the good of the people [the advert said]. Maybe some people won't understand at first, but they will

Approximately 50 per cent of Mexico's population lives in poverty, and the '[...]lack of opportunity, and feelings of hopelessness that characterize many lives in [Mexico] are often no match for the cash flow, livelihood, and social cohesion offered by many gangs' (Franco, 2005). Therefore, the implementation of effective state interventions, addressing the root

⁵ The total agricultural area in Mexico is around 29.9 million hectares (INEGI, 2007).

⁶ During data collection period (May 2007- January 2008), no criminal event related to drug trafficking was reported within the research area.

⁷ Due to the drug violence, in some areas of Mexico the name of some Newspapers reporters are anonymous.

causes of deprivation and oriented to improving the well-being of the rural population, have become relevant for the Mexican Federal Government (*ibid*). State social protection policies currently implemented in rural Mexico are described in section 2.4

2.3 Systems of reciprocity in rural Mexico

Systems of reciprocity are central to the livelihood strategies that rural households follow. For instance, migration to the US labour market is mainly supported by social networks that connect rural Mexican communities with specific work sites in the US. Migrant social networks are based on bonds of kinship, friendship and *paisanaje* (community ties). The latter involves notions of membership and reciprocity among migrants who assist the families and community members that they have left behind. This is very important to new migrants looking for homes, work and support, and it is therefore also important for both those at home and migrant communities in the US to create and maintain networks of support regarding labour recruitment and medical care, for instance, and to sponsor community saint's day celebrations. This notion of *paisanaje* is reinforced through frequent contact with voluntary organizations in both countries (Durand et al.1996; Massey, 1986; Massey et al., 2002; Wilson, 1993:109 -112).

Systems of reciprocity provide security and access to material and discursive⁸ resources but also constrain behaviour. Systems of reciprocity play a relevant role in the implementation of poor household livelihood strategies but they tend to be influenced heavily by gender norms and operate under sex-divided roles. This is because of the moral dimension informing household relations (conjugal and family relationships) and the expected division of roles by gender and age is also informing community arrangements.

A distinctive aspect of these systems of reciprocity is the exchange of resources (material and intangible such moral support) that families tend to mobilise when they are facing an adversity. The flow of goods and services between them goes in both directions and persists beyond a single transaction. As Lomnitz (1977:190-191) points out, there is a Spanish saying that could summarises this system of reciprocity: *hoy por ti, mañana por mí* (your turn today, my turn tomorrow). This implies the idea of generalised reciprocity (Sahlins, 1972) that mostly arises among close family members in situations of resource scarcity: whenever a risk event happens people mobilise their social resources trying to afford their material and discursive necessities (González de la Rocha, 1998).

⁸ Discursive resources are understood as intangible assets such as moral support which tend to legitimise access to other material resources.

Within Mexican rural systems of reciprocity, community arrangements (*faenas*) and household level institutions (i.e. conjugal and family relationship) play a relevant role. Generally speaking, these arrangements and household relationships operate well for specific and short term events (e.g. lending assistance in case of a life cycle event). However, when one of the participants needs more than the other, reciprocity may transform into imbalanced exchanges generating power differentials (Narotsky & Moreno, 2002). In the long term, the idea of social cohesion traditionally linked to reciprocity is transformed into a system of inequalities sanctioned by moral orders (rights and obligations) (ibid), where gender affects the nature of a reciprocal relationship (Wellman & Wellman, 1992). Indeed, gender tends to be related to the provision of social support, with women being more supportive than men (ibid).

2.3.1 Community arrangements

Community arrangements such as *faenas* are considered a social service to the community. *Faenas* traditionally involve unpaid work conducted for collective benefit. Since they are perceived as a reciprocal exchange of work and mutual assistance amongst community members, all the households of a village contribute labour when asked to do so (Carrasco & Nahmad, 2002).

In general *faenas* are attended by men; cases like that reported by Cohen (2002), where women serve in place of their husbands who have migrated to the US labour market, are still the exception. When women are called to participate in *faenas* already institutionalised by the community their participation is likely to be marginal and they usually perform the same type of role that they do at home (i.e. cook for the male participants) (ibid). However, the *Oportunidades* programme has introduced women-only *faenas* as part of the community social services that female recipients of this programme need to take part in as an exchange of the benefits provided by the programme. Evidence of processes of negotiation and settlement regarding this recent community arrangement are explored in Chapter 7.

Formerly *faenas* were mainly associated with agricultural activities such as clearing, ploughing and hauling crops and bringing grain home from the field during the sowing and harvesting seasons. But more recently, due to an absence of government provision, they have also been a source of labour for community projects mostly related to physical infrastructure (i.e. building or maintaining roads and schools) (ibid). In rural contexts where migration is widespread the notion of generalised reciprocity (Sahlins, 1972) and mutual assistance originally informing *faenas* has changed due to the lack of male labour. Nowadays communities require a payment from migrants in lieu of communal labour; this reveals the notional obligations currently informing this type of community activity (Cohen, 2002). As a

result, migrants have begun to hire wage labour replacements to cover their obligations while they are away. Other family members may serve in place of a missing migrant: in general adult male household members are responsible for attending the *faenas*, and older men are often found fulfilling their son's *faena* responsibilities (ibid).

2.3.2 The Mexican Family

The nuclear family is the most common household unit in Mexico and currently makes up around three quarters of the country's households (González de la Rocha, 1998). However, as González de la Rocha (2001:83) explains, despite the fact that the majority of households are nuclear, since the economic collapse during the 1980s and early '90s the proportion of extended households has increased. The extension of a household is achieved mainly through the incorporation of additional adult members. This can be interpreted both as a savings strategy (through sharing household costs) and as a way of increasing the number of members available for income-generating activities (ibid).

In rural areas where male migration to the US is common there is a large proportion of extended family households. When husbands – especially those just married and with no or with only young children – migrate, their wives often move to live with their parents in-law or return to their parents' household while they are away to avoid gossip or placing themselves in a dangerous situation as a woman alone (Mummert, 1994:206). But even where extended families tend to be dispersed in terms of residence, Mexican family membership presupposes a continuous bond from the first to the third generation including parents, their children and their grandchildren. Often extended families also include siblings and other kin such as uncles and aunts (Lomnitz & Perez-Lizaur, 1984).

In terms of moral principles, Mexicans see the family as unit of solidarity and mutual assistance, with membership accompanied by a corresponding set of rights and obligations which are not directly related to co-residence. Each member adjusts to the expectations of other family members and expects their support in return. Basic family obligations include economic help in the case of risk events (Lomnitz & Perez-Lizaur, 1984). Obligations also include participation with material and non-material resources in family ceremonies related to life-cycle events such as baptism and marriage, which give them social recognition and incorporate notions of sharing networks (ibid). However, as Salles and Valenzuela (1997:68) note, this normative framework is an ideal surrounding the contemporary Mexican family, leading to its 'glorification as a privileged space of satisfaction and personal fulfillment'. In practice the Mexican family can be considered a social space organised by relations of power, with the gender and ages of its members dictating the distribution of resources comprising

both tangible material goods and intangible factors such as the moral discourse reinforcing the authority and autonomy of its members (Calveiro, 2005).

Therefore we can say that the Mexican family, apparently based on an agreement to provide 'love and mutual support', is nevertheless socially constructed on the basis of a sex-divided society (ibid: 28). This social institution reproduces the prevailing norms of Mexican society, including the reproduction of masculine and feminine stereotypes that emerge from other hierarchical structures of power such as the Catholic Church⁹ and the state, where men tend to be represented as wage-earners with a strong and dominant personality and women are seen as devoted to household work and reproductive activities, always with a tender and submissive attitude (Cantu, 1990; Mindek, 2003). The moral influence of the Catholic Church in the Mexican family is discussed further below.

Families are not just a reflection of other hierarchical structures of power. These hierarchical structures are also informed by intra-household relations of dominance (Calveiro, 2005), such is the case of the gender and family oriented design of antipoverty programmes like the *Oportunidades* programme, as explained later in this chapter.

Intra-household social relations

Mexican intra-household hierarchical structures are present in parent-child and conjugal relationships: both recognise masculine authority, with the male the primary authority figure central in the everyday organisation of the household. Fathers/husbands hold authority over mothers/wives, children and household assets. This is expressed in two dimensions of power: coercion and consensus. The first refers to the ability to sanction; the second to the internalisation of the notion of masculine authority among family members (Calveiro, 2005).

Parent-child relationships involve the moral expectation of obedience and respect from children towards their parents, reflected in the appropriation of children's resources: these can be tangible as children's paid labour contributions (mostly supplied by boys) and intangible as the time spent by daughters assisting their mothers in the housekeeping and family caring activities (ibid; Denner & Dunbar, 2004). As later explained in Chapter 5, the *Oportunidades* programme intersects with the different roles and expectations that children face at home.

Conjugal relationships here imply the idea of male rule and privilege, with the female dependent and subordinated to masculine authority. Although women and men are equal before Mexican law there are clear differences between males' and females' authority and privileges (Chant, 1991). In rural Mexico conjugal relationships involve sex-divided

⁹ Even though Mexico has no official religion, around 90% of the population is Roman Catholic (INEGI, 2005b).

household roles with the men wage-earners – mainly in agricultural activities – and women devoted to household work and their reproductive role. Women usually participate in the production of goods (handcrafts, for instance) and services for household consumption such as cooking, laundry, ironing and house cleaning (Mindek, 2003). In this discourse, women may become engaged in an income-earning activity, but this is mostly perceived as a coping strategy and is usually on a temporary basis when the household needs money for extra expenses due to adversity such as sickness or other idiosyncratic events related to the main income provider (González de la Rocha, 2007; Mindek, 2003; Mummert, 1994) (see Chapter 7).

Although men are seen as the *jefe de familia* (family head), women are considered the caretakers of morality and hence take centre stage in the domain of religion. The female role here is particularly relevant in traditional Mexican families, where *marianismo* defines the set of cultural expectations of women that include family commitment, respect for male authority and limited mobility (Denner & Dunbar, 2004). Mexican families idealise females as caregivers based on the Virgin Mary's role as the mother of Jesus, which in this country is certainly represented by the cult of the Lady of Guadalupe; also known as Guadalupe-Tonantzi (Tonantzi being a *Nahuatl* expression meaning 'our revered mother') (Lafaye, 1976). Largarde y de los Ríos (2005) asserts that in Mexico there is a national social, political and religious definition of women as *madreesposas* (mother-wives). This is because motherhood and conjugalit are entangled social roles that constantly inform Mexican female stereotypes, regardless of age and socioeconomic position.

Mexican women's role is based on the idea of love, care and affection as opposed to masculine domination. In moral terms these feminine virtues can also involve subtle notions of control that maintain (or reinforce) the asymmetry in conjugal relationships. The woman is expected to express her love for her husband by fulfilling her reproductive role as a mother; however this act of love also represents a source of power and negotiation in the family. As Calverio (2005:62) asserts, 'the noble empire of women' emerges from the woman's reproductive role and family responsibilities in the household, therefore women should not be perceived as powerless in their households. Men cannot restrict women's maternal authority over their children, and this authority is explicitly recognised by the other family members. As result, it is no coincidence that state social policy such as *Oportunidades* allocates its cash transfers benefits directly to the mothers in eligible households, motivated by the idea that resources controlled by mothers rather than by men are more likely to be invested in the children's health and nutrition. Even though this deliberately gendered affirmative action secures more efficient use of the economic benefits transferred by the state to recipient families, it reinforces the sex-divided pattern of household labour, limiting women's access to

other economic and social spheres (i.e. remunerative job opportunities and community participation) and reducing their autonomy from patriarchal family structures.

2.4 State social protection policies

Mexico's state social protection policies can be broadly grouped into two main categories: social insurance and social assistance programmes. The social insurance component provides both private and public sector workers with health and retirement pension benefits. Currently around 47% of the Mexican population has access to a social insurance scheme, and these are mainly operated by IMSS (Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social/Mexican Social Security Institute) and ISSSTE¹⁰ (Instituto de Seguridad Social al Servicio de los Trabajadores del Estado/Institute of Government Workers' Social Security and Services) (INEGI, 2005a). However such benefits only cover workers within the formal labour market and their families.

The majority (48.7% of the population¹¹) of Mexico is poor. Poor families obtain most of their income from the informal sector and have access to a few state social protection benefits provided by social assistance programmes that are mainly financed through general tax revenues.

2.4.1 Social Assistance programme: A brief overview

Social assistance programmes in Mexico are operated through a social policy framework called *Vivir Mejor*¹² (or To Live Better). This framework implements two different types of state policy intervention. In the first, the social programmes are not specifically oriented to the poor, such as the *Seguro Popular* (Popular Insurance) and the *70 y Más* (70 and more). The second type of state social assistance programme targets the poor, with *Oportunidades* the most prominent in terms of coverage and budget, as explained later (GOM, n.d.)¹³.

¹⁰ IMSS is the largest social security institute in Mexico and provides health and pension services for private sector employees in Mexico. In the case of the ISSSTE, it provides the social security services for civil servants working for the Mexican federal government. PEMEX (the state-owned oil company) and the Mexican Armed Forces, also have their own social security programs covering around 2.2% of Mexicans working in the formal labour market.

¹¹ Using an asset-based definition of poverty. For further information see at: <http://www.coneval.gob.mx/> (Consulted: 01/02/2011).

¹² This social policy operational framework substitutes the “*Estrategia Contigo*” (or With You Strategy) implemented during the former Mexican Federal Government administration (2000-2006).

¹³ The World Bank's report (2004) '*Poverty in Mexico: An Assessment of Trends, Conditions, and Government Strategy*', gives an account of 207 social programmes operating in Mexico in 2002. Examples of this extended number of poor targeted social programmes that remain in operation are: Desarrollo de Zonas Prioritarias (PDZP) (priority areas for development) which provides rural areas classified as high-priority by the Mexican government with physical infrastructure (i.e. water, drainage and electricity); *Habitat* a housing subsidy programme and *Empleo Temporal* (temporal employment oriented to the unemployed and low-income workers with earnings below the minimum wage, primarily in poor rural areas classified as high-priority attention.

Seguro Popular is a health insurance programme intended to guarantee access to curative health care services for all the population not included in the social insurance system – for instance the self-employed and unemployed and their families. This insurance has emerged from the reform of the General Health Law approved by the Mexican congress in 2003 (Frenk, Knaul & Gómez-Dantés, 2004) and has been operating since 2004. The *Seguro Popular* comprises government contributions at both federal and state levels but also entails family contributions. Families are classified in income deciles and the first two deciles, covering the poorest Mexican families, do not pay contributions (Secretaría de Salud, 2007:87). Affiliation to the programme is voluntary, and during its early years it faced some difficulties that threatened its financial due to low enrolment by families, especially families in the higher income deciles which pay economic contributions in order to receive medical attention (ibid). With the current national government administration (2006-2012) this programme's coverage has expanded rapidly and covers around 9.1 million families (Secretaría de Salud, 2008). This includes recipients of other social assistance programmes, for instance the 5.8 million *Oportunidades* recipient families (who do not pay contributions) are automatically affiliated to this programme. Although the *Seguro Popular* was originally designed to provide universal social benefits, currently just over 50 percent of its beneficiaries are poor (Scott, 2006). It has faced significant challenges in achieving the required quality and coverage of public health service provision, particularly in terms of institutional coordination between national and state policy implementation and local health care service (LHCS) infrastructure.

The *70 y Más* programme is the Mexico's newest cash transfer programme and has been operating since 2007. Initially it was designed to provide universal social benefits to those over 70 years old with no socioeconomic distinctions. However, it prioritises elderly people living in poor areas with a population of up to 30,000 (SEDESOL, 2008b:2). The programme delivers a monthly payment of 500.00 MNX (around US\$40) to two million elderly people who are not poor enough to qualify for *Oportunidades*. The latter is particularly important in remote rural areas in which LHCS are not yet provided with the medical facilities required by the programme, hence this programme has delayed its implementation in poor rural areas (Gómez Dantés & Ortiz, 2004).

Oportunidades is the most significant poor-targeted social assistance programme currently operating in rural Mexico and differs from the *Seguro Popular* and *70 y Más*, which provide universal social protection benefits and have gained prominence during the current government's administration (2006-2012).

2.4.2 The *Oportunidades* programme

Oportunidades is the most significant state social protection scheme operating in Mexico at the moment, particularly in rural areas. Its relevance is reflected in its coverage of 5.8 million families and current budget of around 63 thousand million MXN peso (approx. US\$5.0 billion)¹⁴ (SEDESOL, 2010b). *Oportunidades*' cost of operation is less than 5 cents per peso; as a result it is one of the most efficient CCTs worldwide (ibid). Its low cost of operation can be explained by its institutional coordination. For example, the Education and Health Ministries provide the physical infrastructure (schools and LHCS, respectively) necessary to operate this programme at the front line.

Oportunidades operates in 93,000 localities around the country, 86 percent of which are in rural communities; 3.4 million households (6 out of 10 recipient families) live in communities with less than 2,500 inhabitants (see Table 2.1, below) (SEDESOL, 2010b).

Table 2.1: *Oportunidades* programme. Number of household recipients by locality. 2010

<i>Rural localities</i> <i><2,500</i>	<i>Semi-urban localities</i> <i>From 2,500 to 14,999</i>	<i>Urban localities</i> <i>>15,000</i>	<i>Total</i>
3.4	0.9	1.5	5.8

Source: *Oportunidades*'s programme web page available at:

http://www.Oportunidades.gob.mx/Wn_Publicaciones/archivos/Oportunidades_a_program_of_results_PDF.pdf

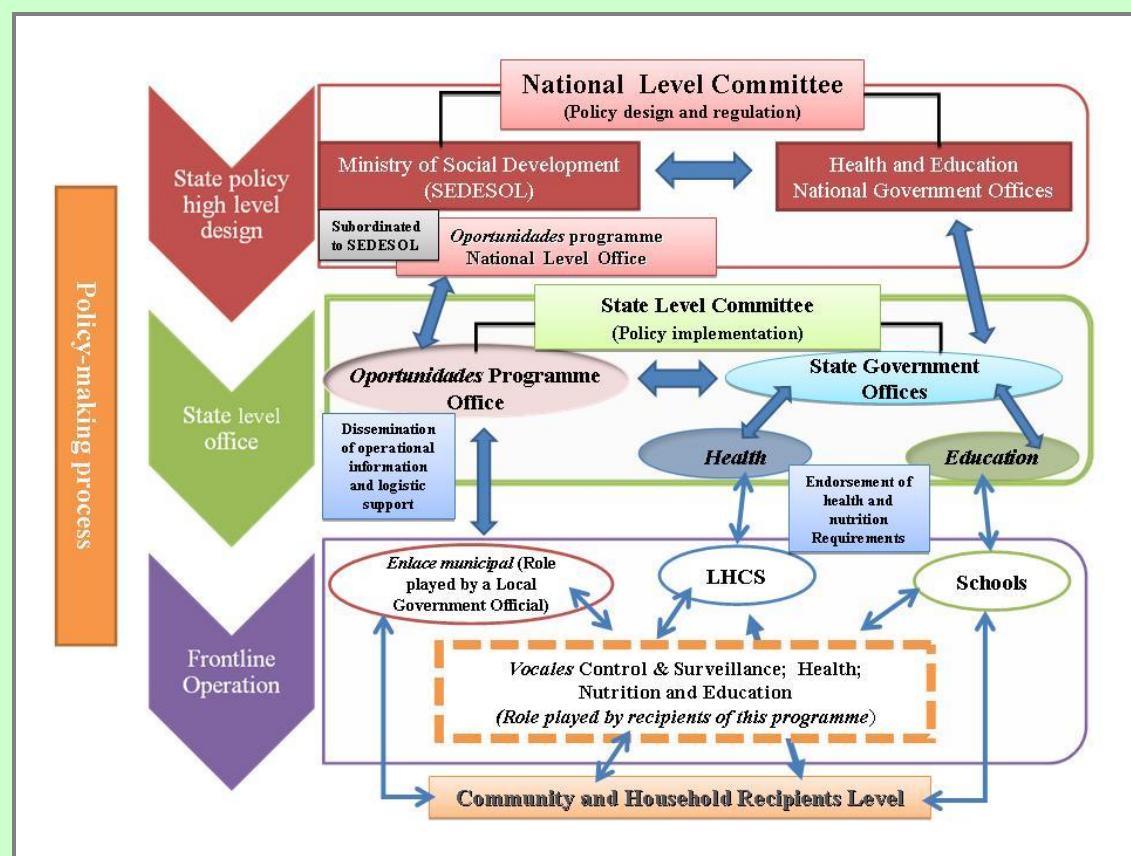
Oportunidades is a conditional cash transfer programme targeting poor families and aiming to break the cycle of poverty. Recipient families receive a monthly cash transfer benefit conditional on their sending their children to school and visiting the LHCS for a family medical check up. Female household heads are required to attend the educational health and nutritional workshops organised at the LHCS and the monthly meetings that take place in the community to disseminate operational information about the programme (SEDESOL, 2009a).

¹⁴ During 2002-2009 this programme has received credit resources from the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) for an amount of US\$2.2 billion (the resource were merely oriented to expand the coverage of this programme in rural areas). In 2008 the IDB started a new phase of loan support to *Oportunidades* approving an extra credit line for US\$2 billion to strength the coverage of this programme in urban areas.

State policy implementation process

Oportunidades is coordinated by a national office called the *Coordinación Nacional del Programa Oportunidades* (CNPO), created as a Deconcentrated Agency (or *Órgano Desconcentrado*) under the Ministry of Social Development (DOF, 2002). As a result the CNPO has limited autonomy and merely designs and coordinates the implementation of the programme in the country (ibid). Other state institutions such as the Health and Education Ministries are also involved in the implementation of this state policy, respectively coordinating the LHCS and schools that are involved in the programme at the front line. They interact directly with policy recipients regarding the programme's health, nutrition and educational requirements (SEDESOL, 2009a). Figure 2.1, below, summarises the *Oportunidades* programme policymaking process.

Figure 2.1: State policymaking processes. *Oportunidades* programme: Inter-sector and institutional coordination



Source: Author based on the *Oportunidades* programme current regulation in force (SEDESOL, 2008b, 2009a).

Figure 2.1 illustrates how the design and implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme is continually negotiated amongst all the actors involved, including policymakers working at the design and implementation stages and policy recipients. It often involves negotiations between *Oportunidades*' national and state offices concerning priority areas for attention and

the physical infrastructure of LHCSs and schools in such areas; this information is often collected by *Oportunidades* state-level offices from health and education state government offices (SEDESOL, 2008b, 2009a).

The national *Oportunidades* office operates through state offices around the country which are responsible for attending to and disseminating operational information such as changes to the regulations or to the day and location for the distribution of the cash transfers to the policy recipients. Local actors connect the recipient families with the institutions responsible for endorsing their fulfilment of the programme's conditions at the front line (LHCS, school and *Oportunidades* state offices). These local actors are the *enlace municipal*, a state official directly appointed by local or municipal governments and the *vocales*, who are selected from each community's policy recipients. The role in the policy process of the doctors, teachers and *enlace municipal* working at the frontline and the *vocales* working in the community and the interface between them and policy recipients are explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Conceptual design

The conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme is guided by targeting criteria, mechanisms for selecting families eligible for the programme and the principles of co-responsibility and conditionality. The principle of co-responsibility involves policy recipients' obligation to comply with certain conditions in return for the cash transfer proffered by the state. Conditionality emerges from the principle of co-responsibility as an operational element to promote or assure poor Mexican families' use of state health care and education services. The principles of co-responsibility and conditionality are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 along with discussion of the moral discourses underlying the rationality of state policy design. Chapter 5 considers the principle of conditionality more specifically through analysis of the moral discourse of obligation and sanction influencing rural households' interaction with public services at the policy front line.

Selection of the family recipients

Those eligible for *Oportunidades* are selected using targeting criteria and mechanisms in four different stages. First, the highest priority localities in urban, semi-urban and rural contexts are selected based on socioeconomic criteria according to the percentage of households in these areas with low monetary income and literacy and inadequate household conditions (i.e. lack of drainage, electricity and drinking water). Simultaneously there is a process of verification related to the physical infrastructure (LHCS and schools) required to implement this programme in the areas selected. According to current regulations *Oportunidades*

communities with no health care or school facilities cannot participate in this programme¹⁵ (SEDESOL, 2008b, 2009a).

Second, after the areas for priority attention are defined the families eligible for the programme are selected using a targeting mechanism involving a census method of sending questionnaires to all the households in the selected localities to collect information about the housing conditions, demographics and socioeconomic information of each family. Third, the information collected from the household questionnaires is analysed by a statistical means test method called discriminant analysis to determine which families will be included in the programme. Eligible families are prioritised as follows: a) families with a total income below the food poverty line, defined by the Mexican state authorities according to a basic food basket indicator; b) families with members under 21 years old; c) families with women of reproductive age; d) families below a specific degree of poverty. Fourth, the targeting mechanism places a last filter on the list of families selected. This is carried out at a community assembly where proposals for families incorrectly left out or included are taken into consideration (SEDESOL, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2008a, 2009a; Skoufias, Davis & de la Vega, 2001)¹⁶.

These targeting criteria and mechanisms have attracted criticism mainly due to two factors: the exclusion of segments of the population that do not meet the programme's criteria (this include the poorest households from non-selected areas) (Adato, 2000; Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2003; Vizcarra, 2002); and the high cost of implementation of its targeting criteria (Coady & Parker, 2009).

In relation to the high cost of the *Oportunidades* programme targeting criteria, a self-selection mechanism has been implemented and it mostly operates in urban areas. Families with knowledge of the programme turn up at local programme offices, where they are asked to provide household social-economic and demographic information. The introduction of this preliminary self-selection stage is intended to save administrative resources allocated to

¹⁵ These types of community are often situated in remote rural areas with less than 50 inhabitants and their population is predominately indigenous living under extreme poverty conditions. Presently (2009-2010), the Mexican National government is implementing an alternative scheme for indigenous poor families called '*Modelo Alternativo de la Operación y Gestión del Programa Oportunidades para Población Indígena*' (or Indigenous People Plan; also known by its initials IPP). Its implementation considers using the infrastructure (i.e. human resources and mobile medical attention units) of other poor-targeted social assistance programme. In urban areas where the indigenous population is dispersed, the implementation of this new IPP includes an indicator that involves an ethnic affirmative action to assure the equal access of indigenous people to state health and educational services (SEDESOL, Draft).

¹⁶ The targeting criteria and mechanism are currently applied for the selection of new eligible localities and families for inclusion in *Oportunidades* (or the ratification of localities determined as high priority and families previously included that still qualify as eligible) (SEDESOL, 2008a:3-4).

screening out higher income households and also visiting every household to do a census based survey (Coady & Parker, 2009; SEDESOL, 2009b). At the second stage, the applicants are submitted to the same ‘discriminant analysis’ as described above and only those who qualify as poor families are included in this programme (*ibid*).

Gender distinctive actions

The design of the *Oportunidades* programme involves a gender distinction expressed in four different ways: first, the cash transfer benefits are directly allocated to the female head of the household (usually the mother). Second, a higher education grant is payable for girls attending secondary and high school (7th – 12th grade, US System¹⁷) than for boys. Third, health-care and nutritional benefits are particularly aimed at adult women, particularly when they are pregnant and breastfeeding, and children under five years old. Fourth, women’s social status in their community and household is enhanced through their participation in monthly meetings, educational health workshops and community activities (mostly related to women-only *faenas*; see Chapter 7) (SEDESOL, 2007a and 2008a).

The potential effect of the above on recipients’ gender power relationships in the household and community are based on the following premises: resources controlled by women rather than men are more likely to translate into improved health and nutrition for their children; the direct allocation of the cash transfer to the female head of the recipient family will transform intra-household gender roles and the allocation of responsibilities; better education can improve girls’ future status in their households and the labour market and improve their living standards and social participation; the monthly meeting and other activities organised around the programme provide spaces where women’s self-confidence is enhanced and create solidarity between the beneficiaries, who participate regularly in such activities (Adato et al., 2000).

However, as Fraser (2004) asserts, affirmative actions in general are often contextual, and despite the general consensus in the literature on CCTs that control over the cash transfers is the principal positive factor in enhancing women’s status in the household (Adato et al., 2000), the impact of giving the cash transfer directly to women may vary according to prevailing gender relations. For instance, in the case of *Oportunidades*, in many rural contexts, such as in several indigenous communities, masculine authority is central to everyday household organisation, therefore this affirmative action may challenge entrenched norms and potentially re-order the balance of household decision-making in favour of women (Molyneux, 2008:38). However, in other contexts where gender relations in households are

¹⁷ It is used the US educational system throughout the document (unless otherwise stated).

not determined 'by such absolute masculine prerogatives', giving women the responsibility for effective use of the programme's payments can send a different message and reinforce more traditional divisions of household labour and gender responsibility (ibid).

The affirmative action of giving bigger grants for girls at secondary and high school than for boys has reversed the gender gap in access to education, and currently more girls than boys are receiving this educational benefit (Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2009:278), as discussed later.

Cash transfer benefits

Oportunidades aims to develop the human capital of Mexican families living in poverty. As a result, the cash transfer includes an educational grant aimed to increase children's school enrolment and reduce the school dropout rate, especially for girls, as mentioned above. The programme also provides cash to improve the family's nutritional intake (SEDESOL, 2003; 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007a). Since 2007-2008 the government has added other two elements: a complementary sum for food denominated *Apoyo Alimentario para Vivir Mejor* (Food Aid for Better Living); and a gas and electricity subsidy (SEDESOL, 2007a). The maximum amount of money that families can receive per month is detailed in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2: *Oportunidades* programme cash transfer benefits. Maximum amount per month received by recipient families. July-December, 2010. (US dollars)¹⁸

Concept	Families with children attending primary school (3 rd to 6 th grade)	Families with children attending secondary and high school (7 th to 12 th grade)
Food grant*	\$ 28.32	\$ 28.32
Gas and electricity	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00
Educational grant	\$ 92.87	\$ 169.91
Total	\$ 126.18	\$ 203.22

Source: Author, based on current *Oportunidades* regulations (SEDESOL, 2008b, 2009a).

* Includes US\$9.0 related to the *Apoyo Alimentario para Vivir Mejor*.

Elderly people living in a household signed up to *Oportunidades* do not qualify for *70 y Más* benefits. *Oportunidades* recipient families receive around US \$25.00 per month for every person aged 70 or above in the household. In addition, since 2010 this programme has added an extra cash transfer benefit of US\$8.00 per child (up to three children) between 0 and 9

¹⁸ Cash transfers in dollars have been calculated at an exchange rate of 12.0064 MXN per 1US\$.

Information retrieved from:

<http://www.banxico.org.mx/portalesespecializados/tiposcambio/tiposcambio.html> (Consulted on: 05/03/11)

years old (SEDESOL, 2009a; 2010a). Apart from the cash, families also receive preventive health care and nutritional benefits.

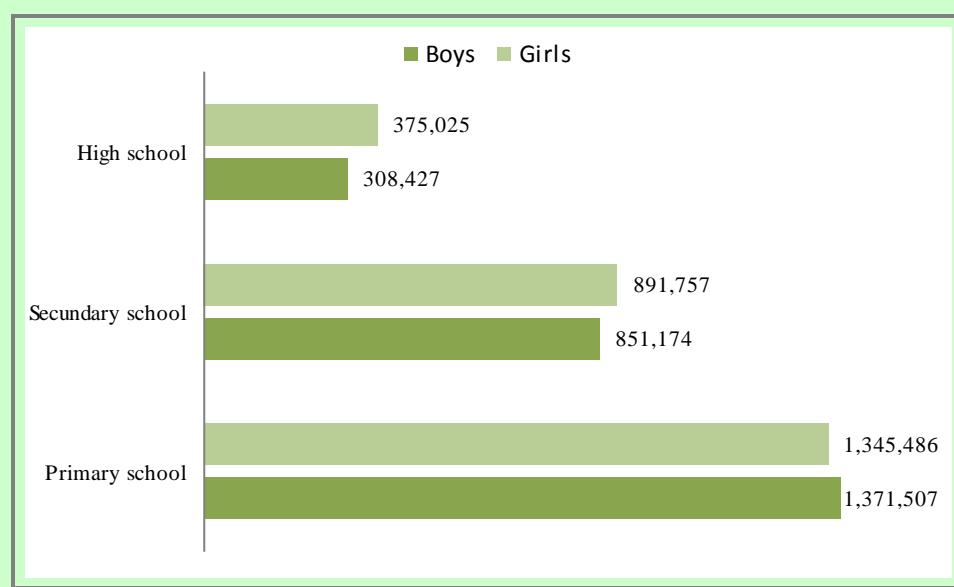
Education, health, and nutritional benefits

The *Oportunidades* cash transfer benefits are conditional on sending the children to school and the attendance of all family members at the LHCS for periodical medical check-ups (ibid).

Education benefits

As mentioned above, the programme has had a positive effect on children's school attendance especially that of girls, who receive an increased sum when at secondary and high school (equivalent to 7th to 12th grade) (SEDESOL, 2008d, 2010b; Behrman et al., 2005; Parker, 2003, 2005). The gap between girls' and boys' school attendance has narrowed, and at the higher levels of school education it has reversed slightly (see Figure 2.2, below).

Figure 2.2: *Oportunidades* Programme. Numbers of boys and girls receiving the educational grants



Source: Author, based on *Oportunidades* programme official data (SEDESOL, 2008d, 2010b)

Health and nutrition benefits

Oportunidades has had positive effects on beneficiaries' health and nutrition due to regular obligatory medical check-ups which involve a basic package of 108 preventive health care services¹⁹ (Bautista et al., 2003; Gutierrez et al., 2005). Children up to two years old (or five if

¹⁹ For a full account of the 108 preventive health services included in the *Oportunidades* programme see:

malnourished) are weighed, measured and vaccinated and receive nutritional supplements every two months. Although these services are centred on children under five years old and adult women (in particular during pregnancy, postnatally and when breastfeeding), services including the prevention and control of several illnesses such as pulmonary tuberculosis, hypertension, diabetes and cervical uterine cancer are extended to all family members. (SEDESOL, 2008a:36-41).

A ten-year evaluation of *Oportunidades* from 1997-2007 has demonstrated its positive impact on recipient families' health and nutrition. Maternal deaths and infant mortality have decreased by 11 and 2 percent respectively (SEDESOL, 2010b). The health of young children has improved. The number of days per year that children under 6 years old are sick has dropped by 20 percent to a current average of 2 days (De la Torre, n.d.); anaemia in beneficiaries under 2 years old has decreased by almost half to 35.8 percent compared to 61 percent in 1999 (SEDESOL, 2010b). Low height prevalence has been reduced by 11 percent compared to 10 years ago (23.9 percent compared to 35 percent) (ibid; Rivera et al., 2004).

The incidence of smear tests taken by adult women participating in *Oportunidades* is 61 percent higher than in female non-recipients (De la Torre, n.d.) Changes in eating habits, mainly associated with mother's attendance at the *Oportunidades* health educational workshops, have increased their families' consumption of protein, fruit and vegetables with a positive impact on their health. This is reflected in a 6 percent reduction of obesity in adult recipients in rural areas (currently 17 percent of this group of recipients is obese) diabetes amongst adult beneficiaries has decreased by 22 percent, although this chronic disease is still prevalent in 19 percent of rural *Oportunidades* recipients (SEDESOL, 2008c).

2.5 Summary: Moving towards an analysis of moral dimensions of state policy

The official data above provide evidence of the positive effects of the *Oportunidades* programme on children's school enrolment, nutritional levels especially in young children, and the health status of the families on this programme. However these short-term effects do not reveal and can indeed conceal the conditions that lead families to live in poverty such as their lack of access to long-term labour opportunities (Farrington & Slater, 2006; Hall, 2008; Handa & Davis, 2006; Vizcarra, 2002), and they distract attention from other major questions implicitly contained in the design and implementation of state policy interventions and their

effects on social norms and relations that might reproduce inequality and poverty (Bradshaw, 2008; Chant, 2008; Molyneux, 2006, 2008).

One major question, on which this thesis focuses, concerns the moral dimension of policy involving class, gender and age-related constructions that are implicitly contained in policy design and implementation processes, and the process of exclusion these generate at different levels of their implementation. This includes its frontline operation – in the community and households. The moral dimension informing the policy process of the antipoverty programme suggests deeper and long-term unintended consequences of CCTs such as *Oportunidade* which constitute the main scope of this thesis and are summarised in Figure 2.3, below.

Figure 2.3: The moral dimension informing the *Oportunidades* programme policy process and its long term effects

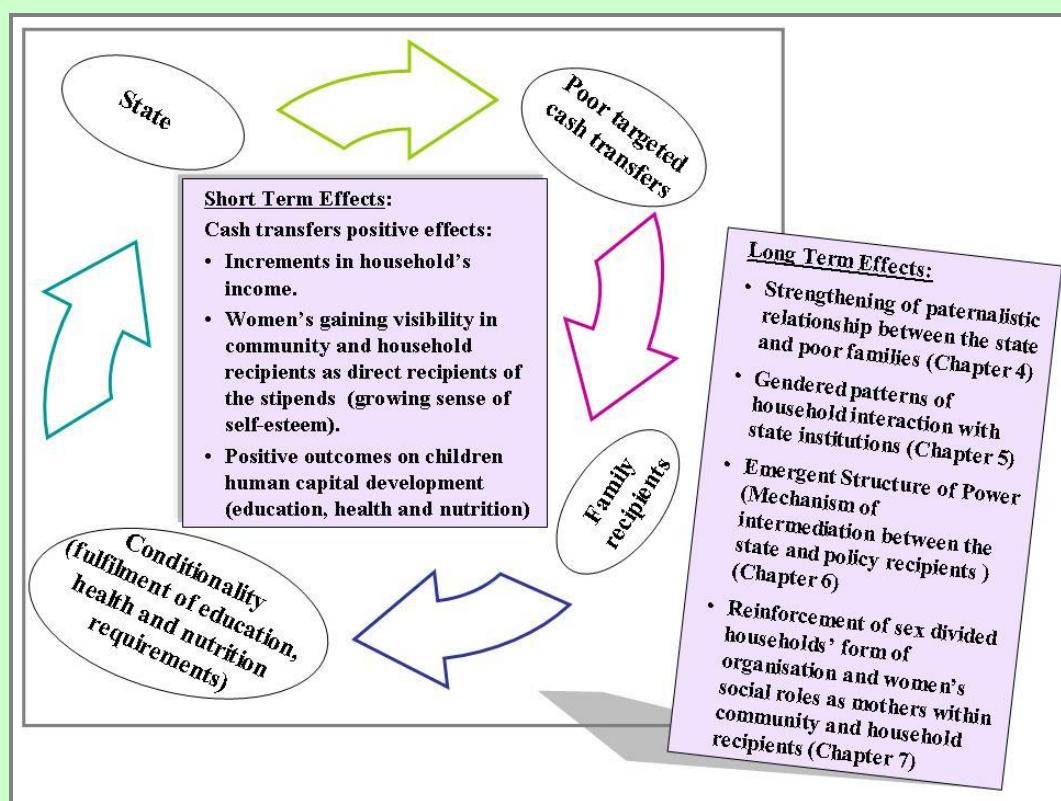


Figure 2.3 highlights the need for and therefore the relevance of extending the analysis of the policymaking process beyond the short-term positive impact of *Oportunidades* to focus attention on its long-term effects, including the strengthening of the paternalistic relationship between the state and the poor, the gendered pattern of rural households' interactions with state institutions at the policy front line and the reinforcement of the gender-divided organisation of household labour and female stereotypes through the fulfilment of this programme's responsibilities. As Figure 2.3 also explains, each of the empirical chapters in this thesis emphasise *Oportunidades*' long-term effects.

Chapter 3 CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the conceptual and methodological foundations of this research. The conceptual framework of the research draws upon the notion of morality (values, norms and conventions) (Bicchieri, 2006; Himmelwiet, 2002) and two theoretical approaches: an actor-oriented perspective (Long, 1992, 2001) and feminist critical theory (Fraser, 1989; 2003). Both approaches theorise about the diverse forms of domination and subordination contained in policy interventions.

The essence of the actor-oriented approach is that it grounds theoretical concepts in the everyday implementation of the policy intervention. It uses social interface analysis to interlock theory and practices to explore the experiences and understanding of all the actors – officials, local actors, recipients and non-recipients – involved in the state policymaking process (Long, 1992; 2001).

Fraser's (1989; 2003) feminist critical perspective frames the discussion about the transformative character of the social protection policy implemented in Mexico during the last decade. She situates her analysis in social welfare systems to examine what she calls the 'politics of need interpretation', and proposes a 'two-dimensional social justice model' for gender analysis in state policy schemes: economic distribution and the recognition of social identities. Both dimensions are 'co-fundamental and mutually irreducible' (Fraser, 2003:3). 'Neither simply a class nor simply a status group, gender is a hybrid category, rooted simultaneously in the economic structure and the status order of society' (ibid:22), and social policy design should consider both.

In terms of methodology, both theoretical approaches call for a detailed ethnographic understanding of everyday social policy interfaces (Long, 1992) and in-depth narrative analysis of policy actors' discourse on people's needs, specifically women's needs, reflected in 'tacit but powerful interpretative map of normative, differentially valued gender roles and gendered needs' (Fraser, 1989:9).

The chapter is presented in two main sections: the conceptual framework and the methodology. The first part of the conceptual framework section introduces the notion of morality; the second part describes the two theoretical frameworks, the key concepts informing them and the relevance of both approaches to this research.

The methodology section explains the epistemological stance of the research, which is grounded in the social constructionist and feminist epistemological approaches, and describes

the field research design and setting. The last section explains the data collection and the methods applied in the empirical analysis.

3.2 Conceptual framework

3.2.1 Morality

In this research, the notion of *morality* (including *values*, *social norms* and *conventions*) refers to judgements of what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ and involves a number of sanctions, obligations and duties, but also privileges. All of these act as some sort of ‘law’ (or *social force*) in a particular context (Harman, 1977). This social force uses *moral values* as a ‘system’ of principles (or judgments) to sanction individual behaviour. Examples of moral values are responsibility, obedience, discipline, charity and altruism.

Moral values are usually categorical, allowing exemption only under the most unusual circumstances. For example, sometimes it is possible to avoid responsibility by claiming another, more important moral value (Edgerton, 1985), for instance obedience. Since moral principles are values, they implicitly have a ‘cost’ related to sanctions that may be internal or external. Internal sanctions are related to individuals’ beliefs. An individual’s conscience informs their personal judgments (commonly referred to as the voice of conscience or the internal voice). This internal force produces a social order which usually causes actors to ‘behave in a certain way regardless of whether there are any penalties for not doing so, because (they think) that it is right’ or beneficial for their wellbeing, ‘and because to do otherwise would cause some sort of harm to people’ (Sayer, 2004:4). For example, parents care for their children do so through their sense of love and moral responsibility rather than because they could be sanctioned otherwise. The motivation for accepting their responsibility is not an outcome based on the threat of social sanction. It is much like the adoption of an ‘internally imposed rule’ (Himmelweit, 2002:240).

Moral values take action as an external force when, backed up by social norms and conventions, they sanction an actor’s behaviour. Social norms, ‘often seen as originally deriving from widely adopted habits’ (Rutherford, 1998:62), are described by Bicchieri (2006:ix) as ‘the grammar of society’, because, like grammar, norms collect rules that define what is acceptable and what is not in a social group.

Social norms prescribe behaviour. In contrast to legal norms, they are not imposed or designed by an authority; social norms emerge through the everyday interaction of social actors in a specific context. They are rules that are unwritten and codified. This means that they cannot be found in books or be explicitly told; some are learned by observing others’ behaviour, others are codified in, for example, parental practices. They entail obligations and are supported by normative expectations, which in turn comprise what a person expects others

to conform to and at the same time her/his awareness of what she/he is expected to conform to. Both expectations are necessary reasons to comply with the social norms (Bicchieri, 2006:40-42). The gender roles and family systems in different societies are examples of social norms. Both play a significant part in the way couples interact and families make decisions. In the Latin-American context, gender roles are traditionally associated with segregated male and female patterns of social interaction at community and household level. These gendered behavioural expectations are reinforced by cultural notions of '*machismo*', where men are seen as dominant, virile and independent, whereas '*marianismo*' emphasizes the idea of women being submissive, chaste, and dependent (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004) (see Chapter 7).

Conventions, on the other hand, are descriptive norms. They refer to practices or procedures widely observed in groups, especially to facilitate social interaction. Conventions are what people commonly do in certain situations; they may constitute regular 'behaviour'. These social practices (often referred to when describing social manners or 'good' manners such as the way people behave and speak) shape everyday life and are permeated with social meanings that cannot be ignored, and breaching them can offend and cause reprisals (Bicchieri, 2006:42). Convention is also often applied to highlight a class position. For instance, as discussed later, in a class-stratified society groups in a dominant position tend to perceive poverty as behavioural rather than structural (Wood, 2007), and view the lower classes as part of a separate culture with its own values and norms that are often in conflict with widely accepted social conventions. 'Apathy, cynicism, helplessness [and immorality]' are the highlighted features of the 'culture of poverty'²⁰ (Lewis, 1970; 1998; Siegel & Welsh, 2009: 117).

Social norms and conventions do not necessarily imply morality. Morality exists where norms and conventions 'become internalised by individuals' (Rutherford, 1998: 62) and their transgression is usually accompanied by feelings of shame, guilt and justification. In other words, while social norms are the rules of the game, conventions describe how the game is generally played according to those rules, and the morality describes the spirit of the game. This is the approved way to play. For example, as gendered roles among household and community members respond to set social norms, convention describes the allocation of responsibilities among the members and morality is involved when such a distribution of roles and responsibilities is accepted or sanctioned by all the parties involved as just or unjust. To conclude, moral values, social norms and conventions are not played out in a vacuum; they

²⁰ The concept first appeared in the late 1950s in an ethnographic study titled *Five families: Mexican case studies in the culture of poverty* (Lewis, 1959). In this research this concept is discussed throughout the lenses of the 'elite's perceptions of poverty' (Reis & Moore, 2005). Both concepts are discussed later in this chapter.

are embedded in the everyday discourse and practices of different structures such as community arrangements and social institutions (i.e. conjugal and parent-child relationships). Further discussion on social structures is included later on in this chapter.

3.2.2 The actor-oriented approach

At the state social policy design level there is a tendency to conceptualise policy interventions ‘as essentially linear in nature’ (Long, 2001: 25). Policymakers tend to imply ‘some kind of [top-down] step-by-step process whereby policy [is] formulated, implemented and then followed by certain results’ (ibid). As Long (2001:25; 38) asserts, even though ‘[p]lanning and intervention are in the end about ‘development’ there is not a straight line from policy [design] to outcomes’. ‘[The] separation of “policy”, “implementation” and “outcomes” is a gross oversimplification of a much more complicated set of processes’. This oversimplification involves a degree of commoditization, in which it is assumed that all the actors involved in the policy process act via role prescription which determines what people do (Bryant, 1999). It neglects the autonomy (or agency, as defined below in Box 3.1) of the policy actors (i.e. state officials, local actors and recipients) involved in the policy process (its design and implementation), and undermines other, endogenous forms of organisation at its frontline level of implementation, where ‘(actors) actively formulate and pursue their own “projects of development”’, which also affect the policy process (ibid: 25).

According to Long (2001:72), the concept of state-planned interventions needs to be deconstructed, and he proposes an alternative actor-oriented framework to explore the policymaking process. This analytical approach understands social policies and practices as a dynamic, socially-constructed, negotiated and meaning-creating process, not simply as the execution of an already-specified plan of action with expected behavioural outcomes.

Long’s actor-oriented approach emerges as a counterpoint to extensive writings in sociology and anthropology that appeared from the early post-war period until the early 1980s, influenced by modernisation theories that ‘see development and social change emanating primarily from external planned interventions’ (Long, 2001:11; Long & van de Ploeg, 1994).

In Long’s view (1992:5) while those previous theoretical contributions provided some new insights and analytical frameworks concerning planned interventions, they did not focus attention on the ‘frontline’ level of policy implementation or on everyday dilemmas related to the interaction between state authorities and policy ‘target’ and ‘non-target-groups’.

Although state policy interventions have an effect on social structures, from an actor-oriented perspective ‘it is theoretically unsatisfactory to base one’s analysis on the concept of external determinations’ (Long, 1992:20; 2001:13). Long (ibid) proposes a more dynamic approach to the understanding of state policy and social change which stresses ‘the interplay and mutual

determination of “internal” and “external” factors’ informing the state policy process and the heterogeneous responses to ‘relatively homogenous’ circumstances in which human action and perception play a central role (*ibid*).

An actor-oriented perspective, by definition, is interested in social actors (see Box 3.1): state officials, local actors, policy recipients and non-recipients. From this perspective, social actors are not depicted as ‘disembodied social categories’ or as ‘passive recipients of intervention’ constructed by external categories (*ibid*:21). Policy actors are socially constructed according to the cultural context in which they are embedded (Long, 1992:25). They are ‘active participants who process information and strategise in their dealings with other policy actors as well as institutions and personnel’ (*ibid*). Therefore a critical view of state policy refuses patterns of institutional incorporation accompanied by a process of centralisations. In this sense, the actor-oriented approach stresses how ‘top-down’ planned interventions have ‘[their] own coordinated institutional rationality and undermine other forms of independent decision’ (Long, 2001:42-44). This latter form of organisation involves emergent power relations and ‘spaces of manoeuvre which may become crucial in the interaction with various intervening (policy actors)’ in frontline implementation (Long, 2001:41).

The above insights leads to the suggestion that an actor-oriented approach recognises the agency of the policy actors (individual and social entities: see Box 3.1), the way in which social meanings are constructed and deconstructed in the everyday policy process and the notion of power that emerges through the patterns of interaction between the policy actors. The concepts of agency, social actors and power are defined in the Box 3.1 below:

The actor-oriented approach examines everyday policy practices and offers social interface analysis as a useful entry point from which to explore encounters between all the policy actors (state officials, local actors and recipients) (Long, 1992; 2001). These social encounters are reflected in the policy actors’ experience and understanding of the policymaking process at different levels: design, frontline implementation, community and household.

Box 3.1: Social Actors, Agency and Power

The concept of social actor emerges from the notion *agency* (Giddens, 1984) and the idea of *discursive means* (or cultural constructions) expressed by individuals in the formulation of their objectives and in presenting arguments for the decision taken (i.e. pursuit of interest and desires) (Long, 1992:25; 2001:18). In an actor-oriented approach, agency is not restricted to single individuals that make decisions and act accordingly. It can be extended to other social identities like state agencies, for example. As long as these entities have discernible ways of reaching and formulating decisions and acting on at least some of them, they also should be considered social actors (Long, 1992:23).

The notion of *agency* recognises that social actors are ‘knowledgeable’ in the sense that they consciously reflect on their own experience and desire (or intentions); are ‘capable of solving problems (even under the most extreme forms of coercion); and engage in any particular organising practice around them (Giddens, 1984:22; Long, 2001:16; 49).

The idea of ‘*discursive means*’ implies the recognition of alternative discourses. According to Long’s actor-oriented perspective, agency is differently constituted culturally, hence moral values and beliefs have an effect on interpersonal relations. In terms of planned interventions, the cultural context influences the responses and strategies of all policy actors involved in the policymaking process (ibid:17-19).

From a moral perspective, the conception of *power* is related to responsibility (as in the case of agency). ‘[W]hen we say that someone has power or is powerful we are... *assessing responsibility* to a human agent or agency for bringing (or failing to bring) about certain outcomes that impinge upon the interests of other human beings’ (Ball, 1976:249; also quoted in Morris, 2002:38 and Lukes, 2002:491). The moral attributes of power imply the possibility of acting differently (individuals as well as groups or institutions) (Lukes, 2005). The allocation of power implies to fix responsibility for the consequences, which flow from the action to the inaction, of certain agents. In other words, power can be held even where it is not used or needed. It cannot be directly observed, but can be described as a latent conflict of interest in the operation of social forces and institutional practices. So power should be also perceived as ‘passive’ individual or collective capacity, ‘where [the] agent receives rather than makes changes, experiencing rather than bringing about the outcome [...]’ (ibid:71).

Social interface analysis in policy interventions

Social interface analysis investigates how different policy actors, often with conflicting interests, attempt to control or gain access to social protection discourses, both material and discursive (Long and van de Ploeg, 1989).

An interface typically takes place in different *social arenas* (or social spaces, described later in this chapter) in which policy actors intersect to devise ways of ‘bridging, accommodating, segregating or contesting social, normative and cognitive standpoints’ (Long, 1988, 2001). As Long explains (2001:65): a ‘[s]ocial interface analysis aims to elucidate the type of critical point of social discontinuity and linkage present in such situations, and to identify the organisational and cultural means (moral and normative values) of reproducing or transforming them’.

An interface is often described as ‘some kind of face-to-face encounter’ or ‘two-sided articulation’ between different policy actors representing different interests and backed by different resources. However, since these interface spaces are situated in a broader

institutional domain, they tend to be ‘more complex and multiple in nature’ revealing different patterns of interaction (or heterogeneous policy actors’ responses to similar structural circumstances), that in certain ways are a joint creation of the actors themselves (ibid, 1988:128, 2001:66).

Several key elements of interface analysis are relevant to social policy interventions (Long, 1988:128-129, 2001:69-72). This research focuses attention on three policy interfaces: dominant discourses in the policy interface; policy interface analysis of ‘interlocking relationships and intentionalities’ of policy actors, including policy recipients; and policy interface analysis of dynamics of conflict, ambivalence and negotiation in emergent structures.

1. Policy interface analysis in dominant discourses. This interface helps ‘to comprehend how “dominant” discourses (played out in an explicit and implicit manner) are endorsed, transformed or challenged’ by the actors involved in the policy process (Long, 2001:71). This research focuses on dominant discourses that tend to promote moral and normative standpoints about poor agency based on social constructions of class, gender and age, which are ‘often mobilised in struggles over social meanings and strategic resources’ (ibid).

In this policy interface, Fraser’s (1989) ‘politics of need interpretation’ contributes to the analysis of moral discourse inscribed in social policy design.²¹ Her critical approach to social welfare systems (ibid) frames the discussion (see Chapter 4) of dominant discourses informing policymakers designing the *Oportunidades* programme. These dominant discourses of policy elites socially construct the ideal policy recipient, often as living in a nuclear, bi-parental and male-headed family, and employ a paternalistic interpretation of the poor’s need at the design level of the programme.²² Recipients are often perceived as passive actors, and hence the state has the power to define and satisfy their needs.

In social welfare systems, elite policymakers often engage in authoritative discourse about the agency of those in need that involves behavioural assumptions. For those in a dominant position, ‘poverty is best conceptualised as behavioural rather than structural’ (ibid:22): this reflects a moral dimension implicitly informing social policy design where the poor are blamed for their own condition and are labelled with ‘self-incriminating badges’ such as

²¹ Even though her theoretical approach is directly related to the feminist critical theory, which also frames the empirical discussion of this research (as explained later), at this point it is important to anticipate her contribution to this policy interface analysis.

²² Authors such as Hall (2008), Molyneux (2006) and Vizcarra (2002) discuss the paternalistic interpretation of the poor’s needs implicitly embedded in the design of the CCT programmes currently operating in Latin America (*Bolsa Familia* and *Oportunidades*), which is reflected in a narrow and short-term vision of how they should overcome poverty (see Chapter 4).

‘beggar’, ‘lazy’ and ‘incompetent’ (ibid). Reis and Moore (2005) call this dominant discourse ‘elite perceptions of poverty’. They assert that elite policymakers often ‘attribute poverty in a moralistic fashion to the passivity or indolence of the poor’. This idea connects with the notion of the ‘culture of poverty’ depicted by Lewis in his anthropological essays (1959; 1970).

From Lewis’ (1959; 1970; 1998) point of view, ‘[t]he culture of poverty is both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified [...] society’ (1970:69). He explains that poor families immersed in the ‘culture of poverty’ tend to present similar characteristics, such as ‘low level(s) of literacy and education’; they make very little use of state services. They also present ‘poor housing conditions, crowding, gregariousness, but above all, a minimum of organisation beyond the level of nuclear and extended family [...]’ (Lewis, 1970:71-72). ‘On the family level the major trait of the culture of poverty (is) the absence of childhood as a specially prolonged and protected stage in the life cycle (with an early initiation into conjugal relationships or marital life and access to the labour market)’ (ibid).

Needs are ‘multivalent and contested’ (1989:164). As Fraser (ibid:166) asserts:

[N]eeds [...] appear as a site of struggle where groups with unequal discursive (and nondiscursive) resources compete to establish as hegemonic their respective interpretations of legitimate social needs. Dominant groups articulate need interpretations intended to exclude, defuse, and/or co-opt counterinterpretations. Subordinated or oppositional groups, on the other hand, articulate need interpretations intended to challenge, displace, and/or modify dominant ones [...].

Thus while *Oportunidades* programme officials make use of discursive resources about the agency of the deservers of this programme, its recipients (and non-recipients) tend to harness moral discourses ‘in order to legitimate their claims upon’ (Long, 2001:71) social protection resources. Therefore a major task of a social interface analysis is to bring into discussion the moral discourses about the poor’s agency inscribed in policy design and to examine their implications at different levels of policy implementation (frontline operation, community and household level) (Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively).

From an actor-oriented perspective, the idea of policy interfaces in everyday practices allows moving the analysis beyond the state’s hegemonic role in labelling and interpreting the needs of the policy recipients to focus attention on the critical points of interaction between the state bureaucracies working at the frontline level of policy implementation with the recipients. This level of the state policy process is explored in two different policy interface analyses: ‘interlocking relationships and intentionalities’ and ‘dynamics of conflict, ambivalence and negotiation in emergent structures’.

2. Policy interface analysis of ‘interlocking relationships and intentionalities’ of policy actors, including policy recipients. This policy interface analysis reveals that ‘[c]ontinuous interaction encourages the development of boundaries and shared expectations that shape the interaction of the participants’ in an organised way with rules, sanctions, procedures and ‘proven’ practices to overcome conflicting interests and different perceptions, so that ‘over time the interface itself becomes an organised entity’ (Long, 1988:128, 2001:69).

At the front line, the policy interface analysis implies more than how dominant groups govern access to social protection resources. At this level, the analysis tends to be more focused on how state policy is organised on an everyday basis and its form and techniques for securing compliance. As Lukes (2005:88) asserts, ‘the power of domination requires, where it is not coercive, the compliance of willing subjects’. Foucault (1991a, 1991b) addresses the discussion about the mechanisms (or ‘techniques of power’) by which compliance is secured.

Foucault’s (*ibid*) notion of power relies on the idea of *hierarchical surveillance* as one of the disciplinary techniques used to control individuals’ behaviour in a range of state institutions (e.g. schools and prisons). Foucault (1991b) expands his political analysis of ‘techniques of power’ into the notion of *governmentality* (or government rationality), which draws attention to the idea that the power of the state rests on the creation of subjectivities and identities through routine and rigid everyday practices.

In this thesis, Foucault’s theoretical insights into the power of the state are directly relevant to the discussion of the moral discourse of obligation and sanction implicitly contained in the notion of conditionality. Moral discursive practices founded on perceptions about poor families’ cultural patterns of behaviour are more evident in everyday policy practices where the *Oportunidades* programme’s frontline operators (e.g. doctors and teachers) interact with policy recipients. Their interaction reflects a paternalistic relationship between state authorities and policy recipients, mutually bonded by notions of control where compliance is secured through the institutionalisation of gift-giving practices and access to social protection is linked to conditioning poor families to fulfil the education, health and nutrition requirements of the programme in order to receive the cash transfer benefits (see Chapter 5).

However, as noted earlier, *Oportunidades* programme officials and recipients are actors with agency influencing the state policymaking processes in their everyday interactions. Their struggles and negotiations over the policy resources give room for manoeuvre or exception to the rule and the implementation of effective strategies in doing so (Long, 2001). This room for manoeuvre implies ‘a degree of consent, a degree of negotiation and thus a degree of power, as manifested in the possibility of exerting some control, prerogative, authority and for action, be it frontstage or backstage, for flickering moments or for more sustained periods’

(Villareal, 1992:256). As Long (2001:71) states, ‘power inevitably generates resistance, accommodations and strategic compliance as regular components of the politics of everyday life’.

The above insight brings into the analysis the idea of ‘street-level bureaucrats’²³ (Lipsky, 1980) described as ‘[p]ublic service workers who interact directly with [policy recipients] and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work’ (ibid:3). In this regard, Law (1991: 245) asserts that ‘where rules are invoked there must be discretion’. Since those in hierarchical positions are most often able to exercise discretion, this latter constitutes a source of power. Therefore discretion is a critical point for analysis in the frontline operation of state-planned interventions like the *Oportunidades* programme.

At the frontline of the *Oportunidades* programme, street-level bureaucrats tend to show a degree of discretion (or deference to the policy recipients) along with fulfilling the requirements of the programme. Lipsky (ibid), in his analysis of the individual dilemmas of frontline operators, understands workers’ discretion as part of the situation they have to face in their everyday interaction with the users of public services. Since each policy recipient usually requires a response appropriate to his/her specific context, everyday policy practice tends to be more complicated than programmatic policy plans.

In the same manner, policy recipients also influence the policymaking process when they interact with state authorities (Long, 2001). In the *Oportunidades* programme, fulfilment of these programme requirements has led poor families to develop heterogeneous responses to comply with the requirements of the programme.

The empirical analysis conducted in this policy interface therefore examines: a) the degree of discretion shown by frontline operators (doctors and teachers) in their interaction with policy recipients aiming to fulfil the education, nutrition and health requirements of this programme; and b) the effects on the behaviour of the recipients fulfilling the requirements, and the gendered nature of these effects (see Chapter 5).

3. Policy interface analysis of dynamics of conflict, ambivalence and negotiation in emergent structures. Interface analysis facilitates understanding of the way in which the state policy operates at the front line, emphasising the differences between formal state policy processes (fulfilment of requirements and sanctions), and the ‘emergent structures’ that come into play as the result of unintended consequences of planned interventions over which social actors (in this case state institutions) have limited control (Giddens, 1984: 10-11). These structures

²³ In this research the term ‘street-level bureaucrats’ is interchangeable with ‘frontline operators’.

emerge through the practices and strategies pursued by different actors (frontline operators and recipients) in their everyday interface.

As Nuitjen asserts (2003:22), the different patterns of interaction between the state institutions and recipients only becomes clear when policy analysis takes into account not just the dynamics of the state institutions themselves but also the ‘informal processes of negotiation and settlement’ (ibid:6). In Long’s (2001:70) view, the ‘analysis of the source and dynamics of conflict and ambivalence in emergent structures cannot be taken for granted; it must be empirically established. This policy interface came to light during the field research and is discussed in Chapter 6.

The ‘emergent structures’ explored in this research are reflected in the mechanisms of intermediation developed by local actors (the *Oportunidades* programme’s *enlace municipal* and *vocales*) who occupy an ambivalent position in the programme. In the first place they play a role as frontline operators; however their formal pattern of interaction with state policy recipients also reveals mechanisms of intermediation that remain outside the control of the state policy. ‘Their position is inevitably ambivalent, since they must respond to the demands of their own groups as well as to the expectations of those with whom they must negotiate’. This represents a dilemma for any policy actor ‘occupying an intercalary (or brokerage) position between different *social domains*’ (ibid:69-70; italics added).

Social domains and arenas

The idea of *social domains* refers to those areas of social life (i.e. the state, community and household level relations) organised with reference to a central core of values and norms which, ‘even if they are not perceived in exactly the same way by all the actors involved’, imply a ‘degree of social commitment’ and ‘become central to the establishments of certain pragmatic rules of social ordering (or governance)’ (ibid: 59, 241).

The analysis of social domains also requires taking into consideration the dynamics of the *social arenas* within them. *Social arenas* (also defined as social spaces) are specific locations ‘in which contest over issues, claims, resources, values, meanings and representations take place’. In other words, they are the sites of struggles in and across different domains, where actors mobilise social relations and play out moral discourses and other social practices in order to achieve specific ends (ibid: 58-59, 241).

In this thesis, the *Oportunidades* programme, which constitutes the social field of this research, is examined in two different social domains: the individual and the household in relation to state institutions; and the individual in relation to his/her household and community. The social arenas affected by this programme are summarised in the table below.

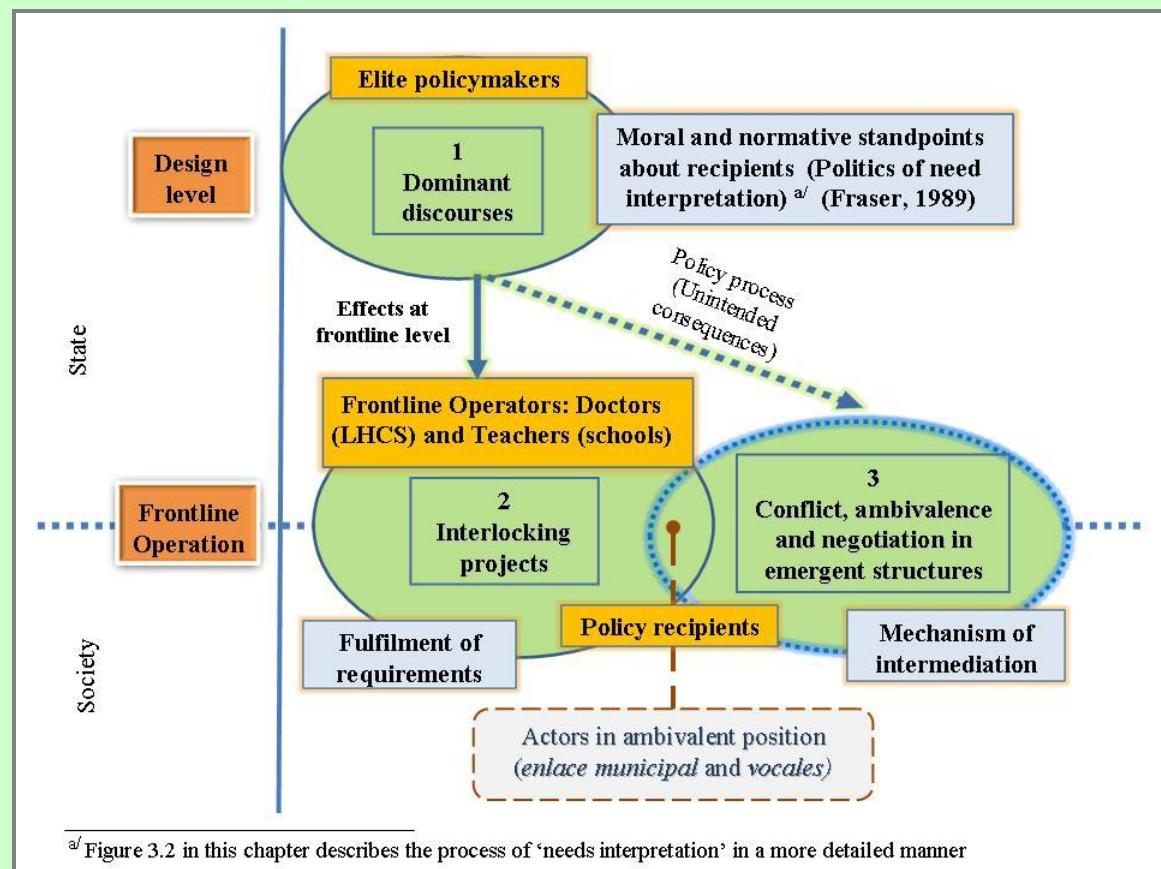
Table 3.1: *Oportunidades* programme examined in different social arenas

Rural households' patterns of interaction with frontline state institutions (Local Health Care Service –LHCS- and school) (see Chapter 5).
The interaction between <i>enlace municipal</i> and the <i>vocales</i> of this programme through monthly meetings organised with the latter group (Chapter 6).
'Payday', when the <i>enlace municipal</i> interacts directly with policy recipients (Chapter 6).
The <i>Oportunidades</i> programme community monthly meetings and <i>faenas</i> attended by the <i>vocales</i> and policy recipients (Chapter 7).
Household modes of compliance developed by families receiving the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme in order to fulfil with the requirement of this programmes (Chapter 7).

Source: Based on Long, 2001.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the social policy interface analysis conducted in this research.

Figure 3.1: *Oportunidades* Programme Policy Interface Analysis



Source: Based on Long (2001)

Long's (1992; 2001) valuable contribution of the actor-oriented approach and social interface analysis enables examination of the interaction of *Oportunidades* programme recipients with the state authorities in the course of fulfilling the requirements of this programme, particularly

at the front line where the everyday policy interfaces are more evident. However, this approach does not pay particular attention to the resources and constraints that recipients (and non-recipients too) often face when they are actively negotiating and struggling with social meanings (moral values and norms) with social arrangements and institutions that operate in the context where the state policy is implemented.

The point of departure from Long's actor-oriented approach is a critique of top-down planned intervention which tends to homogenise (or encapsulate) the life of the policy recipients, 'reducing their autonomy [and] resulting in centralised control by [...] [state] institutions' (Long, 1988:63). Based on this, the actor-oriented approach reveals the heterogeneity of the social actors' responses to planned interventions and the conflicts inherent in the policymaking process, where human agency plays a central role (Long, 1992, 2001). However, as Villareal (1992:259) suggests, '[i]n the process of analysing interfaces [...] in social situations' one finds that the relations of power in a policy arena are interwoven with other social structures at ground level.

Social structures at community and household level

Social structures, in their most elemental sense, as the 'rules (and resources)' implemented thorough social practices (Giddens, 1984:17), also '[imply] a notion of organising process and practices and ongoing contestations over meaning and values' (Long, 2001:17). Since 'rules are inherently transformational' (Giddens, 1984:17), social structure refers to the structural properties that allow the interconnection of time and space in social systems. The idea that social practices do not have 'structures' – i.e. in the sense of purely situational practices – but rather exhibit 'structural properties' make it possible to discern similar social practices across time and space and 'lend them a systemic form'. 'The most deeply embedded structural properties implicated in the reproduction of social [practices are called] *structural principles*' (Giddens, 1984:17). This latter idea implies a 'paradigmatic dimension' of social structure involving a virtual and hierarchical moral order on recursive modes of social interaction. Social practices that are extended over time and space in social systems can be referred to as institutions (ibid) (conjugal and parent-child relationships).

Often the distinction between social practices and institutions points out the normative aspects of institutions and emphasises the structural (or situational) aspect of social practices (or arrangements). As a result, social arrangements are defined more in terms of recognized and accepted roles, and *social institutions* – described by (Kabeer & Subramanian, 1996) as structural relationships that create and reproduce systematic disadvantages among different groups of people (i.e. men and women) – are defined more in terms of the social group's beliefs, norms and rules (Appendini & Nuijten, 2002).

The distinction between social arrangements and institutions is stressed because in several Mexican rural settings arrangements such as community arrangements (*faenas*) (see Chapter 7), despite being informed by notions of rights and obligations and regulated between members of a community, are more in the nature of customary practices that have persisted over time than of a specific set of rules or norms (Appendini & Nuijten, 2002; Carrasco & Nahmad, 2002; Cohen, 2002).

A relevant aspect of community arrangements and social institutions is gender relations. A dynamic policy interface analysis has to ‘identify constraints and discontinuities in terms of power, status and access to resources between men and women’ (Villareal, 1992).

The moral character of *faenas* and social relations (e.g. conjugal and parent-child relationships), and the way they have been adapted or reinforced after over the decade since the *Oportunidades* programme was introduced in rural Mexico (see Chapter 7), calls for feminist critical analysis (Fraser, 1989; 2003). This theoretical perspective is explained in the following subsection.

3.2.3 Feminist critical theory

Fraser’s feminist critical perspective frames the discussion about the transformative character of the social protection policy implemented in Mexico during the last decade. Her two-dimensional social justice model is a valuable entry point for examining the extent to which antipoverty programmes like *Oportunidades* are sensitive to recognising and therefore enhancing women’s social status and economic autonomy.

Fraser’s (1989) feminist critical perspective rests on the notion of the politics of need interpretation, which exposes the process by which social policies and practices construct the ideal policy recipient and his/her needs ‘according to certain specific and, in principle, contestable interpretations’ (ibid:146).

From a critical feminist perspective, misrecognition, as a factor of women’s subordination, is ‘rooted in institutionalised patterns of cultural value’ (at state, community and household level), informed by normative discursive constructions of masculine hierarchy that have ‘deprived [women] of the possibility of participating fully, as peers, in social life’ (Olson, 2008:6). This concern has led Fraser (2003, 2004) to refine her theoretical approach to state policy analysis to create a two-dimensional social justice model, where disadvantages of class and gender comprise two elements: the distribution of economic and material benefits on the one hand and cultural value and social recognition on the other. As she explains:

To be misrecognized, in my view, is not simply to be [...] looked down on, or devalued in others' conscious attitudes or [...] beliefs. It is rather to be denied the status of a *full partner* in social interaction and prevented from *participating as a peer* in social life – not as a consequence of a distributive inequity (such as failing to receive one's fair share of resources or 'primary goods'), but rather as a consequence of *institutionalized* patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem. When such patterns of disrespect and disesteem are institutionalized, for example, in law, social welfare, medicine, and/or popular culture, they impede parity of participation, just as surely as do distributive inequities. The resulting harm is in either case all too real. (Fraser, 1998:141)

The politics of need interpretation

Fraser's theoretical approach 'break(s) with standard approaches' and 'shift[s] the focus of inquiry from needs to discourses about needs, from the distribution of need satisfactions to "the politics of need interpretation"' (Fraser, 1989:162). The aim of the analytical approach is to discuss the contextual and contested character of 'needs talk' in social welfare systems (ibid).

General claims about needs – for instance that adequate education, health and nutrition are needed to reduce poverty – may be quite uncontroversial, and the state's responsibility for meeting such needs is widely accepted. However, when the discussion about the fulfilment of needs becomes more specific it is more controversial. For example, there are questions about how basic needs should be satisfied through a general subsidisation system that allows universal access to education and health care services or prioritises their delivery to a targeted poor population, as in antipoverty programmes. In the latter case, other implications must be considered, such as whether or not the provision of state services to the poor are to be associated with conditional cash transfer mechanisms to encourage their use, as in the *Oportunidades* programme.

As Fraser (ibid) suggests, it is possible to continue the above discussion indefinitely and at the same time proliferate the controversy about needs satisfaction. '[This] is precisely the point about need claims': they tend to be connected to other ramified implications. However, the discussion of needs claims tends to be merely concerned with the fulfilment of the needs, and this deflects attention from something that is also essential: 'the *interpretation* of people's need'; thus failing to problematise 'the social and institutional logic of process of need interpretations' (ibid:164, emphasis added). A focus only on the fulfilment of needs disregards other crucial aspects such as who is interpreting the needs; the institutional context in which the needs are interpreted; and 'who gets to establish the authoritative thick definition of people's need' (ibid).

In the case of welfare systems, elite policymakers often pronounce authoritatively about those in need. As Fraser (1989:154-156) explains, institutionalised patterns of need interpretation

are based on culturally hegemonic systems related to the socio-cultural constructions of the ideal policy deservers and their need interpretation.

As mentioned, in this research the authoritative discourse on the socio-cultural constructions of policy recipients and the interpretation of their needs shape two different empirical discussions at the policy design level (see Chapter 4): the moral discourse implicitly contained in the targeting mechanisms implemented in the *Oportunidades* programme's selection of its recipients. This empirical discussion also includes the 'politics of labelling' proposed by Wood (1985, 2007), which focuses on 'the practices of [elite policymakers'] rationality in classifying need and targeting resources to those needs' (Wood, 2007:18); and the interpretative discourses of elite policymakers on poor cultural habits (Lewis, 1959, 1970, 1998; Reis & Moore, 2005) lying behind the introduction of the notions of *co-responsibility*²⁴ and *conditionality*²⁵ in the conceptual design of this programme.

In Fraser's (1989) theoretical approach, needs are essentially socially constructed and therefore 'political' and their interpretation is normally controversial. However, the political character of 'social needs' is not a straightforward process: they have to exceed other depoliticising social spheres (or domains, as explained earlier) such as domestic institutions characterised by gender-normative forms of organisation where needs are interpreted as a personal or family matter, often in relation to masculine prerogatives, and emerge as 'need talk' –understood as a political idiom that refers to the process where needs have 'broken out of the discursive enclaves constructed in and around domestic [...] institutions' (Fraser, 1989:168) and are discussed in different public domains, for example in social movements such as feminist activist and academic groups and state institutions (see Figure 3.2 below).

Fraser (*ibid*) identifies three different discursive moments in the social and institutional process in which needs struggle to gain first social and then political status: the first is 'the struggle to establish or deny the political status of a given need'; the second, 'the struggle over the interpretations of the need' (who is going to define it and what would satisfy it); the last is 'the struggle over the satisfaction of the need' (to secure or withhold its provision).

²⁴ The straightforward meaning of 'co-responsibility' is shared responsibility. For the specific case of the CCT programmes, Molyneux (2006:434) explains this term as a 'quasi-contractual understanding' between the state and civil society where, in return for the entitlements proffered by the state, certain obligations are accomplished by the programmes' beneficiaries. (For a full examination of this concept see Chapter 4).

²⁵ 'Conditionality' also involves the idea of a contractual agreement where one actor conditions the behaviour of others (Scott & Marshall, 2005). As examined in Chapter 4, there is no distinctive line between the notions of co-responsibility and conditionality: both are related to the obligations and sanctions that antipoverty programmes entail. Nonetheless, at the operational level conditionality becomes more significant because of its connection to the requirements that the recipients need to fulfil in order to receive the cash transfer benefits (this concept is fully examined in Chapter 5).

The struggle to gain or deny the political status of a given need

As Fraser explains (1989:171):

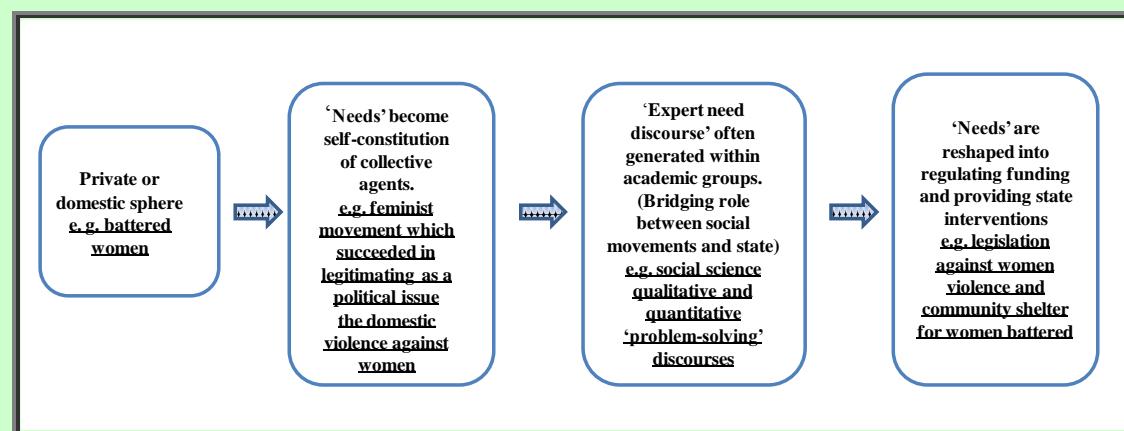
[N]eeds become politicized when, for example, women (or) workers [...] come to contest the subordinated identities and roles, the traditional, reified, and disadvantageous need interpretations previously assigned to and/or embraced by them.

In doing this they offer an alternative interpretation of their needs and create new public discourses that are disseminated through a wide range of different discursive arenas (ibid).

In democratic theory, if not always in practice, a matter does not usefully become subject to legitimate state interventions until it has been debated across a wide range of discourses. (ibid:166)

The process of needs interpretation can be explained in a schematic and simplistic one way: needs become social, and because of this an object of potential state intervention, when they have 'struggled' through the different social fields; as it is described below:

Figure 3.2: The social and institutional process of needs interpretation



Source: Based on Fraser's (1989) 'politics of need interpretation' analytical framework.

The above schematic process tends to be complex and dynamic and does not necessarily follow a linear 'input-outcome' process. The contestants who are 'struggling over needs' tend to be more heterogeneous. They 'range from proponents of politicization to defenders of (re)depoliticization' (where needs are negotiated as 'individual cases'; as explained later) and 'rivals and alliances' related to need interpretations are forged around policy proposals and groups constantly compete to shape their own agenda (ibid). Moreover, Figure 3.2 reinforces the idea that a need must follow a process of legitimisation in order to become an object of government intervention.

The struggle to interpret need

When needs succeed in being addressed by government provision, they are repositioned and redefined into bureaucratic and administrative programmatic 'need (or policy) interventions'

and become the *raison d'être* of state agencies who are the policy actors that gain to establish authoritative (or dominant) discourse on interpreting and satisfying people's need. By virtue of this administrative rhetoric, expert needs discourse [...] tends to be depoliticizing. (ibid:174)

Since needs are reinterpreted as 'predefined state services', people whose needs are in question 'become individual "cases" rather than members of social groups or participants in political movements' (ibid). They are reshaped as passive and therefore 'potential recipients of predefined services rather than as agents involved in interpreting their needs and shaping their life conditions' (ibid). According to policymakers' perceptions, the causes of economic (or class) injustices are rooted in poor families' cultural attitudes and habits, as mentioned earlier. In this sense, state policy becomes a 'normalising' intervention, 'aimed at "reforming", or more often stigmatizing, "deviancy"' (ibid). In the specific case of the *Oportunidades* programme, according to state officials working in this programme the poor families' cultural habits are reflected in their lack of interest in investing in human capital: education, nutrition and health care (see Chapter 4). In consequence the recipients of the programme are also 'constructed as deviant', the programme includes a strong surveillance component (Foucault, 1991a) and recipients are constantly required to qualify and maintain their eligibility (see Chapter 5).

The struggle to secure or withhold provision

Since social needs are socially constructed, they are associated with moral values and normative discourse. Their interpretation is not fixed or given, and often differs from one culture or historical period to another (Fraser, 1989). For that reason the third moment in the struggle over need is attention to securing (or withholding) the fulfillment of the need and establishes the relationship between their provision and citizens' rights.

On this third point of discussion Fraser (1989) asserts that social welfare systems traditionally prefer to distribute aid as a matter of need instead of introducing the notion of rights among the benefited population, 'precisely in order to avoid assumptions of entitlement that could carry egalitarian implications' (ibid:182). In Fraser's (ibid:183) view, the satisfaction of needs (i.e. the provision of health and education state services) should be translated into citizens' rights, and a critical perspective of the existing social welfare programme has to be 'committed to opposing forms of paternalism [or *asistencialismo*, in the case of Latin American context] that arise when need claims are divorced from rights claims'.

For example, as mentioned on multiple occasions the *Oportunidades* programme provides access to education, nutrition and health care services to the family recipients. These social benefits are already considered citizens' rights in the Mexican Political Constitution²⁶ (Articles 3 and 4 on access to state education and health services respectively, approved in 1917 as a result of the Revolution and currently in force). So all Mexicans, without social or economic distinction, have the right to use the state's social protection services when it is deemed necessary, although other factors such as lack of physical infrastructure and poor quality service have discouraged their use by poor families (see Chapter 5). But because of the regulation of this programme those state services have been reshaped as requirements that poor recipients have to fulfil in order to receive the cash transfers, rather than as citizens' rights (see Chapters 4 and 5).

From a feminist critical perspective the struggle to secure needs provision cannot be restricted to the distribution of social benefits. Other 'institutionalised, andocentric value patterns' based on segregated gender roles and responsibilities tend to assess women's primary responsibilities in 'unpaid and reproductive work' (ibid).

Usually women are the direct recipients of the cash transfers delivered by antipoverty programmes, but they receive the benefit not as individuals but in their social identity as mothers playing their traditional child caregiver role²⁷ (ibid). This reveals aspects of male dominance in the interpretation of the policy recipients, where two different and separated social spheres in women's everyday life – domestic and nondomestic – are assumed and reinforced, and these spheres are women's and men's respectively. A gendered transformative social policy approach should combine the delivery of social protection benefits with recognition of women's social status and should be oriented to promote more cooperative than gendered segregated social spaces of interaction (see Chapter 7). These two dimensions of social policy – the distribution of economic benefits and gender recognition – are discussed in the following section.

Two-dimensional social justice model

As Fraser (2003) states, a gender transformative social policy only can be approached when this includes both the politics of distribution and the politics of recognition. This two-dimensional gender approach brings into the discussion the debate between affirmative action and transformative strategy, both instrumented through state policy interventions in order to

²⁶ For an English translated version see at:

<http://www.juridicas.unam.mx/infjur/leg/constmex/pdf/consting.pdf>

²⁷ Molyneux (2006, 2007) examines how Latin American welfare systems are also deeply rooted in cultural notions of motherhood.

redress social injustices. In general, the distinction between affirmation and transformation applies equally to politics of distribution and recognition; it depends on the type of social injustice to be redressed. While affirmative action aims ‘to correct inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying social structures that generate them [...]’, transformative strategies, in contrast, [are oriented] to correct unjust outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework’. In other words, ‘whereas affirmation targets end-state outcomes, transformation addresses root causes’ (Fraser, 2003:74).

Conditional cash transfers (CCT) programmes such *Oportunidades* provide an example of the implementation of affirmative action. The affirmative action applied in this programme is oriented to compensate for the effects of economic maldistribution and gender misrecognition. In the specific case of Mexico, CCT programmes were first implemented in the 1990s with PROGRESA (see Chapter 4) and the delivery of income transfers aiming to repair the negative outcomes of economic reforms introduced over the past decade. In addition, the *Oportunidades* programme includes two specific gender actions: direct allocation of the cash transfer to the female head of the household (mainly the mother) and extra money in the education grant for girls attending secondary and high school.

Initially cash transfers have a positive economic effect. Generally speaking they increase the income of the recipient household, but in the long term this affirmative distributive remedy tends to have other repercussions. Affirmative action to redress maldistribution simply channels economic aid to the poor while leaving the structural economic causes that generate poverty intact; thus income transfers have to be constantly reallocated. As a result the policy recipients are seen ‘as inherently deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more’ (ibid). So, Fraser (ibid:77) concludes, ‘affirmative approaches not only fail to redress maldistribution; they also intensify misrecognition. Their net effect is to add the insult of disrespect to the injury of deprivation’.

On the other hand, when an affirmative action is applied to gender misrecognition, as in the *Oportunidades* programme, although this creates the positive effect of giving girls full access to education which increases their school attendance, in the long term this affirmative action tends to present a reverse result. As mentioned in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.1) nowadays more girls attend secondary and high school than boys, who tend to be more predisposed to drop out of school to join the labour market. This is because this affirmative action does not resolve the structural conditions that cause children to give up school (see Chapter 5).

In the case of women being deliberately selected as the direct recipients of the cash transfer and therefore as the main connection between the state and the family, when they and their families have to fulfil the educational, nutritional and health requirements of this programme,

far from promoting cooperative gender patterns of interaction based on women's equal participation in the public sphere (economic, social, cultural and political), it tends to reify the women's social identity as mothers and caregivers (see Chapter 7).

At ground level of the policy process, the state interventions encounter social structures such as community arrangements and conjugal and parent-child relationships. These social structures tend to be hierarchical and are underpinned by moral discourses and through them, social status is given and power is mobilised. This leads to a discussion of the elements of control in the hierarchical institutions that normatively determine the practices by which resources are allocated and the tasks and responsibilities assigned. The latter are reflected in gendered segregated patterns of everyday household organisation (this includes modes of cooperation amongst *Oportunidades* recipient households to fulfil the requirements of the programme) and arrangements of social space (see Chapter 7).

The moral character of sex-divided patterns of interaction amongst community and household members, where men and women's roles and responsibilities are clearly differentiated and they have a considerable number of separate interest and activities (Scott and Marshal, 2005:588), and their possible transformation or reinforcement via social policy interventions, brings to the discussion the notion of power, this time examined through the lens of the concept of empowerment proposed by Molyneux (2008).

Before proceeding to define empowerment (Molyneux, 2008), it is relevant to highlight the idea that women's empowerment has been already considered in antipoverty programme design; however, its definition tends to be imprecise (*ibid*). Often the term 'empowerment' tends to be described as 'changes that take place largely at the micro, subjective level, focusing on individual and attitudinal transformations such as a growing sense of self-esteem [...], rather than on acquiring the conditions necessary to achieve sustainable security and autonomy' (*ibid*:42). Molyneux (*ibid*: 44) proposes a more extended definition of empowerment oriented to understanding the multi-dimensional transformative process that enlarges women's life chances and choices:

...the acquisition of (assets) that have the potential to assist women in achieving autonomy (legal and material), equality (social and personal, ie status and self-esteem) and voice and influence (over decisions that affect their lives). (*ibid*: 45)

The notion of empowerment explained above has been partially absorbed to some extent by CCT programmes 'designed to tackle women's poverty in a sustainable way by providing education, (health and nutritional social benefits)' (*ibid*: 44). But as Molyneux (2006, 2008) and other authors note (inter alias Adato et al, 2000; Chant, 2008; Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2009), empowerment is not confined to the provision of material benefits, as it also depends on changes in gender relations.

The previous discussion presents evidence of the narrow vision of women's empowerment and the pragmatic manner in which a gender perspective has been incorporated in the design of antipoverty programmes. As Chant (2008) and Molyneux (2006, 2008) assert, the inclusion of women in CCT programmes has secured their access to material goods such as education, health and nutrition benefits. But in terms of social status, women's main social role is still informed by past gendered patterns of interaction, and consequently their primary responsibilities remain in the family.

This connects with the earlier discussion about the politics of need interpretation, in which Fraser (1989) stresses male dominance in the interpretation of women's needs in the welfare system. Often welfare systems assume and reinforce two different and separate social spheres in peoples' everyday life – domestic and nondomestic – and these are women's and men's spheres respectively (*ibid*). Therefore along with the implementation of empowerment as the central concept for the empirical discussion about the gendered transformative character of CCT programmes, it is relevant to highlight the specific contribution of feminist critical theorists, in this case Fraser (1989, 2003), to the discussion of power and gender equality.

According to Fraser's (1989) theoretical approach, the distribution of material benefits such as the *Oportunidades* cash transfers also involves a social meaning, actively constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by the social actors through routine practices. In the case of CCT programmes, their design is still dominated by economic considerations, hence gender equality tends to be acknowledged in terms of the distribution of cash transfers and human capital benefits while the programmes deflect attention from women's other social and cultural disadvantages.

Chapter 7 in this thesis pays particular attention to examining the extent to which state interventions, originally designed to enhance the status of their recipients, have contributed to transforming, if not reinforcing, patterns of segregated gender interaction at community and household level.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Epistemology

This research is grounded in a social constructionist and feminist epistemological approach. The core idea of social constructionism is that knowledge is derived from and maintained by social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Individuals and groups participate in the creation of their social reality, and so reality is socially constructed. In this research, the construction of knowledge in the state policymaking process relies more on the everyday policy interface between groups and individuals than on the outcome of the distribution of material and symbolic benefits. Consequently state policy, as a socially constructed process,

is seen as an ongoing, dynamic process reproduced by people acting on their interpretation and knowledge of it.

As Hacking (1999) notes, the social construction of knowledge is often applied not only to social facts but also to perceptions and interpretations. In the case of the policymaking process, and more specifically the *Oportunidades* programme, the social construction of the female recipients and their children as the main policy recipients of this programme does not only rely on the fact that they are poor. Rather, the shared knowledge among the state policy actors – state officials, local actors and policy recipients – exposes the way in which a particular perception of poor families' needs has been shaped by moral discourses with class, gender and age distinctions embedded in social structures of power.

Furthermore, 'if knowledge is socially constructed then it is unavoidably gendered' (Jackson, 2006:530), and 'gender influences what we take to be knowledge' (Anderson, 2005:188). In this research the knowledge among the state policy actors is shaped not just by their constructions of gender: their social class position also informs their understanding of the policymaking process. This class and gender differentiation in the ways knowledge is constructed has led to the combination here of a social constructionist approach with a feminist epistemological stance.

The feminist epistemological stance claims that whether intentionally or unintentionally, the subordinated, and more specifically women, have systematically been denied as agents of knowledge (Harding, 1987:3). In this research, the different perceptions and opinions on the problems regarding the subordinated (in this case, *Oportunidades* programme policy recipients), expressed either by the dominant voices of the state officials or by those of the recipients (and non-recipients) have the same value. However, most of the empirical accounts presented in this thesis emerge from women's everyday life experience in different hierarchical social domains (state institutions, community and households).

Socially-constructed conceptions and norms regarding gender and class position are revealed not just through discussion of the elite's perceptions of poor people's behaviour that inform state policy design but also through the moral discourses of obligation and sanction played out in policy's frontline implementation, and the way policy recipients (and non-recipients) understand and adopt a particular position in their everyday negotiation with the state and in their social contexts (community and household). This includes not just the state policy recipients (both women and men), but also the institutional actors involved in the delivery of the social policy benefits and the researcher as well; this latter leads to the problem of epistemological reflexivity.

Epistemological reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the whole research process (design, data collection, forms of analysis and its interpretation) and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside' the subject matter while conducting research (Jackson, 2009; Pillow, 2010). Bourdieu (1998:127-140) notes how the 'scholastic point of view' unconsciously alters the object of study. He insists that researchers need to conduct their research with conscious attention to the effects of their own position, their own set of internalised structures, and how these are likely to distort or prejudice their objectivity (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:68-70). In methodological terms, reflexivity introduces the idea that the researcher's identities – in terms of gender, class and other axis of social difference – and positionality affect the data collected (Jackson, 2009).

The researcher is not seen as objective, value-free and neutral but as having *positionality*, which is understood as social, cultural, political, economic and historical location (Harding, 2005:229-231; Jackson, 2006:533). As Harding (2005:231) notes: 'Understanding ourselves and the world around us requires understanding what others think of us and our beliefs and actions, not just what we think of ourselves and them'. In practical terms, this means that the accounts collected from the interviews conducted with *Oportunidades* programme state officials, local authorities, recipients and non-recipients (mostly female) were, in many ways, influenced by their perception of me.

As a female outsider I tended to relate more to the women than to the men in the research setting and it was easier to develop a trusting relationship with the former, while with the latter it took a little longer. Apart from being a woman conducting research in a setting where gendered segregated patterns of socialisation are still evident (see Chapter 7), another reason that can explain my closer relationship with female respondents is directly connected to the subjects explored in the household questionnaires and interviews. Most of the themes were oriented to exploring different patterns of interaction between *Oportunidades* programme recipients and state authorities in fulfilment of this programme's requirements (see Chapters 5 and 6), and to everyday household organisation (see Chapter 7). Such subjects are perceived as women's care responsibilities (or 'female topics' as some of the interviewees, women included, commented).

My background as a civil servant for a period of over 10 years also played a relevant role, especially as part of my work experience was directly related to other social transfer programmes implemented in Mexico (*Solidaridad* and *PROCAMPO* programmes). In my interviews with Mexican state authorities, my interviewees' tended to identify me as one of them, and this allowed me to gain access to more in-depth narratives related to state policymakers' perceptions and interpretations of poor families. In contrast, in the research

setting I could feel that the same work experience led some of the household interviewees to view me as *Oportunidades* programme staff, which may have influenced their responses.

However, I am conscious of the fact that living in the research setting for nine months and continuously attending different *Oportunidades* activities organised by the programme's frontline implementers allowed me to build a relationship of trust with the female recipients and non-recipients who agreed to participate in this case study, and particularly with the *vocales*, who after months of our spending several hours a day together felt relaxed about my presence in the community and started to act more freely at meetings and in other activities where we met, and to answer my questions more openly.

My closeness to the local implementers of *Oportunidades* (*vocales*, doctor, nurse and teachers) and its female recipients and non-recipients directly influenced the design of this research, therefore the main empirical discussion presented in this case study emphasises the frontline policy interface (including community and household) more the high-level policy design.

The researcher's positionality is often associated with the social and political context in which the research is conducted, but feminist reflexivity goes a step further and also considers the personal subjectivity of the researcher (Jackson, 2006). This requires the researcher to be 'critically conspicuous' about how his/her own position and interest influences all stages of the research process (ibid:535). 'The ability to "disclose" one's own subjectivity and write "unshackled" depends upon the researcher's ability to mark where her (him) self ends and another begins through the use of self-reflexivity' (Pillow, 2003:182). This means that researchers must be explicit about their own predisposition and feelings that emerge during the field research (Jackson, 2006).

As a Mexican woman brought up in a gendered, hierarchical society, I cannot get away from my own experiences of exclusion and dislocation, but at the same I am conscious of the privilege of being an educated person who has grown up in an upper middle-class family. Yet precisely because of the fact that there are differences in terms of social and economic status, educational background and work experience between myself and the respondents – but also some cultural proximities, as I point out later – I tended to have a better understanding than the participant of the topic we discussed, and this forced me to recognise that my own subjectivities may have influenced their responses, and on some occasions – although unintentionally – also challenged them. For instance, sexist or classist comment played out by some local authority or male community member during the conduction of an interview or informal conversation.

As Jackson (2006) asserts, not all knowledge needs to be rational: emotions are also a significant element in feminist epistemologies. They allow the recognition of both differences and commonalities between researcher and respondents. When emotions are brought into the discussion, the smokescreen of impartiality and objectivist neutrality that supposedly prevents the researcher from contaminating the data (and, presumably, vice versa) is removed (England, 1994:243), but they induce a more self-reflexive attitude on the researcher's side and lead to exploration of the feelings that emerge in his/her interaction with the respondents. In this research it is possible to identify the role of emotions in the conduct of different household-level interviews in the field. For instance, there is an account by a female *Oportunidades* programme recipient in which she describes her childhood living with her mother, who was suffering from a chronic neurological disorder. Her narrative was very significant to me. I never questioned any of her statements and always perceived her as a trustworthy person. I think that I believe her accounts – and also identify with her – due to having had a similar childhood experience. In contrast to this, in other interviews conducted with female respondents, especially those who portrayed themselves as sweet, passive and powerless, with no agency and completely subordinated to any representative of the hierarchical structure (i.e. their husband or a state authority), I need to recognise that despite conducting the interviews with respect and understanding there were moments of lack of empathy between myself and the respondents.

From a feminist perspective, recognising the fractured and often contradictory subjectivities between researcher and interview respondent offers a reflection about the active role of the research participants and the fluctuating nature of the power in the conduct of the interviews (Luff, 1999). A clear example of this is described in Chapter 5 in the discussion about 'the necessary pose of the powerless' surrounding the calculated behaviour of *Oportunidades* programme recipients in their interaction with state institutions in fulfilling the programme's requirements.

3.3.2 Ethical concerns in the fieldwork process

Emotions bring into play some ethical and methodological issues associated with how rapport is gained, maintained and used in qualitative interviews. Rapport can be 'instrumental, hierarchical and non-reciprocal', and feminist epistemologies are concerned with the broader analogies between emotions and 'doing' rapport that researchers perform in their relationship with respondents by simulating empathy or friendship to make the other feel good (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002).

In this research, my Mexican *mestizo* and Catholic background gave me cultural proximity (i.e. sharing knowledge about food and participating in the organisation of patron saint

festivities) with the respondents – especially the women – that allowed me to minimise the social and economic distance between us and establish rapport and trust with them. Moreover, throughout the fieldwork period I was, and behaved as, a genuine and straightforward person. For the most part, my interaction with all the respondents was reciprocal, based on empathy and mutual respect, and I often shared knowledge with those who agreed to participate in this study (i.e. life experiences with female respondents and work experiences with state authorities).

All the people invited to participate in this case study (key informants, focus group attendees and household-level interview respondents) were informed that they had the right to refuse to participate or to end their participation. Hence all the participants joined this study on a voluntary basis. People who were reluctant to take part, even though they were constantly invited (especially non-recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme), were not included. The participants also knew that they had the right to decline to answer any question and they were never pushed to talk about topics that they felt uncomfortable discussing.

In all cases the informants' consent to participate in this research was obtained verbally (and also, in most cases, recorded at the beginning of each interview and focus group session). The participants were all informed about the purpose of this research and assured that the data would be treated anonymously. As a result, all the names in this research are fictional, and the names of key informants have been omitted and their position in the state government office deliberately not specified.

Ideally there should be reciprocity, as a form of recognition and gratitude, with participants in a research project. The researcher is indebted to the participants for sharing their experiences, so he/she must give to them something in return. However, reciprocity should fit within the constraints of the ethics of research and of maintaining the role of researcher (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002; Scheyvens, et al., 2003).

In my case, none of the participants received any economic compensation or promise of help related to the *Oportunidades* programme in exchange for attending interviews or focus groups, such as with submitting an application to join the programme on their behalf²⁸. To express my gratitude for their time spent in this study I always took some food (either cooked by myself or bought at the local market) to the households interviewed or offered snacks and soft drinks to focus group attendees.

²⁸ It is also relevant to clarify that also I was never asked for any kind of help related to the *Oportunidades* programme by anyone of the household interviewees or focus group discussion participants, whether recipients and non-recipients.

Generally speaking I always tried to give something to the community members such as taking time to help them out (e.g. taking photos at some of the events organised in the research setting, donating blood to one of the female participants who faced a medical emergency during the time of the household interviews), and by being a good listener, especially with female participants in household interviews, particularly when they spoke about crucial moments in their life.

3.3.3 Field research design

In order to gain in-depth understanding of the social construction of moral discourse in the social policy interfaces and the everyday life of the *Oportunidades* programme policy recipients and non-recipients. The fieldwork was restricted to one rural setting (described below).

The reasons for designing the field research as an ethnographic case study were as follows: first, this type of case study ‘imparts concreteness to otherwise abstract events’; and second, it allows the capture of everyday life events as they occur, the context and circumstances surrounding them, and ‘the principle underlying the beliefs or behaviours’ of all the actors involved (Mitchell, 1984:237).

Considering that the *Oportunidades* programme operates nationally and that Mexican society presents historical endemic patterns of class and gender inequality, this case study could have been conducted in several places in the country. Nonetheless, as Nuitjen (2003:20) suggests, the economic, social and cultural dynamics in rural Mexico can only be understood by taking into account migration to the United States and the increasingly transnational lives of the members of rural communities. As a result, I considered it relevant to examine the everyday policy interfaces of this programme in a context where male international labour migration to the US is widespread (this international migration context has given specific empirical accounts discussed in Chapters 5 and 7). For this reason the state of Michoacán, located in the western-centre of Mexico (see Map 3.1), was deliberately selected for the field research. According to the last national census (INEGI, 2000), around 4% of the Mexican population born in this state is working in the US, and it is the largest recipient of remittances from the US with over 10% of all remittances sent from the US in 2009 received by families in Michoacán²⁹ (BANXICO, 2009).

Selection of the research setting

Initially, six communities were visited during a pre-fieldwork exploratory trip conducted between June-August, 2006. These were the communities that the local authorities allowed

²⁹ In 2009, remittances sent from the U.S. to Mexico amounted to over 20 million dollars.

me to visit. As previously mentioned, the threat of drug violence in Michoacán has increased since 2006, and in consequence the area that it was possible to visit was mainly limited to the central north of the state around the capital city of Morelia.

As explained above, the decision to carry out the field research in just one community had been taken in advance. With this intention, the six communities visited were found to present similar cultural and socio-economic characteristics: rural, mestizo, and with two main sources of income: agriculture and remittances from the US.

The reason for choosing a rural context for this case study was mainly based on the fact that the Oportunidades programme mostly operates in this setting (seven out of ten recipient households are located in rural areas). The decision to work with mestizo rather than indigenous communities was basically because this research directs attention to the moral discourses of class and gender governing access to social protection; including an indigenous group would have made it necessary to consider ethnicity as a third element of analysis in this case study. This latter aspect goes beyond the main focus of this research.

Since the six communities visited have similar characteristics, the final selection of research setting was mainly based on logistic considerations such as: the good location of the community and transportation facilities, to save time for travelling to diverse locations to collect secondary data and conduct interviews with key informants. The other aspect taken into account was the good rapport established with the local population and authorities.

The research setting is an *ejido* community founded in 1935 (DOF, 1936). The *ejido* is a land tenure system that combines communal ownership with individual use, as explained below. The fact that this rural community is an *ejido* was not a determinant of its selection. However, this specific situation has given this case study two concrete instances for class and gender analysis: the distinction between male and female faenas and gendered the arrangements of social spaces (see Chapter 7).

The ejido system

The research setting is one of the 30,322 ejidos and communities founded by the Mexican federal government around the country after the Revolution of 1910.³⁰ This land tenure system is a communal resource-holding institution which consists of cultivated land,

³⁰ The *ejido* form of land tenure was common practice during the Aztec rule in Mexico (called *Chinalcalli* or *Calpulli*), and was replaced by the *encomienda*, a quasi-feudal land system implemented during the Colonial period and re-established at the beginning of the 20th century as a result of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), when masses of landless peasants demanded 'land and liberty' from the state. As part of this social demand, large landholdings were expropriated and extensive land reform took place between 1917 and 1992 (Katz, 1982; Morett-Sánchez, 2003; Nuitjen, 2003).

pastureland, other uncultivated land and a residential area. In most cases the cultivated land is divided into separate family holdings, which before the land reform of 1992 could not be sold, rented out or mortgaged, although it could be handed down to heirs (Morett-Sanchez, 2003).

In the 75 years between 1917 and 1992 103 million hectares (52 percent of the 196 million hectares that make up Mexico's territory, including 56 percent of its agrarian land and 70 percent of its forests) were distributed to 3.5 million *ejidatarios* and communal landholders living in the country (Perramond, 2008).

In 1992 a reform of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution and new agrarian legislation opened the way for the privatization of land in the *ejido* sector. This land reform was followed by PROCEDE (Program for Certification of Ejidal Rights), a voluntary programme in operation until 2006. The aim of this program was to regularise land tenancy and define clear property rights in the *ejidos* and agrarian communities, in addition to endowing millions of peasants with title deeds to these rights (ibid). During its implementation approximately 92.2% percent of all *ejidos* and communities—28, 757 agrarian nuclei— were certified;³¹ the remaining *ejidos* either rejected the program or are still in dispute over boundaries and inequity in access to land (Assies, 2008; Perramond, 2008).

Although the 1992 land reform allowed the privatization of communal resources, few extensive privatization schemes have taken hold in the *ejidos* (Morett-Sanchez, 2003; Perramond, 2008). While the majority of the agrarian nuclei have accepted some level of PROCEDE, the process of actual titling has covered only 0.27 percent of the surface area. According to the *Secretaria de la Reforma Agraria* (SRA) (Ministry of Agrarian Reform), only 0.43 percent of the *ejidos* have adopted full ownership of only 0.94 percent of the social sector's surface area (Assies, 2008); most of these are situated in peripheral urban areas, and the *ejidos* are interested in selling their land for a profit (ibid). Authors such as de Ita (2006:158) and Nuitjen (2008) explain that despite some government and international agencies such as the World Bank convictions that the *ejidatarios*' lack of interest in titling their properties is based on the fact that private property is subject to taxes, this situation can also be related to other cultural and historical criteria. For instance, in the specific case of the research setting, on several occasions *ejidatarios* explained me how their fathers, uncles and other relatives had fought to obtain land and found the *ejido* 72 years ago (fieldwork

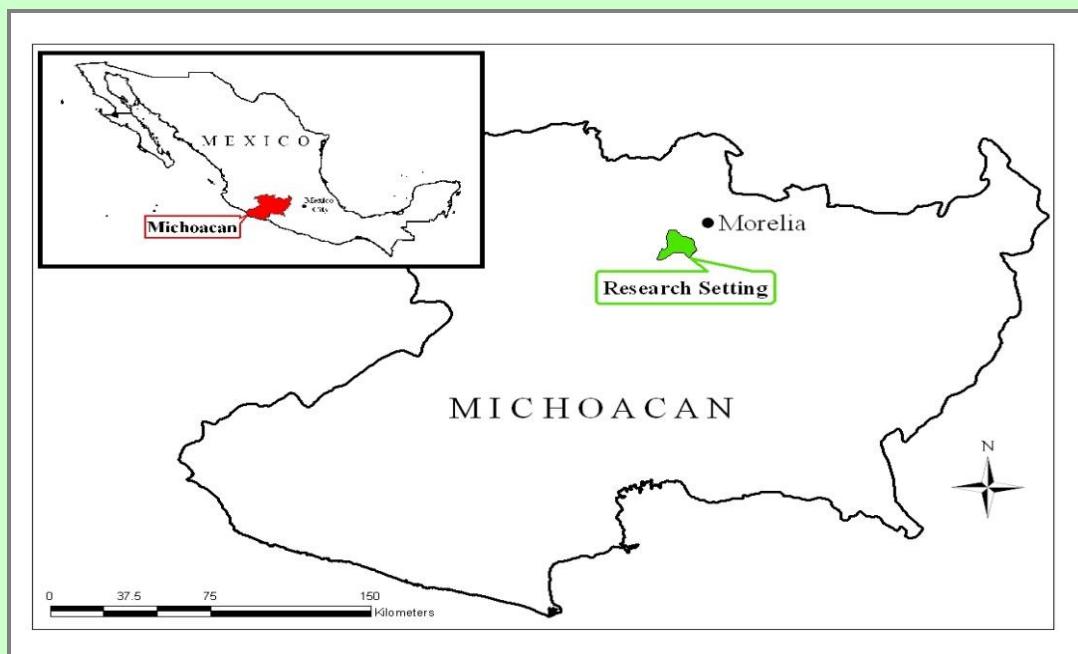
³¹ Information retrieved from the Registro Agrario Nacional (RAN) (National Agrarian Registry) see at : http://www.ran.gob.mx/ran/programas_sustantivos/ran_procede.html (Consulted 07/06/11)

diaries).³² For them, land is not merely a commercial resource: rather they see it as a social space in which their identity is formed and re-created (ibid; Nuijten, 1998).

Location of the research setting

The research setting is a community in a municipality³³ in the central north of the state of Michoacán, 25 km from the capital city Morelia (see Map 3.1, below).

Map 3.1: Geographical location of the research setting



Source: Based on ESRI shape file format (retrieved 08/06/10 from <http://www.maplibrary.org/stacks/Central%20America/Mexico/index.php>)

The *ejido* has a total land area of 987 hectares (ibid) which is mostly used for agriculture (generally corn and oat crops) and forestry.³⁴ Male wage-labour migration to the United States has been adopted since the 1960s as part of the diversification of household livelihoods. Nowadays US remittances represent an important source of family income (Wiest, 1973, 2006).

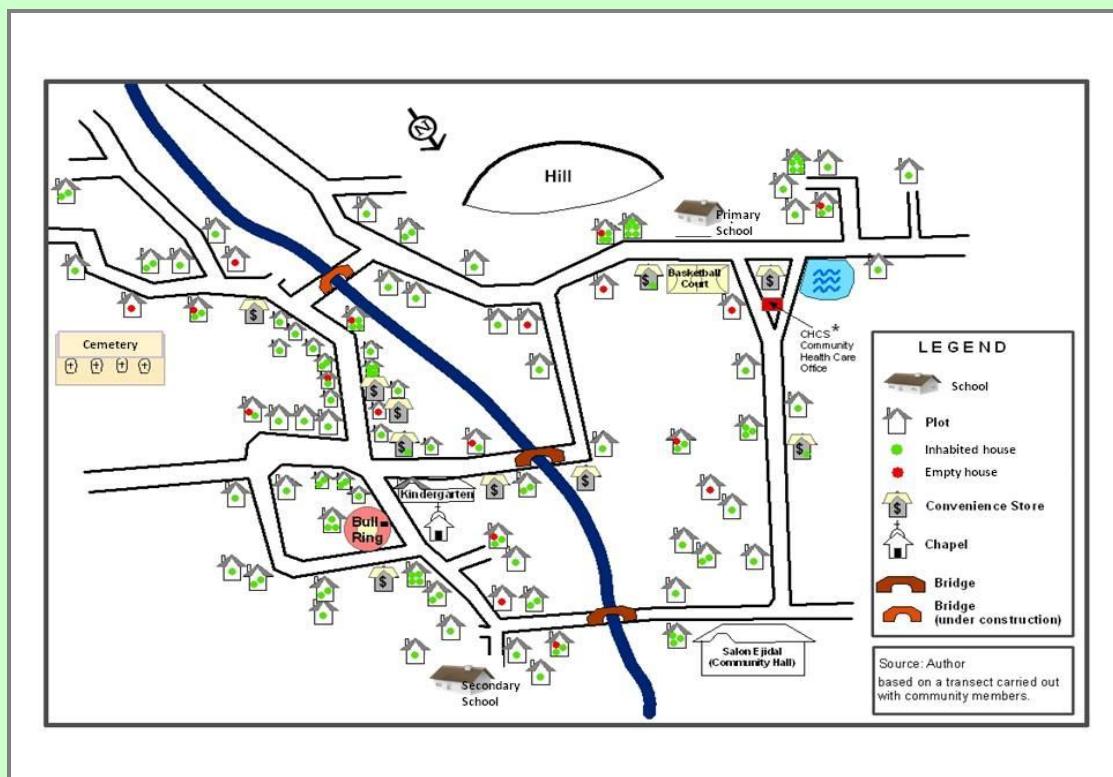
The *ejido* has a residential area inhabited by 548 people (CONAPO, 2000; DOF, 1936) comprising 135 houses, 18 of which were uninhabited when the field research was conducted (see Map 3.2, below)

³² Data collection methods are detailed later on in this chapter.

³³ Michoacán is divided into 113 municipalities.

³⁴ Data collected from the local government office (pre-fieldwork; July-August, 2006).

Map 3.2: *Ejido* residential area



* This office is currently closed. The monthly *Oportunidades* meeting attended by the *vocales* and recipients is conducted outside the building.

The residential area is provided with basic infrastructure services such as a kindergarten and primary and secondary schools, electricity and water.³⁵ In the past there was a community healthcare service (CHCS) (see Map 3.2, above): however, by the beginning of the field research this office had closed. There were 102 households receiving the benefits of the *Oportunidades* programme (around 9% of the 1,150 family recipients in the municipality) at the time of my research.³⁶

The above description of the research setting suggests that this small place has little to recommend it as a case study location. However, as Scott (1985:27; also quoted in Nuitjen 2003:20) proposes, the ‘ordinariness’ of a place is also relevant in field research. In fact by examining the most ordinary everyday life events at a research site and not just its crucial moments it is possible to say something meaningful about the policy discourses and practices (in this specific case with class, gender and age distinctions) in different spaces of social interaction (state services, community and households) (Nuitjen, 2003: 20-21).

³⁵ Data collected from the *Asamblea Ejidal* (pre-fieldwork; July-August, 2006)

³⁶ Data collected from the local government office (pre-fieldwork; July-August, 2006). (See also http://www.oportunidades.gob.mx/Portal/wb/web/padron_de_familias_Op) (Accessed 30/07/09).

Data collection methods

As Harding (1987:2) notes, a ‘method of inquiry’ is a technique for (or a way of proceeding in) gathering evidence. In social science most of the evidence-gathering techniques fall into one of the following three categories: ‘listening to (or interrogating) informants, observing behaviour, or examining historical traces and records’ (ibid). In this research, all the field data methods fall into these categories.

However, as Harding (ibid) proposes, the difference lies in how the methods are carried out. As already mentioned, this research focuses on the moral dimensions inscribed in social policy discourses and norms governing access to social protection. This involves multiple levels (national, state, community and household) of social policy analysis and multiple data collection methods implemented in two different stages. In the first stage I organised three focus group discussions with community members and applied 103 household questionnaires. During the second stage I interviewed 7 *Oportunidades* programme state officials (key informants) working at different levels of the policymaking process and carried out 30 in-depth household case studies (including 5 rounds of semi-structured interviews with household recipients and non-recipients of the programme).

As mentioned above, 102 of the 135 households in the research setting were beneficiaries of the *Oportunidades* programme at the time of fieldwork. This is not atypical. When this situation was discussed in the semi-structured interviews conducted with two authorities of this programme working at the national and state offices (key informants 3 and 5), both mentioned that in the communities where this programme is operating (specifically in rural contexts) on average eight out of ten households tend to be included in it. This is reflected in the data collection methods implemented at community and household level, where around 75% of the participants in the focus groups, household questionnaires and in-depth case studies were *Oportunidades* programme recipients.

The data collection methods and the objectives addressed by each are included in Table 3.2, below and explained in more detail in subsequent subsections.

Table 3.2: Data Collection Methods and Objectives

Data Collection Methods	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semi-structured interviews with <i>Oportunidades</i> programme authorities working at the design level of the policymaking process (national and state level offices), and in frontline operation (doctor at the LHCS; director of a secondary school; <i>enlace municipal</i>; <i>vocales</i>) - <i>Oportunidades</i> programme official documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore the moral dimension that operates in the state social policy governing access to social protection. Look into the class, gender and age discourses implicitly embedded in the conceptual design of the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme targeting the mechanism, co-responsibility and conditionality.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Household questionnaires (section 6 : Engagement with state social protection services). - Focus group discussion with community members - Semi-structured interviews with <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipient and non-recipient households (first round) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examine <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipients' perceptions of state services (education and health care) and how these perceptions affect the way they interact with the state institutions. Bring into discussion their experiences and opinions based on their recent use of the services and, based on these experiences, under which circumstances they tend to use state services and when they would rather use a private service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semi-structured interviews with <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipient households (first round) - Fieldwork diary notes (observation, listening and informal conversations with the <i>vocales</i> of the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand how local actor's aspirations and interests influence the operation of the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme at its ground level of implementation. Focus attention on the mechanisms of intermediation between the state and policy recipients that have emerged as unintended consequences of everyday policy implementation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male and female focus group discussions - Household questionnaires (section 1, Household Composition and section 4: Engagement with Local Community) - Semi-structured interviews with <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipient and non-recipients (second to fifth rounds) - Informal conversations with community authorities and <i>vocales</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examine how social institutions and community arrangements have been adapted (or reinforced) over the last ten years since the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme was first implemented in the community. Looking at the gender and age discourse and practices (roles and responsibilities) informing the <i>faenas</i>' and households' forms of organisations

Focus Group Discussions

The aim of the focus groups was to gain a better understanding of the gender and age patterns in social interactions with state institutions and community engagements amongst rural households. Some of the topics explored in the discussion group sessions were opinions and perceptions of the quality of state services (educational and state health care) provided in the locality and how those affect their interaction with the state institutions, and changes perceived in the community since the *Oportunidades* programme was introduced. The focus groups also explored the livelihood strategies and *faenas* implemented in the community, with

an emphasis on roles and responsibilities distributed amongst household and community members and how these have been affected over the last decade (see Annex I).

Three focus groups were organised with *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipients, each with 12 to 15 participants. Two of the groups were attended by women only. The ages of the first group of attendees varied between 18 and 25, all of whom were single. In the second group, the women were all married and aged between 25 and 45. The third focus group consisted of married men aged between 30 and 55. On average each session lasted about an hour. All were recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis. The data collected from the focus groups contributed to the empirical analysis presented in Chapters 5 and 7.

It was not possible to organise a fourth focus group with men aged 18 to 25 because at the time only three young men were living in the research setting, two of whom were illiterate and both had a hearing impairment. The absence of young men in the research setting is mostly explained by the phenomenon of male migration to the US. In rural Mexico, where international male migration is widespread, when boys reach the age of 15 they tend to move out of their communities to join the US labour market (López-Castro & Díaz-Gómez, 2002).

Household level questionnaires

This data collection method was applied on a census basis, covering the 135 households located in the research setting. Only 103 households agreed to answer the questionnaire.³⁷ The purpose of these questionnaires was to collect data about household characteristics. Most of the questions were closed, and the data collected included household composition (number of members, gender and age, levels of education and main income activity); socio-economic information (housing, property and other assets such as land, cattle, vehicles and household goods); and engagement with state social protection services (whether they participated in the *Oportunidades* programme or not; use of local school and health care services). Some of the data collected from the questionnaire added empirical evidence to the discussion regarding the use of state services (see Chapter 5) and everyday household practices, especially modes of compliance with the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme associated with their domestic cycle (see Chapter 7) (see Annex II).

It is worth emphasising the fact that the household questionnaires were applied at the beginning of the fieldwork period. At that time I had not yet established trust with most of the participants in this case study. As a result, the socio-economic information (Section D; Q14-Q31) and data about migration and remittances (Section F; Q37-Q43) were not consistent

³⁷ As mentioned, 18 household were unoccupied and the other 14 did not agree to answer the questionnaire.

with other data gathered later through other qualitative collection methods (these included observation and informal conversations). For instance, in the case of the socio-economic information, many of the respondents omitted information related to the household's assets such as the cattle that families possess which are released during the summer season and not observable in the stables when the household questionnaire were applied; also cars (that were not within the house when the questionnaires were answered), were not reported by the respondents. In the same manner, the information collected about remittances is not fully reliable since several of the respondents didn't accept there were migrants amongst their family members (especially in the case of their son(s) who tend to spend several years working away but still send money to home on periodical basis). For these reasons (see Chapter 7), I tend to rely more in data analysis relating to the household's economy on information obtained through semi-structured interviews, informal conversation and observation than on the data obtained in the household questionnaires

For these reasons when household socioeconomic information such as income-earning activities and remittances came into play (see Chapter 7) during the data analysis process I relied more on information obtained through the semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and observation than on the data obtained from the household questionnaires.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were one of the main sources of information from the fieldwork. These were applied to two different groups of respondents: *Oportunidades* programme officials working at different levels of the policymaking process and recipient and non-recipient households.

- Key informants**

Five interviews were conducted with different *Oportunidades* programme authorities working at different levels of the policymaking process (national, state and frontline operations) (see Table 3.2, above). Each key informant was the most representative state authority at each level. In addition, three of the four *Oportunidades* programme *vocales* living in the community were interviewed. The *vocal de education* (educational volunteer worker) refused to be interviewed, and as result her perceptions and opinions of the implementation of this programme in the community are missing.

Interview guides were prepared in advance (see Annex III), and initially centred on the three elements informing the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme: the targeting mechanism; co-responsibility and conditionality and their interpretation at different levels of the policy process. However, during the interviews the respondents were allowed to freely lead the discussion to the policy arenas they felt comfortable talking about. As a result, while

the discussion with the *Oportunidades* programme authorities working at the policy design level (national and state offices) was centred on the targeting mechanism and their interpretative discourses around the notion of co-responsibility, in the case of the frontline operators (doctor at LHCS; director of the secondary school; *enlace municipal* and *vocales*) the interviews were basically oriented to discuss the notion of conditionality and its implications in everyday policy implementation (i.e. fulfilment of the programme's requirements; recipient families' difficulties in complying with the regulations of the programme; the role played by frontline operators to accomplish the programme's requirements (sanctions and exceptions to the rule).

- **In-depth household case studies**

The 30 household participants, 23 of whom were *Oportunidades* programme recipients, were selected on a random basis. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in five different rounds covering different aspects of the everyday life of the respondents: i) key life events (childhood, adolescence and adulthood); ii) intrahousehold organisation (roles and responsibilities) and gendered spaces for social interaction (female and male everyday situations and locations where they interact with other community members); iii) household risk events (mostly related to health difficulties) and coping strategies (the main actors or institutions usually involved in their risk responses); iv) patterns of interaction with state institutions (school and local health care services); v) opinions and perceptions of the state services provided at ground level (the discussion was mostly oriented to the LHCS) (see Annex IV).

In the case of the beneficiaries of the *Oportunidades* programme, one round of interviews explored participants' strategies for complying with the requirements of the programme, the difficulties they had experienced in this, and how they had overcome them. In households with a migrant amongst their members, part of the interview discussed how this affected their mode of compliance with the social programme.

The non-recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme were asked if they had been recipients in the past and, according to their answer, the discussion explored other topics in more detail; for example possible causes of exclusion, rejection of their application to be included in the programme and attitudes toward current recipients of the programme.

On average each interview lasted an hour. All were recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis. Since the participants were never pushed to talk about topics that they felt uncomfortable discussing and the level of in-depth discussion was completely up to the respondents, it was not always possible to gain the same level of in-depth discussion with all the participants.

Two interviews in the final round could not be completed. In one case a woman who had agreed to participate in the study cancelled our last meeting as her husband had arrived unexpectedly from the US and she preferred not to continue. In the second case the participant moved out of the community to live with her partner.

Participant observation, listening and informal conversation

Although it is important to recognize the distinction between participant and non-participant observation, in terms of the roles adopted by observers, often ‘this simply dichotomy is not very useful’ (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994: 248). This is because it tends to imply that a non-participant observer plays no recognised role in the research setting. Sometimes researchers can act only as observers, but usually observation involves a certain degree of participation. As Atkinson and Hammersley (*ibid*: 249) argue, ‘in a sense *all* social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it’.

Living in the community for a period of nine months as I carried out the fieldwork as described above, I was constantly engaged in participatory observation amongst the everyday practices carried out by community members. The most relevant data were collected by attending two *Oportunidades* health educational workshops, one in the LHCS and the other in the main square of the local government seat at an event called *Feria Salud Migrante* (or *Migrant’s Health Fair*);³⁸ a meeting conducted by the *enlace municipal* and *vocales*; four *Oportunidades* community monthly meetings attended by the *vocales* and recipients; and two paydays events (see Chapter 6). Attending these events allowed an *in-situ* (or on-site) view of the patterns of interaction between *Oportunidades* programme frontline operators and female recipients in addition to the reported opinions and perspectives collected through the data collected methods described previously.

Listening to and engaging in informal conversation was a constant source of information during the time I spent living in the community. Most of the information I gathered from male inhabitants of the research community came through these two methods. However, the most relevant informal conversations were carried out with the two *vocales* of the *Oportunidades* programme the *vocal de control y vigilancia* (or control and surveillance) and *nutrición* (or nutrition), both related to the activities the programme organised at the community: monthly meetings and the female *faenas*. In the conversation conducted with the *vocal de nutrición* it was also possible to talk about the compliance with nutritional requirements of mothers of

³⁸ In order to fulfil the health requirement of the programme the female recipients were asked to attend health fair event (organised by the local government and the LHCS) instead of the *Oportunidades* educational workshop (accounts of these events are included in Chapter 7).

children under five years of age. These informal conversations and listening were especially relevant during the local elections which occurred during the data collection period.

All of the data collected through participatory observation, listening and informal conversation were documented in the fieldwork diaries for subsequent analysis. Most of the empirical evidence presented in Chapter 6 relating to the role of local actors (*enlace municipal* and *vocales*) at ground level of the policy implementation was collected using these three methods.

3.3.4 Description of the data analysis method

The data analysis used in this research is mainly qualitative and is complemented with descriptive statistics from the household questionnaires.

The data analysis was carried out in two stages. The first stage concentrated on designing and building up a database with the information collected from the questionnaires. The second step focused on qualitative analysis of the information collected from the focus groups, interviews and fieldwork diaries.³⁹

The data analysis summarises the information collected from the household questionnaires and facilitates a tabular descriptive analysis related to the 103 household participants. The descriptive data from the questionnaires complements the qualitative analysis described in Chapter 5 and 7 related to patterns of use of state services and household organisation, respectively. For instance, it analyses household composition (number of members; gender; age); current means of income of household participants; number of households with/without migrants; number of households and members receiving the *Oportunidades* programme cash transfer benefits.

Qualitative analysis

As Green and Thorogood (2004:173) explain, the ‘[a]nalysis of qualitative data relies on both rigour and imagination’. This requires developing rules for integrating the context and the theoretical insights of the dataset in question, and at the same time involves creativity in their interpretation. On one hand, creativity is understood as a process of going backwards and forwards between the data, also described as a ‘constant comparative method’ (ibid:181). This comparison can be done by thinking about the ‘meaning’ of the data, breaking it into discrete events such as happenings and actions/interactions and grouping them under the same characteristics. On the other hand, creativity cannot simply be a spontaneous process: the

³⁹ A variety of *Oportunidades* programme official documents were been included as secondary sources of data.

interpretation of the empirical data has to be reliable and the links between the data and the theoretical claims about them need to be set out clearly (*ibid*).

In this research the qualitative analysis was carried out using qualitative thematic content analysis (QTCA) (Bryman, 2004:392-393) in three main steps: indexing the data collected, identifying the domains and sub-themes, and establishing the relationships between domains.

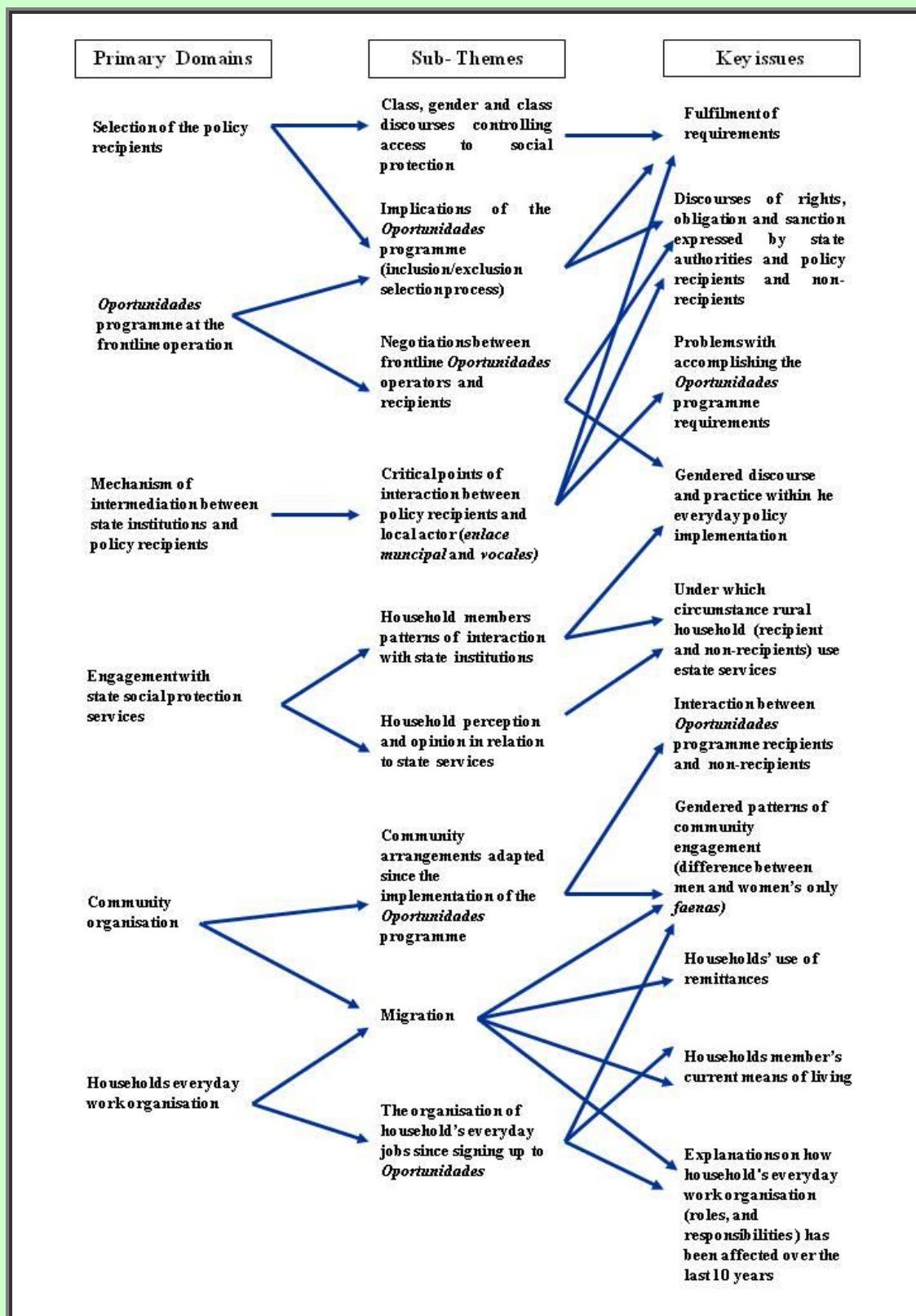
- **Indexing the data collected**

The indexing of the data collected was accomplished following transcript conventions (Green & Thorogood, 2004:177-178). For example: each transcript was given a name and date of collection, the number of the interview (allocated in chronological order) and page number. In order to make quotation from each easier during the writing up of the analytical chapters, each transcript was ordered by paragraphs, giving a number to each. These paragraph numbers were used during the coding process, when a list of code names was created with the topic discussed in the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. The list of code names was used to identify the primary domains and subthemes of this research, as discussed below.

- **Identifying the primary domains and sub-themes**

The primary domains and sub-themes emerged from the data gathered during the fieldwork. Both were identified from ‘concrete issues raised from the interviewees rather than the linguistic content’ of research participants’ narratives (Atkinson & Abul El Haj, 1996:439). Their identification was completed after reading the transcript information several times. The texts were arranged into primary domains, grouping phrases and paragraphs that emerged from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups discussions, and into diverse sub-themes that represent the topic most important (key issue) to each participant in this research (*ibid*). These topics reflect the perceptions and opinions expressed by the key informants and other participants regarding the questions or themes suggested in the interviews and focus groups discussions. Figure 3.3 presents an example of how this second step of the QTCA was applied to this research:

Figure 3.3: Identification of primary domains, sub-themes and key issues



Source: Based on Atkinson & El Haj, 1996: 440

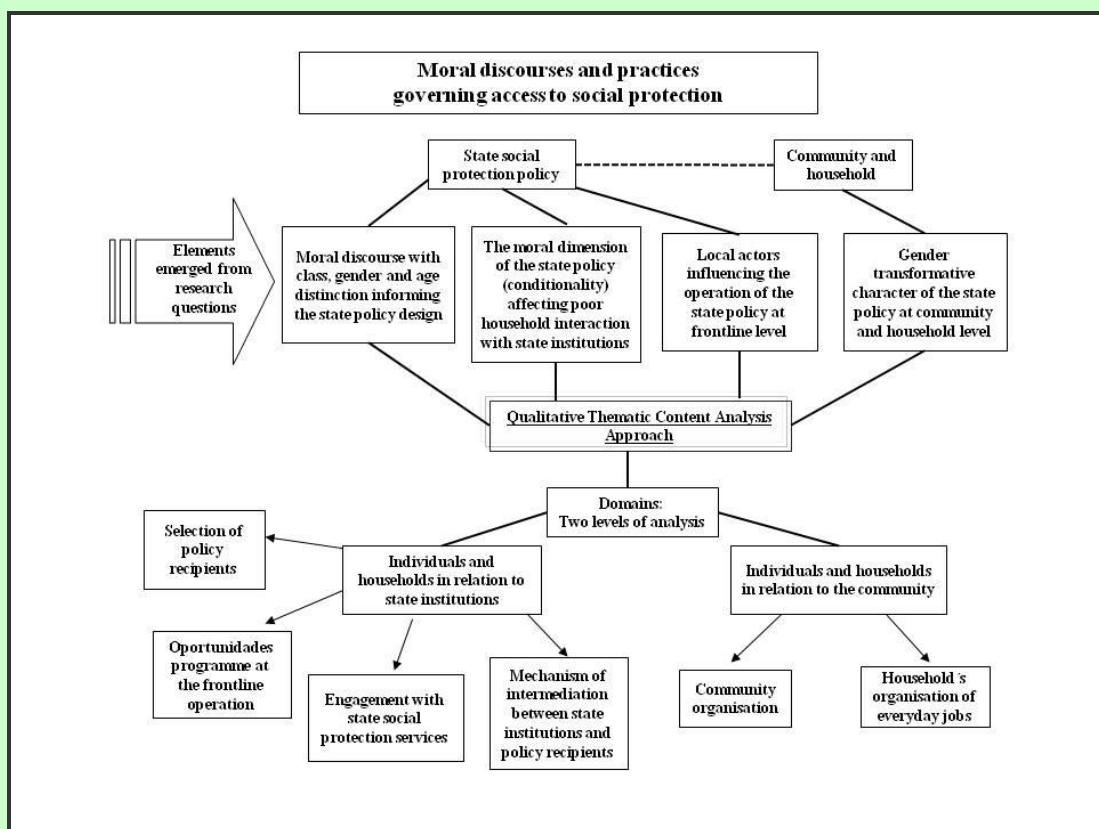
Figure 3.3, above simplifies this second QTCA step. During the entire process of the empirical analysis the data collected were constantly fractured with intense line-by-line

inquires and interpretations, and regrouped into different domains and subthemes (Green & Thorogood, 2004:181).

- **Relationships between primary domains**

The last step in this QTCA approach built up an overview of the data analysed. In order to establish the relationship between the primary analytical domains identified (see Figure 3.3) the information was classified at two different levels of analysis: individuals and household in relation to state institutions, and individuals in relation to their household and community. In this last step it was necessary to identify the most recurrent themes collected in the data fieldwork, and, as Atkinson and Abu El Haj propose (ibid:440), to link them with the conceptual elements contained in the research questions. This process is described in Figure 3.4, below:

Figure 3.4: Relationships between Analytical Domains



- **Further analysis**

Continuing with the principle of 'rigour and imagination' that guided the qualitative analysis of this research, and taking into consideration that QTCA can be as 'simple or sophisticated as is needed' (Green & Thorogood, 2004) depending on how the data analysis is moved beyond the identification of domains and subthemes (coding data) to a more complex and deeper

qualitative analysis, during the empirical analysis it was necessary to continuously go back to the fractured data and review it line-by-line, looking for potential inquiries and interpretations.

Since the qualitative data analysis process tends to be ‘inevitably selective’ (Fairclough, 2003), asking questions with a particular motivation, QTCA involves a substantial degree of interpretation. This means that in this type of analysis there are no hard data: the reliability of the approach depends on logical and well-founded arguments exposed in the empirical discussion in this thesis about the moral discourse (i.e. expression, opinions and perceptions with class, gender and age distinction) in everyday social policy interfaces that govern access to social protection resource (see Chapters 4 to 7). The validity of the empirical argumentation relies on a systematic classification of the information collected, as explained previously.

3.4 Summary

This chapter presents the theoretical and methodological foundations of this research. The first part of the chapter describes the theoretical framework informing the research, which is composed of two different approaches: an actor-oriented perspective and feminist critical theory.

An actor-oriented perspective brings to this research a dynamic approach to the understanding of state policy and social change aimed at analysing in depth the interplay and mutual determination of the internal and external factors informing the policymaking process and the heterogeneous responses from all the policy actors in their everyday policy practices. From an actor-oriented approach it is essential to examine everyday policy practices. This theoretical approach offers the social interface analysis as useful entry to explore encounters between all the policy actors (*Oportunidades* programme state officials, local actors, recipients and non-recipients).

This chapter introduces the three social policy interface analyses that this research focuses on: *dominant discourses in policy interface analysis*, focusing on the dominant discourses at the policy design level informing policymakers that tend to promote moral and normative standpoints about the poor ‘s agency , who are often perceived as passive actors and hence the state has the power to define and satisfy their needs; *policy interface analysis of interlocking relationships and intentionalities of policy actors*, (including policy recipients) in the everyday organisation of state policy; the form and techniques implemented by state policy frontline operators to secure compliance from recipients and the strategies developed by the latter in their everyday interaction with state institutions; and *policy interface analysis of dynamics of conflict, ambivalence and negotiation in emergent structures*, with an emphasis

on the roles of local actors, who also have their own interests (or projects) that affect the state policy process at the front line. These three policy interfaces are explored in more detail in the empirical chapters: Chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively.

Feminist critical theory frames the discussion of the transformative character of the social protection policy implemented in Mexico during the last decade. This theoretical perspective rests on the notion of the ‘politics of need interpretation’ that contributes to the analysis of moral discourse inscribed in social policy design. It offers a two-dimensional social justice model which provides a valuable entry point to examining to what extent antipoverty programmes like *Oportunidades* are sensitive to recognising and therefore enhancing women’s social status and economic autonomy.

From the two theoretical frameworks applied in this research emerged the key concepts of agency, social actor and power, as described in this chapter. These concepts and debates are intertwined, and frame the empirical discussion of this thesis at different stages.

The second part in this chapter discusses the methodology applied to this research. The first section explains the epistemological stance of the research grounded in a social constructionist and feminist epistemological approach, and the following two sections describe the field research design and setting and the data collection and methods used for the empirical analysis.

Chapter 4 THE IMPLICIT MORALITY IN STATE SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY

4.1 Introduction

The aim in this chapter is to understand how state social protection policy is underpinned by moral discourses and practices (values, norms and conventions) that inform policy actors about which social groups (and in these groups, individuals categorised by their gender and age) should be included in or excluded from state social protection policy.

The moral discourses and practices that shape the state's *Oportunidades* programme policymaking process operate at two different levels of intervention: design (national and state-level offices) and implementation (frontline, community and household level), and both are intimately intertwined. Therefore it is important to understand state policy in general by looking at this case study in particular as a dynamic process which involves its constant reshaping by its own internal organisational process, in which policy actors, including recipients, play a role. At the same time it is also influenced by the specific conditions it encounters or creates at the implementation level, where moral discourses and practices may persist and also be transformed or reinforced by policy actors (Long, 2001).

This chapter centres its attention on the moral discourses and practices informing the *Oportunidades* programme policy design. The implicit morality informing the policy design process of the *Oportunidades* programme rests on the notion of the 'politics of need interpretation' (Fraser, 1989). The empirical discussion conducted in this chapter exposes the process by which social policies and practices construct the ideal policy recipients and their needs 'according to certain specific – and, in principle, contestable – interpretations' (ibid:146).

The elite policymakers' authoritative discourses on socio-cultural constructions about 'policy deservers' and the interpretation of their needs shape two different empirical discussions. The first directs attention to the moral discourse implicitly contained in the targeting mechanisms implemented by the *Oportunidades* programme to select its recipients. This empirical discussion is informed by the 'politics of labelling' proposed by Wood (1985, 2007), focused on 'the practices of [elite policymakers'] rationality in classifying need and targeting resources to those needs' (Wood, 2007:18). The second empirical discussion considers the policymakers' interpretative discourses about the cultural habits of the poor (Lewis, 1959, 1970, 1998; Reis & Moore, 2005) that lie behind the introduction of the notions of *co-responsibility* and *conditionality* in the conceptual design of the programme.

The information included in this chapter has been collected from the literature review and official *Oportunidades* documentation, and also includes data collected during the fieldwork through semi-structured interviews with *Oportunidades* programme officials at national and state level. All the information presented here has been analysed using qualitative thematic content analysis (QTCA) (see Chapter 3, subsection 3.3.4).

This chapter is organised as follows: section 4.2 situates morality in context, describing some general characteristics of the *Oportunidades* programme, its origins and main components and the moral discourses underlying the rationale behind policy design. Section 4.3 explores the moral discourses informing the policymaking decision process with regard to the three components informing the conceptual design of this programme: targeting mechanism, co-responsibility and conditionality. The last section summarises the chapter.

4.2 The origins and rationale of anti-poverty programmes in Mexico

4.2.1 The National Solidarity Programme (PRONASOL)

The origins of the anti-poverty programmes currently operating in Mexico can be traced back to the 1980s⁴⁰. PRONASOL (1989-1994) was the first large-scale anti-poverty programme in Mexico and addressed diverse areas of social policy. Some authors such as Cornelius et al. (1994: xi) qualify this programme as ‘a huge, complex and constantly evolving public program’.

The main features of this anti-poverty programme included multiple actions in diverse spheres such as food subsidies; day-care centres; housing programmes; infrastructure for public health services and schools – particularly in remote rural areas with high levels of poverty – and cash transfers for attending school (Cohen, Franco, & Villoro, 2006). This latter element embodied the first steps of the introduction of *conditionality* as a component of Mexican state policy. However this became more explicit in the state’s policy design of PROGRESA and later the *Oportunidades* programme. Section 4.3.3 explores the notion of *conditionality* in depth.

Unlike other, later anti-poverty programmes in Mexico such as PROGRESA (1997-2000) and *Oportunidades* (currently in operation), which are clearly top-down and family-oriented, the

⁴⁰ During the 1970s two anti-poverty programmes were created. PIDER (1973) (The Integral Programme for Rural Development) was established to channel substantial resources to poor rural areas to enhance employment opportunities and social infrastructure (Cernea, 1979). The other programme was COPLAMAR (General Coordination Agency for the National Plan for Marginalised Zones) which operated from the late 1970s to the early 1980s with the intention of alleviating poverty through general food and services subsidies (Trejo & Jones, 1993). COPLAMAR also provided health services to people living in extreme poverty in remote rural areas, through Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS)-COPLAMAR (1979-1989). This programme has continued operating over the last two decades under the names of IMSS-Solidaridad (1989-2002) and currently IMSS-Oportunidades. Information retrieved 22/01/09 from: <http://www.imss.gob.mx/programas/oportunidades/historia.htm>

state promoted PRONASOL as a demand-driven programme whose anti-poverty action responded to priorities defined by the poor themselves through collective decisions taken in local committees known as *Comités de Solidaridad* (solidarity committees) (Yaschine, 1999: 49-50). The intention to promote PRONASOL as a demand-driven programme was to encourage poor people's community participation through volunteer work. This involved the initial stage of *co-responsibility* as a component of the moral rationale of Mexico's social policy design, where the state and poor members of civil society were encouraged '[to work] together in order to improve the living conditions of Mexicans' (Ontiveros Ruiz, 2005:50). This component is examined in section 4.3.2.

Part of this demand-driven and community-orientated element of PRONASOL was its dependence on *Comités de Solidaridad*, which were intended to prioritise and articulate the demands of the poor in the form of explicit project proposals (Yaschine, 1999). These 5,000 or more *Comités de Solidaridad*, all located in poor urban and rural areas across the country, were responsible for the government-funded projects, and each specialised in one of the diverse areas of action considered by this programme: infrastructure projects, cultural activities and productive projects (Mackinlay, 2004:303-304). In promoting these *Comités de Solidaridad* the state aimed to replicate and play out (at least in discursive terms) moral notions of mutual aid among community members, portraying the state-organised committees as a new version of traditional communitarian arrangements such as the *tequio* in Oaxaca and the *sulaltéquetl* in Milpa Alta, Mexico City, where community members contribute voluntary work to benefit their community (Ontiveros Ruiz, 2005:50).⁴¹ In other words, as Dresser (1994) comments, with PRONASOL the Mexican state attempted to institutionalise the organisational effort that already existed in civil society at the social policy level.

In the moral rationale of the PRONASOL programme, the poor were not perceived by the elite state policy makers as simply passive recipients of state social policy benefits. They were also perceived as producers supported through productive projects such as women's and indigenous productive projects (Dresser, 1994:149). Although PRONASOL reported that 15 per cent of the total resource of this programme was used to back production initiatives such as women's handcraft projects (CCPNS, 1994), the vast majority of policy recipients' participation was concentrated on unpaid public works, building infrastructure such as drainage and roads in poor communities (*ibid*). In consequence this anti-poverty programme had less direct positive impact on the income of the recipients of the programme, than the CCT programmes, currently implemented.

⁴¹ In the particular context of this case study, these free community work arrangements consist of the organisation of *faenas*. The effects of the *Oportunidades* programme on this type of community arrangements are explored in depth in Chapter 7).

Despite efforts by elite groups of the Mexican public bureaucracy to describe PRONASOL as a demand-driven and community-orientated social programme, Dresser (1994) describes the ‘genealogy of PRONASOL’ as a regime legitimatisation strategy that sought to redefine the Mexican state and its relationship with civil society after a period of neo-liberal reforms which reflected the withdrawal of the state from many aspects of the economy. As Dresser (1994) states, the broad-based neo-liberal economic reforms undertaken by the previous National government administration (1982-1988)⁴² affected ‘the reach of the state, the legitimacy of the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*), the composition of the ruling elite, and the organisational abilities of the groups in civil society’ such as the workers’ unions and peasant organisations that had previously been the main beneficiaries of the state during the corporatism period of the 1940s to the early 1980s (*ibid*).

To maintain its legitimacy the Mexican state elite was forced to restructure the terms of its domination by recasting the traditional members of the political patronage regimen as PRONASOL recipients. An example of this transformation within the Mexican political patronage system was the peasant organisations operating in the Mexican countryside, which instead of being the traditional beneficiaries of state protection in the form of subsidies and agrarian reforms became the recipients of PRONASOL benefits such as electricity, scholarships and paved streets (*ibid*; Mackinlay, 2004).

The moral rationale of the PRONASOL programme was ambiguous: it was conceived as a state intervention mechanism focused on providing basic living conditions for the poor, but at the same time it attempted to modify the relationship between civil society and the state by reflecting party political objectives in its centralised and bureaucratic processes, similar to the long-established logic of corporative and electoral clientelism that characterised state social policy in Mexico during the past four decades (Cohen, et al., 2006; Mackinlay, 2004). Dresser (1994:146) remarks that a fundamental and explicit tactic of this programme was to concentrate ‘as much power as possible in the hands of the executive⁴³ in order to channel resources to politically turbulent zones or disaffected groups’ to gain political support. Dresser (*ibid*:159) gives two journalists’ accounts, published in two Mexican newspapers (*La Jornada*, July, 26 1992 and *El Financiero*, July 27, 1992) that claimed that over 12 per cent of

⁴² The previous National government administration (1982-1988) introduced neo-liberal economic reforms focused on the restraint of demand through devaluation and wage reduction. Levels of state intervention were reduced from the state’s previous economic role, with reductions in public expenditure, price liberation of basic products (i.e bean and corn), the privatisation of state enterprises and the liberation of the financial and trade markets (Lustig, 1998).

⁴³ The executive power is headed by the President, advised by a cabinet of secretaries and independent of legislature and judicial power. Source: Mexican Constitution Law, 1917, currently in force. Third Title, Chapter I: on the Separation of Powers (Capítulo I, de la División de Poderes, retrieved 18/12/08 from <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/1.pdf>).

PRONASOL's national budget was channelled to Michoacán state and the deployment of one-fourth of its national promoters to combat the PRD (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*) during the governor race in 1992. She explains that by that time the election in that Mexican state was crucial for the PRI to prove that it had regained its electoral hegemony after the disputed results of the presidential election in 1988, and for the PRD this election was the last chance to re-establish itself as a viable political force (ibid).

As a result of its politicisation at the end of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's administration (1988-1994), PRONASOL was discredited and replaced by the *Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación* (PROGRESA; the Education, Health and Nutrition Programme) from 1997-2000.⁴⁴

4.2.2 PROGRESA

The Education, Health and Nutrition Programme (PROGRESA, 1997-2000) started to be implemented in a wider context of decentralisation as part of a political project known as *Nuevo Federalismo* (New Federalism), during the national government administration of Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (1994-2000) (Rocha Menocal, 2001). Under the *Nuevo Federalismo* initiative, 'political decentralisation was accelerated, with increasing power, authority and resources being transferred from the executive government to authorities at the state and municipal level, as well as to the legislative and judiciary branches of the federal government' (ibid:518).

In view of this New Federalism project, the presidential authority might have been devolved to state governors, municipal presidents and legislators, who would have acquired power in the state policy making decision process. But in fact the decentralisation was a paradox, with the executive government preserving the state policy design within its arena – which was strategic in terms of political control – conveying the bureaucratic day-to-day policy implementation to state and municipal government (ibid). The state's social policy was 'to centralise by decentralising'.

New Federalism transferred two-thirds of the budget and resources formally managed by the Ministry of Social Development (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Social* (SEDESOL)) to states and municipal governments. Rocha Menocal (ibid:519) asserts that 'while in 1995 only 20 percent of SEDESOL's budget was managed directly by the states, and, below them, the

⁴⁴ Before PROGRESA there was a pilot programme in three cities in the south-eastern Mexican State of Campeche called '*Programa de Canasta Básica para el Bienestar de la Familia*' (Basic Food Basket for Family Well-being). The programme was aimed at pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under five years old and was conceived as a cash transfer food subsidy programme. Participants in this pilot programme had to visit their local health centre (LHC) in order to receive economic benefits (Cohen et al., 2006).

municipalities, by 1997 65 percent of SEDESOL's budget had been decentralised'. Currently, around 44 per cent of its total budget is managed at national government level (SEDESOL, 2008b). However, even if the New Federalism project involved a substantial decentralisation of resources, this project was 'something of a chimera' (Ward & Rodriguez, 1999:19) due to the fact that while there was a significant change in the allocation of the welfare budget, federal government officials continued to exercise authority in the design of the social policy and the distribution of the social development resources to states and municipalities (Rocha Menocal, 2001).

PROGRESA, and later the *Oportunidades* programme, represent a good example of this New Federalism project: whilst their designs remain under the control of the National government, the delivery of the programme's health and education services is implemented by state government structures (see Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2). This has had an effect on the coverage and quality of this state service, particularly in rural areas. The World Bank (2004:xi) reports that despite the fact that Mexico 'has reorganised many of its government programmes over the last dozen years, [this] process is far from complete'. Furthermore, even if there is a major expansion in the coverage of state services focusing on the poor, currently the biggest challenge is to improve the delivery of state public services in special education and health (ibid).

PROGRESA was first implemented in August 1997 with 300,000 families in extreme poverty in 3,369 localities in rural areas. The expansion of the programme included 11 phases, and by the end of President Zedillo's administration in 2000 it covered 2.5 million families in 72,345 localities across 31 Mexican states (excluding Distrito Federal) (*Oportunidades*, 2002; Rocha Menocal, 2001; Skoufias et al., 2001).

PROGRESA aimed to be cost-effective by establishing targeting criteria and mechanisms. These targeting criteria are still applied for the selection of the *Oportunidades* programme recipients. The process involves various stages: selection of the localities for high priority attention; a household-level questionnaire applied by a census data collection method in the localities selected; a statistical means test called 'discriminant analysis' to determine the potential recipient families; and last, filtering the list of families selected at a community assembly (Skoufias, et al., 2001) (see Chapter 2).

Authors such as Skoufias, Davis and de la Vega (2001) describe these targeting criteria as a positive factor that contributes to the use of resources more effectively with no discretionary allocation in terms of a political agenda. Yaschine (1999) in her analysis exploring how neo-liberalism became the dominant ideology guiding the design of social policy, asserts that although the emphasis on the 'cost-effective' criteria involves a response to the previous

extremely bureaucratic and time-consuming social programmes in Mexico, the implementation of targeting criteria also represents an ideological shift in the policy rationale. She cites the lack of emphasis on ‘community participation’ as further evidence of this ideological shift and explains that despite the fact that ‘participation’ was mentioned in all PROGRESA official documentation, the elite policymakers considered this a potential source of political manipulation at subnational levels which would lead to loss of credibility, as happened with PRONASOL. Moreover, due to the economic difficulties and political vulnerability of the Mexican context, community participation may have been seen by the government as potential fuel for political mobilisation and opposition. Therefore Mexican social policy discourse became family-focused rather than encouraging community participation (ibid). Those eligible for PROGRESA were families living in extreme conditions of poverty (targeted thorough the above-mentioned criteria), and the *Comités de Solidaridad*, which had been discredited due to the politicisation of PRONASOL, were dissolved.

The introduction of targeting criteria focusing on families living in extreme poverty also represented a shift in the moral commitment of the state in relation to Mexico’s civil society. With the introduction of neo-liberalism in Mexico, extensive untargeted government interventions in economic and social policy were exchanged for a targeting mechanism where the moral imperative of state social policy was to assist poor families who had been left behind in this process of economic liberation (Harris, 2001; Vizcarra, 2002). As suggested in a PROGRESA official document:

Due to the fact that economic resources, abundant as they are, are not always enough to fight poverty, it is essential to make sure that the benefit of these resources go to those who are more in need, and not to those people that are receiving other aid or their economic situation is not urgent. Hence these [targeting] criteria attempt to concentrate more resource among the population who have been identified [as extremely poor]. (Urquiza, Angeles, Mroz, Lamadrid-Figueroa, & Hernandez, 2009:11-12)

Another important element to consider in this transformation of policy discourse is the gender and age distinction that the Mexican state makes within poor families by positioning women, in particular mothers, as key to the success of these social programmes. Although the policymakers insisted that poor mothers be recognised as the claimants of the social protection policies, the actual recipients were in fact their children. In other words, the moral imperative of anti-poverty programmes like PROGRESA (and more recently *Oportunidades*) was based on the social construction of poor children’s needs, with their mothers receiving the entitlements to better fulfil their maternal responsibilities (Molyneux, 2006:427). The social construction of the poor’s needs is discussed later in this chapter.

The election of Vicente Fox (2000-2007) after 71 years of one-party PRI rule was accompanied by efforts to reform existing state institutions along more democratic and

accountable lines. Social justice became a priority of the Fox administration, which recognised that poverty was a multidimensional phenomenon involving human capabilities (especially education and health status), access to infrastructure, income, vulnerability and social status (World Bank, 2004). These multiple dimensions of poverty were taken into account by the Mexican federal government in the design of a new framework called *Contigo* (With You) which, according to the World Bank (*ibid*: xviii) report can be interpreted ‘as an imperfect approximation to the well being approach developed by Amartya Sen, in terms of a person’s freedom (or capability) to pursue a life of their choosing’.

Under the *Contigo* framework, anti-poverty programmes, and in particular CCT, focused on the development of human capabilities among Mexico’s poor population. In view of this PROGRESA, originally restricted to poor rural areas, was modified to extend its coverage to urban and semi-urban areas and relaunched in 2002 under the name *Programa de Desarrollo Humano Oportunidades* (Human Development Opportunities Programme (World Bank, 2004). Apart from its expanded coverage, the *Oportunidades* programme extended the educational benefits from the third year of basic education⁴⁵ to completion of the third year of high school education (US grade 12) (*Oportunidades*, 2002).

The current federal government administration of Felipe Calderon Hinojosa (2006-2012) continues to follow the same welfare formula⁴⁶ (SEDESOL, 2006a, 2007b, 2008a, 2009a). Nowadays the *Oportunidades* programme covers 5.8 million families (see Table 2.1 in Chapter 2).

4.2.3 The main components of the *Oportunidades* programme

The aim and original components of PROGRESA prevail in the *Oportunidades* programme. The aim is to break the cycle of poverty in poor families, and the programme contains both long- and short-term components.

In the long term, this programme addresses three main focal components: education, health and nutrition. In the short term it involves a bimonthly cash transfer in the form of an educational grant (aimed at increasing school enrolment and reducing the school dropout rate) and two further cash transfers to improve the nutrition of recipient families and subsidise their gas and electricity. The cash transfer received by the families increases by around US\$23.00 for every family member over 70 years old (SEDESOL, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2007a,

⁴⁵ PROGRESA’s education benefits extended to the 3rd year of secondary school (US grade 9).

⁴⁶ More recently, *Oportunidades* has been included in a new framework denominated ‘*Vivir Mejor*’ (Live Better), announced by the current National government administration (20006-2012) in April, 2008. To read the press release see:

http://www.oportunidades.gob.mx/prensa/admin_2006_2012/discursos/discurso_24042008.html

2007d, 2008a) (see Table 2.2 in Chapter 2 for detailed information of the maximum amount per month received per family recipient).

The allocation of *Oportunidades* economic benefits is contingent on poor families investing in human capital by sending their children to school and visiting the local health centre for monthly talks and health check-ups, even if they do not present a medical condition (SEDESOL, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2007a, 2008a).

The moral foundation of the *Oportunidades* programme does not differ from that of PROGRESA. Its conceptual design considers three key elements: the targeting criteria and mechanisms and the two principles of co-responsibility and conditionality. All are discussed in the next section.

4.3 The moral foundation of the *Oportunidades* programme

This section explores the moral foundation of the programme, in which the elite policymakers' dominant discourse has socially constructed the 'ideal policy recipient' of the *Oportunidades* programme – the poor, and in this social category, the mother and her children as its direct policy recipients – and the interpretation of their needs (Fraser, 1989). This moral foundation is implicitly embedded in the three key elements considered in the conceptual design of the programme: the targeting mechanism, co-responsibility and conditionality.

The information included in this section was collected through semi-structured interviews with *Oportunidades* programme authorities working at national (Key Informant 3) and state office level (Key Informant 5), and from official documentation related to the normative framework or regulation of the programme.

4.3.1 Targeting mechanism: authoritative discourse on poor's need and policy resources

The targeting mechanism applied to select those eligible for *Oportunidades* involves various stages including the determination of the selection criteria for high-priority localities, a household questionnaire applied in the localities selected and a statistical means test to determine potentially eligible families (see Chapter 2). In discursive terms, these targeting criteria play out the moral commitment of the state to the 'extreme poor' and label them as deservers of this social protection policy (SEDESOL, 2008a).

Key Informant 3 described the methodology used for these targeting mechanisms as 'innovative' and explained them as follows:

This is the first time [the Mexican government] has decided to apply socioeconomic and demographic indicators in the selection of [the recipients] of this programme. In the programme we apply a household-level survey to collect data related to the age [of the household members] and other demographic and socioeconomic information. This information is analysed using a statistical

technique called ‘discriminant analysis’. With this [type] of analysis it is possible to identify whether the household interviewed has the *elements* that determine whether or not it should be included in the programme. In the [*Oportunidades*] programme the households selected must have characteristics that identify them as *extremely poor* [...]. If this is the case, [the household] has to be included in this programme. (Key Informant 3)

The quote above describes how the *Oportunidades*’ targeting mechanism selects its recipients: but it also adds evidence to Vizcarras’ (2002) argument that the moral paternalistic discourses informing state social protection policy implicitly create a social category that differentiates policy ‘deservers’ from ‘non-deservers’.

Contrasting Key Informant 3’s description (above) of the *Oportunidades* programme’s targeted mechanisms with my own fieldwork experience from May 2007 to January 2008 suggests that the socioeconomic information collected through household survey for the purpose of programme targeting may not be accurate. As mentioned in Chapter 3, families tend to omit information about their assets and income, including remittances, which in the context of this research are highly relevant. Moreover, families do not necessary report the existence of migrants among their members, assuming that this could prevent them from qualifying as poor and rule them out as recipients of this CCT programme. The omission of income remittances from survey data-gathering methods questions the nature of *Oportunidades* as a means-tested CCT. . In addition, during the nine months I spent living within the research setting, it was possible to observe that non-recipient households were not always the better-off families in the community and vice versa. For instance, one of the recipient households I interviewed was headed by a man who has a political position as *Regidor Municipal* within the local government. This situation was commented with an *Oportunidades* state level official, Key Informant 5, when he was asked to explain about the possibility that non-poor families might be included in this programme. He responded in the following manner:

In general terms the programme has credibility and it is clear that the majority of its recipients are poor. Case like that you have mentioned (the informant refers to the example above exposed) are the least [...]. Perhaps, some family recipients are not as poor as others that currently do not receive the benefits of the [*Oportunidades*] program; therefore every three years we apply a process of recertification to evaluate if the families previously included in this programme still qualify as eligible. This process ensures that this type of mistakes is corrected. However, I think - and this is a personal statement (the interviewed clarifies)-, that is better to have mistakes of including families that do not qualify as poor, than leave outside of this programme families who are suffering from deprivation (ibid).

Even though this “mistakes of inclusion” in the *Oportunidades* programme selection mechanisms are treated as insignificant and not recurrent by policy designers, the contrasting

accounts I collected during the fieldwork period of this research suggest that differences underlying the policy design discourses and empirical evidences from the grounded level, are more frequent than it has been recognised by the authorities of this programme (see Chapter 7 for more detail).

From a moral perspective, the targeting mechanism ranks poor families according to ‘moral proximities’ (Wood, 1985) that involve some expectations. These expectations inform the design of the state policy in two directions. They define both the ideal poor families that the Mexican state should protect and how these ideal poor families should behave. This argument was reinforced in an interview with another *Oportunidades* programme authority, Key Informant 5, who described the ‘targeting mechanism’ as a ‘points system’:

I would say (the selection criterion) in this programme is like a ‘point system’ which involves a very meticulous survey at household level. However, due to the conceptual design of this programme, the number of children attending the school is relevant to include the families in this programme. That is, if I go and interview a family with two elderly members, let’s say they are around 60 or 75 years old, and then I go and visit a young woman with five children attending school. [In this last case] her husband is not living with her any more or she is a widow. Easily, she is going to *occupy* one of the first places *on the list*. (my emphasis) [...] (ibid).

He also explained how he understood the method used in this targeting mechanism:

I’m thinking, no one else has said this before (he clarifies before expressing his understanding about the method of analysis used in *Oportunidades*’ targeting mechanisms): these [targeting mechanisms] are like a ‘black box’ [he uses this expression to emphasize the complexity of ‘discriminant analysis’ used to select the *Oportunidades* programme recipients] where, from my personal point of view, [state policy] has to give preference to poor families with [...] mothers and their children attending school. (ibid)

In this way it is possible to assert that in the *Oportunidades* programme the ideal policy deservers are selected in advance and the targeting criteria and mechanism only identify their location.

But this targeting mechanism not only directs attention to the selection of the recipients: the policy resources are also targeted to ‘predefine state interventions’ (Fraser, 1989) based on selected construction of poor people’s needs with special emphasis on children’s access to education and health.

This targeting mechanism also involves moral expectations that reveal a paternalistic relationship between the state and society’s poor, based on children’s needs and reinforced with gender concepts where mothers are labelled as the direct recipients of the cash transfer of the programme in order to fulfil their traditional role as caregivers (Fraser, 1989; Molyneux, 2006, 2007). Wheeler (1985:139) also asserts that in targeted anti-poverty interventions adult women become visible because they are labelled as ‘female parents responsible for child care,

and for nothing else'. To clarify her position she asserts: 'It is not the *fact* of motherhood which is in question, but the use of fact to create a label which excludes women from other categories', like for example women as labours, traders and tenants.

Social and selective construction of poor's needs

As mentioned, *Oportunidades* (SEDESOL, 2006b) aims to be effective in its education, health and nutrition components, all of them interacting in a set of strategic family orientations whose central concern is the improvement of children's human capital, with mothers the key to securing it (Molyneux, 2006, 2007). However, the identification of these *Oportunidades* components may be interpreted more as a social construction of the poor's needs by the elite policy designers than as its identification by the poor themselves (Fraser, 1989; *ibid*). This assertion is supported by an interview with a Mexican state official involved in the design of the programme. Here the poor's needs are interpreted very simplistically:

To tell the truth, the synergy between better nutrition for better health and better school performance is quite logical. This is all going to be reflected in better future performance in the labour market and it will end their poverty. (Key Informant 3)

Following with the same social construction of the poor's needs, Key Informant 3 reinforces this position by asserting:

This argument is more or less logical, but [state] intervention is necessary [...], this has to be integral, household-oriented and focused on household members' life cycles. The interventions required are in pregnancy, breastfeeding, and much more focused interventions in nutrition during [children's] early years and then education [...] from 6 to 18 years old; well, when PROGRESA started educational grants they just covered up to 15 years old. It was *Oportunidades* with President Fox that extended educational grants to high school.

The interpretation of the poor's needs was explored with Key Informant 5 by asking him a similar question about how health, education and nutrition had been identified as the essential needs of the poor population. His answer entails a similar argument regarding the development of poor children's human capital as the central factor in relieving poor households from deprivation:

Thanks to *Oportunidades'* educational grants, children are incentivised and motivated [...], and of course their mothers as well, to continue attending school. This is where *Oportunidades* 'places its bets', to create and develop something that we now understand as everyone's ability. [...] That is why we pay special attention to maintaining, as much as we can, the number of children with educational grants. (Key Informant 5)

The three quotations above confirm the current official position of the Mexican state, where children's human capital development has been labelled as the poor's 'genuine demands' (or demands) that the *Oportunidades* programme attempts to guarantee, as expressed in the following extract from an official document:

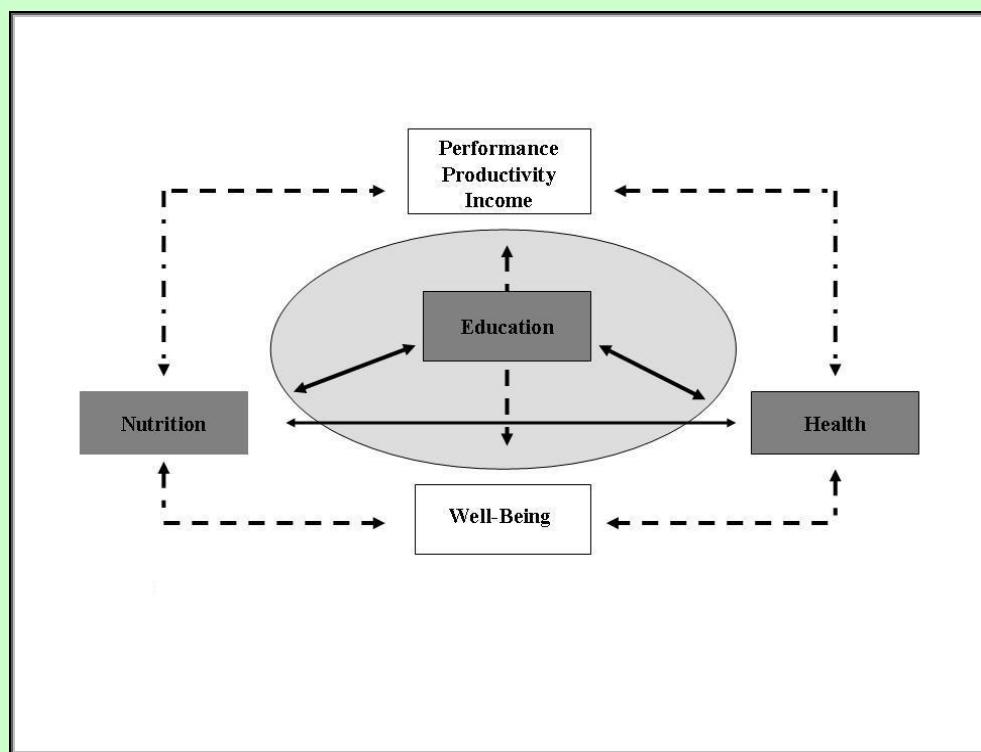
In essence, this programme attempts to guarantee poor families access to *genuine opportunities* to satisfy their basic needs. This is represented in education, health and nutrition and oriented to developing their capacities and [improving] their well-being (*Oportunidades*, 2002, 2007; my emphasis).

Fraser's (1989) discussion about 'the struggle of need interpretation', places emphasis on the idea of who is interpreting the poor's needs. In this case, the Mexican state, rather than the poor families themselves, has classified children's human capital development as lacking in 'genuine opportunities' (*Oportunidades*, 2002; 2007) to be satisfied thorough 'predefined state services' (ibid: 174).

The data quoted also give evidence of how social-welfare systems often implicitly depict policy recipients as passive actors instead of portraying them as 'active citizens capable of formulating their own needs and engaging in the setting of priorities and the implementation of projects, whether community development schemes, health and housing or micro-credit enterprises' (Molyneux, 2006:429).

Then again, the excerpts from the interviews above and the extract from the official documentation show the extent to which Amartya Sen's capabilities approach informs welfare assessment and the rationale of the Mexican state's social protection policy design. In the Mexican social protection policy arena Sen's capabilities approach has been simplified and reduced to some state intervention solely oriented to the economic dimension of poverty. But it does not discuss how social structures may influence how poor people function. This simplification of the state's social policy strategies to combat poverty is illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Strategies to combat the ‘vicious circle’ of poverty



Source: Based on *Círculo virtuoso para combatir a la pobreza* (SEDESOL (1999): *Más oportunidades* para las familias pobres. Evaluación de Resultados del Programa de *Educación, Alimentación-Primeros avances*.

According to Figure 4.1, Mexican elite policymakers see poverty as a vicious circle and have selected three components (education, health and nutrition) across several capabilities (i.e. housing and access to financial assets) with which to combat poverty, envisioning them in ‘linear cause and effect terms’ (or logical connexion, as Key Informant 3 suggests in previous quotations): ‘entitlements lead to capabilities, which lead to functioning, which lead to improving the quality of poor families life’ (Jackson, 2005). Likewise, from the Mexican elite’s perspective state social policy just intervenes at the initial step of this linear cause and effect through selective state services that may lead to enhancing poor families’ capacity. Beyond this point it is assumed that better capabilities would help poor people to function better and to better quality of life.

In practice, the linear connection between entitlements, capabilities and functioning is more complex and tangled where social structure also influences poor functioning. ‘[T]he ability to do things stems partly from a person’s place in social structures [...]; personal relations and networks magnify the powers of network members and diminish those of non-members’ (Jackson, 2005:107). Thus a full account of state social protection policy might recognise that the poor’s activities and competences are inseparable from social structures (see Chapter 7).

In moral terms, Figure 4.1 presents a degree of top-down and paternalistic assessment of the poor's needs (Fraser, 1989; Molyneux, 2006; Vizcarra, 2002). As Vizcarra (*ibid*:212) asserts, even if these social needs are genuine they are directly connected to a political agenda through discursive practices. As a result, social needs are not defined or presented in a totally transparent way: rather, they are part of a selective process and are often carefully enunciated thorough paternalistic moral discourses in an effort to sensitise public opinion to provide the final validation for the intervention (*ibid*).

The selective process of interpreting the poor's needs is also evident at other, sub-national levels of the policy design. Key Informant 5, a state-level *Oportunidades* programme official, called attention to education as a representation of unequal access to the labour market and intergenerational differences among poor household members, but also labels access to knowledge as a parameter of poor social progress:

I think that we can say that with [*Oportunidades* educational grants] we are going to break with transitional and intergenerational poverty. This means [...] children at the moment, thanks to the programme's 'bag' [the *Oportunidades* financial budget] we can keep them attending the school. Obviously [...] they are going to have a little bit more than their parents have at the moment, aren't they? Then, here at the *Oportunidades* programme we're betting on this fundamentally. With the development of capabilities, these are developed, building on learning. At school is where we learn that we have capabilities, that we have more knowledge: this is the way to get a bit better-paid job. (Key Informant 5)

The interpretation of the poor's needs includes representation of how things are and have been, as well as imagination how things might or could or should be. This is clear in the government official's account:

We are having an impact on education [...]. I think that we will have good results in the medium term. At the moment, I can go to visit a poor family's house; they may have been in this programme for three years, or six years. And I say, well, this lady has been in this programme for six years and her conditions have not changed so much. What's going on here? Is this programme not performing well? But then, while I'm thinking about this, suddenly I can see a boy with his bag coming back from school, then I can see a girl as well, she's a little bit older, she's coming back from school and then an older young boy with his 'T' ruler and his plans, and I say to myself: 'Well, here is where we're having an impact. Surely this young boy is going to university because he was sponsored by *Oportunidades*, and thanks to this he's now an undergraduate. He's going to change his life, different to his mother's at this moment, actually his life is going to be different to his when he was a little boy'. (Key Informant 5)

The above emphasises government officials' perceptions of the passive role of the poor (though the state's policy discourse encourages their participation through the notion of co-responsibility, as discussed in section 4.3.2) by representing *Oportunidades* as an entity that can act as an agent without the poor's agency. This is clear when Key Informant 5 rhetorically

states: ‘surely this boy is going to university because he was sponsored by *Oportunidades*’ (my emphasis).

From a moral perspective, the selected construction of the poor family’s needs also directs attention to official discourses that attempt to regulate how poor families should behave. This comes out in the description of the impact of *Oportunidades* in poor children’s futures, in which their way of life has changed ‘thanks to *Oportunidades*’ educational grants’ (Key Informant 5; my emphasis).

Key Informant 5’s description quoted above also embodies the ‘ideal poor family’ as a nuclear, bi-parental steady family with an organised everyday life (as implicitly suggested by the person interviewed) with children going to school and mothers at home waiting for them to return. The suggestion of a mother at home waiting for her children is based on his hypothetical description of himself visiting a poor family’s house where there is a mother.

In this sense, Escobar and González de la Rocha (2009) emphasise the nuclear and bi-parental family moral orientation implicitly contained in the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme, which does not take into account (at least in its conceptual design) the different types of household and their life cycle stages which equip some families, especially those that do not have very young or very old members, better than others to benefit from their participation in the *Oportunidades* programme. This discussion is continued in chapters 5 and 7.

The father figure is not clearly represented or even mentioned in the state official’s representation of a mother waiting at home for her children to come back from school (Key Informant 5). As Molyenux (2006:438) affirms, the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme does not incorporate men in a serious way, and no effort is made to promote the principle that men and women might share equal responsibility for caring for their children.

Furthermore, the above account (Key Informant 5) gives evidence to the implicit morality that this programme entails by reinforcing gender roles with wives at home playing their role as good mothers sending their children to school. This opens the way for another discussion regarding Mexican elite state policy maker’s claim that the *Oportunidades* programme entails a gender perspective.

Gender discourse informing the rationale of *Oportunidades*’ conceptual design

Official documentation of this programme (SEDESOL, 2007a, 2008a) alleges a gender distinction within its conceptual design that is expressed in two different affirmative actions: the direct allocation of the cash transfer to the mothers (or female household heads), and the distribution of higher amounts of educational grants for girls attending secondary and high

school (equivalent from 7th to 12th grades). Also, the conceptual design of this programme entails other notions of gender sensitivity where adult women (who are pregnant or breastfeeding) are entitled to receive food supplements, and women's self-esteem and community leadership is enhanced through their participation in health and nutrition monthly talks and community assemblies (ibid). It is worth clarifying that these monthly talks and community assemblies are mostly organised for giving information related to the *Oportunidades* programme to the recipients, and they are not oriented (at least this is not first intention at its design level) to create conditions for an independent organisation (such as productive projects) among the participants to contribute to the development of notions of citizenship rights, through labour access (chapter 7).

Thus it is possible to assert that the 'selective and gendering construction of social needs' (Molyneux, 2006) informing the state social protection policy design tends to reinforce gender roles and responsibilities. Further, the gender affirmative actions embedded in the *Oportunidades* programme are inconsistent, at the same time that the daughters now have better access to education through the educational grants, this state intervention has not removed any of the persistent causes of gender inequality, as women remain marked by their motherhood responsibilities within the family with little recognitions of their strategic needs such as economic autonomy and security (ibid). This is because the purpose of affirmative actions is restricted 'to correct inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying social structures that generate them' (Fraser, 2003: 74). To achieve greater equality social policy must be transformative rather than affirmative, and it must be 'oriented to correct unjust outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework' (ibid). (The gendered transformative character of the state policy is discussed more in detail in chapter 7).

Targeting the poor with gender and age distinctions is also evidence of the narrow vision of policy design regarding how to overcome poverty. Some scholars, such as González de la Rocha (2000), Molyneux (2006 and 2007) and Vizcarra (2002), assert that cash transfers are no substitute for economic restitution and social security, and that without directing attention to promoting long-term household livelihoods strategies, including women's access to these strategies, new anti-poverty programmes like *Oportunidades* will not contribute to creating the conditions needed to release individuals and households from their poverty. On the contrary, as Molynuex (2006: 441) declares, despite the good intentions of the Mexican state, poor families 'will remain fundamentally trapped in [*asistencialista* programmes]' (as defined in Chapter 3), even though elite policymakers have claimed that new antipoverty programmes such as *Oportunidades* have superseded them. The next section examines the term

‘*asistencialismo*’ and its interpretative discourse connected to the principle of co-responsibility.

4.3.2 Co-responsibility: citizen rights vs *asistencialismo*; interpretative discourse at the policy design level

In the *Oportunidades* programme the relation between the state and recipient families is guided by the principle of co-responsibility. The straightforward meaning of ‘co-responsibility’ is sharing responsibility, and it is explained by Molyneux (2006:434) as a ‘quasi-contractual understanding’ between the state and civil society that, in return for the entitlements proffered by the state through anti-poverty programmes, certain obligations are accomplished by the programmes’ beneficiaries. In the particular case of the *Oportunidades* programme these obligations are oriented to ‘actions in education and health’, as described in the normative framework of the programme (SEDESOL, 2008a:34).

According to Cohen et al. (2006) co-responsibility has been incorporated in the policy design as an ‘incentive to use public education, health and nutrition services to promote the development of human capital and capabilities in families living under extreme poverty conditions’ (ibid:87).

On the other hand, elite policymakers consider the introduction of ‘co-responsibility’ a key element in *Oportunidades* conceptual design that implies the internalisation of the notion of citizenship among policy recipients and the transformation of their relationship with the Mexican state, as discussed below.

Key Informant 3, an elite policymaker working at policy design level considers co-responsibility a fundamental feature in this programme. When interviewed he described co-responsibility as a citizens’ right. He explained that this concept entails a ‘logical connection’ between responsibilities and rights:

By accomplishing responsibilities at the same time they are exercising their citizens’ rights. The accomplishing of responsibilities makes [the poor] more citizenlike. (Key Informant 3)

The same official emphasized his view of the connection between co-responsibility and the exercise of citizens’ rights through taking responsibility. He states:

[Co-responsibility] is something like a trade-off: they have to do something in return to get the benefits of this programme. (Key Informant 3)

According to the perspective of Key Informant 3, co-responsibility is a turning point in the design of the state social protection policy that introduces the notion of citizens’ rights to the *Oportunidades* participants: ‘Perhaps it is an abstract way’ (as he states).

One step at time: [*Oportunidades* recipients] know that nobody can make them drop out of the programme. ‘I’m dropping out of this programme myself if I

don't accomplish [the requirements]'. [His depiction of himself as one of the recipients of this programme reinforces his comment]. (Key Informant 3)

The previous discussion implicitly reveals that elite policymakers still have a negative concept of the poor's agency. The data in the quotes above imply that even though the notion of co-responsibility introduces the idea of social protection as a citizen's right in the *Oportunidades* programme, the state has to enforce this through the application of sanctions such as dropping poor families who do not use the state health and educational services from the programme, even when the families themselves have assessed this as unnecessary (see Chapter 5).

The idea that it is not the state that excludes poor families that do not accomplish their commitments but rather that they exclude themselves by deciding not to carry out the requirements of this programme (see last quote above) also involves a negative perception of the poor's agency. Elite policy designers often tend to blame the poor for their economic or class conditions: according to their perceptions, poverty is rooted in cultural attitudes and habits (Reis & Moore, 2005) and poor people are often depicted as being apathetic and making very little use of state services (Lewis, 1970: 71-72). This discussion is taken further in the next subsection, where the related notion of conditionality is examined.

The principle of co-responsibility was also explored with another *Oportunidades* programme official working at state-level, Key Informant 5. At this level, the term co-responsibility is not associated with citizens' rights. By contrast, it is understood as a necessary condition, recently introduced to the Mexican state policy arena through *Oportunidades*, in order to disassociate this programme from any suggestion of *asistencialismo*. As he explains:

We would have to review the word *asistencia*⁴⁷ and also we would have to review its derivation into *asistencialismo* and then contrast this with the word 'co-responsibility'. There are many programmes that are changing with this government; some of them were implemented before by other governments as '*asistencialistas*' to keep people content, basically [...]. We are not '*asistencialistas*' (Key Informant 5).

Key Informant 5 affirmed that with the introduction of the notion of co-responsibility this programme is different from previous social assistance programmes implemented in Mexico which are criticised as *asistencialistas* backed by strong notions of paternalism in which the poor are portrayed as passive recipients of state policy. He declared that with the introduction of co-responsibility as a key element of the *Oportunidades* programme the recipients' passive behaviour has changed:

⁴⁷ According to the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, 22nd Edition (<http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/>), the meaning of the word *asistencia* is 'to give support, aid and favour'. *Asistencia social* is related to public administration of the provision of support to people in need.

The responsibility of the state is to provide poor people with adequate health services, but families have to commit themselves to using them. (Key Informant 5)

His explanation suggests a political bias, because the previous anti-poverty programmes operating in Mexico were implemented when the PRI party was still in power (see section 4.2). In fact, the *Oportunidades* programme does not differ conceptually from PROGRESA design (sub-section 4.2.3). It is also important to clarify that the notion of co-responsibility does not exclusively belong to Mexican anti-poverty programmes. This principle was incorporated in the social policy agenda of the World Bank in the late 1980s and early 1990s and transferred to Mexican anti-poverty programmes when President Salinas (1988-1994) made PRONASOL a key element of his government strategy (Yashine, 1999).

In PRONASOL, co-responsibility was seen as a cost-sharing element expressed in the poor's contribution of labour to diverse projects including building infrastructure like school buildings and roads (Ontiveros Ruiz, 2005; Yashine, 1999). What distinguishes the notion of co-responsibility in *Oportunidades* from that of its predecessor PRONASOL is the consideration of women household heads as the focal connection between the family and the state: 'They are the members of the family who are committed to the state in the trading of family responsibility performance for cash transfer' (Cohen et al., 2006:90, my translation).

In the pursuit of disassociating the *Oportunidades* programme from previous *asistencialista* experiences, the above Mexican official argued that the beneficiaries of this programme – women in particular - have to give something in return:

Here [in the *Oportunidades* programme] women have to give something in return. But this 'giving in return' is for their own benefit. (Key Informant 5)

Despite the fact that co-responsibility is advocated as an element of transformation in Mexico's state social policy, Key Informant 5 is still suggesting a paternalistic intention on the side of state authorities towards poor citizens, in which the state interacts with *Oportunidades* participants in order to promote 'their own good'. Van De Veer (1986:13) affirms that paternalistic acts are defined as those 'in which one person A, interfaces with another person, S, in order to promote S's own good'.

Suber (1999:632) defines paternalistic behaviour as follows: 'It is to act for the good of another person without that person's consent, as parents do for children'. He considers this term controversial 'because its end is benevolent, and its means coercive' (ibid). Indeed, someone who behaves in a paternalist manner may advance people's interests – this could be related to education, health or safety – but at the expense of individuals' autonomy to make their own decisions and be responsible for themselves.

In this manner the expression extracted from the above quotation: ‘(it) is for their own benefit’ presents the figure of a benevolent father exercising authority over children that ‘are not (their) moral equals’ (Jackman, 1994:13). From the perspective of Key Informant 5, *Oportunidades* recipients are similar to children not prepared to make decisions by themselves. Therefore, as Jackman (1994) states, they are taken care of.

In this attempt to avoid any *asistencialista* connotations in the *Oportunidades* programme, Key Informant 5 explicitly proposes a new description for policy recipients.

I have commented, here to *my people*, that I would not like to call the women of this programme ‘beneficiaries’ [...]. I would *really love* to call them ‘*Oportunidades* co-responsible’ (my emphasis).

The description above expresses a persuasive moral discourse that confers interpretations of the relationship between Mexican state institutions and poor citizens. But also it exposes the fact that *Oportunidades* officials working at state level also play the role of policymakers and tend to label relationships in order to create or underline dominant discourses. Wood (1985:5) affirms: ‘Labelling is a feature of all social communications. It is therefore an aspect of public policy (utterance and practice)’. Labelling refers to power relationships; it is an element in the structure of state policy discourses created, reinforced and reproduced by the state institutions. State policy discourses express the process of control and regulation which are largely unrecognised, even by the actors (in this case state policymakers and recipients) themselves (ibid). Chapter 5 discusses the analysis of the everyday policy interfaces between the *Oportunidades* programme frontline operators and recipients.

Thus labelling is an element implicitly inserted in the moral discourses of state social protection policy that refers to and also constructs unequal relationship. In the case of the *Oportunidades* programme this unequal relationship occurs when the recipients of the programme are labelled as ‘co-responsible’, implying behavioural assumptions and types of agency such as that they have agreed to fulfil certain obligations in order to receive the benefits of this programme.

From a moral perspective the relationship between responsibility and obligation is relevant and demands differentiation. From a moral perception, responsibility refers to voluntary action. As Uniacke (2005:464) asserts: ‘We are responsible for whatever we voluntarily do or bring about’. Nonetheless, when responsibility confronts a ‘must’ then an obligation comes out of it. Obligations are more associated with non-voluntary actions that individuals execute because they have been told to. In this sense, obligation is a normative term that refers to expectations of the moral order, therefore its observance involves a sanction (ibid).

Following on from this, it is possible to propose that in the policy design discourse there is a smooth transition from the co-responsibility that involves a sharing of duty-bearing positions

between the state and the families, to sole duty-bearing by the recipient using the moral discourse of obligation. The latter reinforces the idea of paternalistic discourses still embedded in Mexican state policy at the design level. On the one hand, policy discourses express fostering care for *Oportunidades* programme recipients on the part of the state, but on the other, recipients are conditioned to behave in a certain way through sanctions.

In the particular case of the *Oportunidades* programme, the sanctions imposed on recipients are the reduction, deferment or permanent withdrawal of the cash transfer benefits, as established in the regulations of the programme (SEDESOL, 2006a, 2007a, 2008a).

The relation between the *Oportunidades* programme sanctions and the cash transfer is connected to the introduction of the notion of conditionality. Conditionality is the third principle informing the conceptual design of this programme and is explored in more detail in the next section.

4.3.3 The introduction of conditionality as an operational element: discourses on ‘cultural habits’

The term ‘conditionality’ is introduced in the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme due to its effect on the frontline policy process (see Chapter 5). However, at the policy design level, conditionality is perceived as a key element to encourage poor Mexican families to develop their human capital and to promote their use of state public services.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (Scott & Marshall, 2005), the term ‘conditionality’ describes an offer or agreement that depends on something else being done. In other words, it expresses the idea of dependency where one actor conditions the behaviour of others.

It is important to emphasise that in the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme the difference between conditionality and co-responsibility is imprecise; as a result they tend to overlap. Authors such as Cohen, et al. (2006) and Escobar & González del la Rocha (2009:268) do not distinguish between the two: *Oportunidades* [...] operates on the basis of conditionality or ‘co-responsibility’: in return for the entitlements provided by the programme certain *obligations* are to be assumed by the participating mother’ (emphasis added).

Adato et al. (2000) explain that the conceptual design of the cash transfer programme in Mexico has been set up under the assumption that poor households do not invest enough in their human capital and therefore a vicious cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty persists, with children dropping out of school and destined to suffer the long-term effects of deprivation. They assert that the programme focuses simultaneously on various dimensions of human capital development in order to improve the children’s education, nutrition and health conditions and on enhancing the poor’s demand for state health and educational

services by making their entitlement to receive cash transfers conditional on visiting LHC and attending school.

From a moral perspective, poor people are often perceived as part of a separate culture with its own values and norms (Siegel & Welsh, 2009:117). Key Informant 3, reinforces this argument:

Before the implementation of this programme, Mexico already had a 'long tradition of social programmes like food subsidies, educational and health services. There was important investment in the educational and health infrastructure covering areas of extreme poverty. There was an extraordinary governmental effort [to provide state services] but still there was a gap. High levels of children dropping out from school, and the impact of state services in rural areas was not significant. Then there was an opportunity cost, but also rural households didn't value sending children to school. There was even a cultural pattern where girls were not sent to secondary school, since they were going to get married and be supported by their husband. So in this sense poor households had to make quite complicated decisions, therefore they needed incentives.'

According to Key Informant 3's opinion, conditionality became a key component of poverty programmes in Mexico, because of two interconnected factors: one an economic criterion related to the opportunity cost of children's education for poor families and the other, cultural patterns of behaviour among Mexican poor families. The opportunity cost to poor families of children's education is especially significant in rural areas, where boys can take low-skilled work and earn money from the age of 12, when secondary school starts.

In addition, poor families' patterns of behaviour are perceived by policymakers to be one of the major obstacles to overcoming poverty (see Chapter 3). As a result, the introduction of conditionality in the programme is considered a positive element in the transformation of these cultural habits.

The Mexican elite policymaker, Key Informant 3, recognised that the notion of conditionality has received criticism due to the fact that conditionality implicitly suggests obligation. However, to defend conditionality as a positive element in the transformation poor families' behaviour, Key Informant 3 explains that this positive transformation can be reflected in the opportune detection of cervical uterine and breast cancer:

The prevention of cervical uterine and breast cancer is one of the 'starts' [best achievement] of this programme, and this is part of the cultural transformation [...]. This is especially relevant [in rural areas] where *machista* cultural patterns represented a barrier to the implementation of the pap smear test. This has been a challenge for the *Oportunidades* programme. Actually, we have had to implement some extra measures. For example, in some rural areas we have to make sure that woman [rather than male] doctors carry out the tests.

Here it is relevant to highlight that cervical cancer is the leading cause of death in Mexico in women around 35 years of age, and the second leading cause of death among women aged

15–64 (Givaudan et al., 2008). These authors affirm that the high rate of cervical cancer reflects prevalent ‘high-risk behaviour’. This can be understood as cultural patterns associated with myths about preventive measures for cancer (or smear test) and the underuse of medical services by the Mexican population, most notably in rural areas, where despite the fact that the Health Ministry provides free or very low-cost cancer-screening services these remain notoriously underutilised (*ibid*).

Interviews revealed that there is a consensus among elite policymakers that the *Oportunidades* programme’s requirements can be described as a ‘scheme of conditionality’ and are necessary to improve the poor Mexican families’ human capital. In this way the Key Informant 3, working at the design level, declares:

The message is clear: take your [children] further [the speaker is referring to school attendance] and you will receive more [money].

The Mexican official working in the state-level office remarks:

In this programme if you want to stay you have to do something [Key Informant 5)

Moreover, at the state level conditionality tends to be interpreted as obligation and explained in the following manner:

The government has the obligation to people suffering deprivation to provide them with public services. (Key Informant 5)

Then the speaker, turns to represent himself talking to *Oportunidades* programme participants in a fatherly manner:

I have an obligation to you [...]; then you have the right to receive money, but you also have an obligation.

Here it is important to say that at this state level of the policymaking process, state officials insist that conditionality is a necessary element to transform the ‘cultural habits’ of the Mexican citizen. More specifically, Key Informant 5 explains that conditionality is a determinant of their internalisation of the ‘habit’ of preventive health care.

If you are in this programme you must go to visit the doctor even if you are not sick.

Key Informant 5 assumes that in general the Mexican population does not have a ‘cultural habit of health prevention’. To reinforce his comment he adopts a self-critical position, using himself as an example:

[...] at least] in my case I don’t have it [...]

He affirms that this lack of ‘habits of health prevention’ among the Mexican population justifies the introduction of conditionality. He explains conditionality in terms of obligation:

Here in the *Oportunidades* programme we oblige families to visit the doctor, especially women, at least once a month to have a check-up and attend the monthly talks [...]. In this programme women are under permanent control if they are pregnant during this period and then when they are breastfeeding.

For children younger than two it is compulsory that they take a nutritional complement [...]. Children under five years with levels of malnourishment are also under [medical] control; it is also compulsory for them to [...] take a nutritional supplement. (Key Informant 5)

Because children are too young to take responsibility for this it is taken for granted that the mother will assume this obligation.

Since the *Oportunidades* programme (and previously, PROGRESA) was introduced there has been evidence of positive development of human capital among poor Mexican families, in particular in rural areas. According to data published by the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL, 2008c, 2010b), after ten years' operation the *Oportunidades* programme has had a remarkable impact on the education, nutrition and health of poor rural Mexican families (see Chapter 2).

Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that these positive developments in poor families' human capital have been promoted through the allocation of conditional cash transfers; the data providing evidence of this change are restricted to *Oportunidades* programme family recipients; and the results above do not tell us whether this transformation of poor families' patterns of behaviour is permanent. Escobar & González de la Rocha (2009:278) ask whether poor families are convinced that it is worthwhile investing in children's – particularly girls' – education, or whether they will need permanent government incentives to invest in the development of their human capital. A similar question can be extended to action in preventive health and nutrition (see Chapter 5 for further examination of this topic).

The introduction of conditionality as part of the conceptual design of cash transfer programmes has received criticism due to its intended purposes (or social construction of the poor's needs, as discussed) (Farrington & Slater, 2006). Some of the argument against conditionality as part of the conceptual design of the cash transfer programmes is that to fulfil the conditions 'women could be overloaded with competing demands on their time' (Molyneux, 2006:437), which may be a disincentive to working and create dependence (see Chapter 5 and 7 for further detail).

In the particular case of the *Oportunidades* programme, Handa and Davis (2006) argue that the almost exclusive focus of this programme on children's accumulation of human capital deflects attention from other aspects of household welfare and the broader rural development context, such as the development of long-term productive projects oriented to all community members and not restricted to recipients of the programme). Furthermore, Handa and Davis (*ibid*) declare that the term 'conditionality' is oriented to enhancing poor families' demand on

health and education services, but the quality of public services provided by the Mexican state is inadequate.

In terms of moral discourse, the introduction of conditionality and its obligations affects the relationship between the Mexican state and poor members of society.

Meanwhile the notion of conditionality expresses a state policy discourse that portrays the Mexican state as in an equal relationship with the poor citizen, both ‘sharing responsibility’ for defeating the poor’s situation of deprivation. With the introduction of conditionality as the third component of the *Oportunidades* programme state policy discourse is transformed into a more dependent and hierarchical relationship between the state and poor families.

This transformation is more evident in the everyday operation of the *Oportunidades* programme, where recipients of the programme interact with front line operators to accomplish the requirements that the programme entails (see Chapter 5).

4.4 Summary

This chapter has focused on the moral discourses and practices informing Mexico’s social protection policymaking process at the design level.

The section starts with PRONASOL (1988-1994), a community-oriented programme targeting the poor. PRONASOL was the first anti-poverty programme implemented in Mexico after a period of neo-liberal reforms during the 1980s and early 1990s. The discussion continues with the exploration of PROGRESA (1997-2002). From a moral perspective, this anti-poverty programme has two relevant aspects. One is the introduction of targeting mechanisms (as ‘cost-effective’ criteria) to reach the extreme poor, representing a shift in the moral commitment of the Mexican state to civil society, with the role of the state in economic and social policy restricted to assisting extremely poor families. The second element of the transformation is the focus on family (with gender and age distinctions) rather than community participation. The section concludes with a brief examination of the main components of the *Oportunidades* programme. In terms of conceptual design this programme continues with the same welfare formula as that of PROGRESA. The most distinctive difference is the expansion of *Oportunidades*’ geographical coverage from rural to semi-urban and urban areas, and of its educational benefits from the third year of basic education (grade 9) to the end of the third year of high school (grade 12).

The second part of the chapter explores the moral discourses and practices embedded in the three principles that inform the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme: targeting mechanisms, co-responsibility and conditionality.

In the first place, the targeting mechanisms of the *Oportunidades* programme have been qualified by some of the elite policymakers working in this programme as: ‘clear, concrete and objective’ selection criteria to ensure that the programme’s resources are directed to families living in extreme poverty. However, from a moral perspective this targeting mechanism has created a social category that differentiates ‘policy deservers’ from ‘non-deservers’. This distinction involves moral expectations that reveal a paternalistic relationship between the state and poor members of society, based on the selective construction of poor families’ needs with special distinction of children’s access to education, health and nutrition, reinforced with gender concepts that make mothers the direct recipients of the cash transfer in order that they fulfil their traditional role as caregivers.

The principle of co-responsibility is the second element informing the conceptual design of the programme. It is examined in relation to the interpretative discourse of citizenship and *asistencialismo*.

At the policy design level, co-responsibility is interpreted as a key element in internalising the notion of citizens’ rights amongst *Oportunidades* programme recipient families and disassociating the programme from any suggestion of *asistencialismo*. From a moral perspective, this principle suggests an equal relationship between the Mexican state and civil society. However, despite the fact that at the design level of the state policymaking process co-responsibility is advocated as an element of change in the state’s social policy, analysis presented in this section suggests that a negative conception of the poor’s agency persists among Mexican elite policymakers. As a result it is possible to propose that in the policy design discourse there is a smooth transition from co-responsibility that involves a sharing duty-bearing position between the state and the families, to duty-bearing solely by the recipient. The recipient’s duty-bearing position involves the moral discourse of obligation. This unequal relationship between the state and poor families is evident in the labelling of the recipients as ‘co-responsible’, but at the same time implying behavioural assumptions and types of agency such as recipients agreeing to certain obligations in order to receive the benefits of the programme.

Conditionality is the third element informing the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme. The term ‘conditionality’ is examined thorough the discourse of cultural habits played out by state policymakers working at policy design level.

At the state policy design level, poor families’ cultural patterns of behaviour are perceived as one of the major obstacles to overcoming poverty. As a result, the introduction of conditionality in the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme is considered a positive element in the transformation of poor families’ cultural habits and promotes their use

of state public services. The state authorities emphasise the positive impact of conditionality in the internalisation of preventive health habits among poor families. However, these positive effects are restricted to the recipients of the programme, and therefore it cannot be concluded that this internalisation of preventive health habits is permanent; poor families may need to be constantly incentivised to attend preventive medical check-ups with cash transfer benefits.

The notion of conditionality entails a moral discourse of obligation and sanction that has affected the relationship between the Mexican state and the poor members of civil society. This transformation is evident in the everyday policy process, where frontline *Oportunidades* operators and recipients interact to fulfil the programme's requirements. The implications introducing conditionality at the frontline level of the policy implementation process and the moral discourse and practices that it brings about are examined in the next, empirical chapter.

Chapter 5 MORAL DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE IN EVERYDAY POLICY INTERFACES

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine how the moral discourses and practices (values, norms and conventions) that inform the design of social protection policy have affected rural households' interactions with state institutions and their uptake of policy resources.

This chapter presents empirical evidence from *Oportunidades* implementation at ground level.

At the front line of the *Oportunidades* programme state officials and recipients are actors with agency influencing policy processes in their everyday interface with each other (Long, 2001).

As state policy actors the *Oportunidades* programme frontline operators, as Lipsky (1980) discusses in his study of street-level bureaucrats, play an essential role in the state policymaking process with various degrees of discretion and autonomy from official policy design. Frontline operators are constantly searching 'for the correct balance between compassion (or sympathy) and flexibility on the one hand, and impartiality and rigid rule application on the other hand' (ibid:15-16). This constitutes the 'dialectic of public service' at ground level. Frontline operators often rely on state policy moral directives, and at the same time they apply their own judgment in their interactions with state policy recipients.

Oportunidades recipients also bring their own values and interests to policy implementation (Long, 2001). The moral notions of obligation and sanction embedded in the requirements of the programme have led poor families to organise themselves individually and collectively in a variety of ways when they have to interact with state institutions for education and health care.

The analysis of this chapter focuses on how the programme's moral discourse of obligation and sanction influenced rural households' interaction with education and health services and the gendered nature of these effects.

This chapter is in two main sections: Section 5.2 describes the current use of state education and health centres by rural households and their perceptions of the quality of the services they access. The last part of the section discusses the moral discourse of obligation implicitly contained in the notion of conditionality and its effect on rural households' interaction with state institutions at ground level. Section 5.3 explores the gendered effects of these moral

discourses of obligation and sanction on rural households' patterns of interaction with state education and health care services.

5.2 Moral discourse of obligation and sanction at the front line: Implications for rural households' interaction with state services

5.2.1 Use of state services by rural households

Use of state education services

The *Oportunidades* programme's education grant applies to children in grades 3 to 12. *Oportunidades* children up to 18 years old attending primary school are entitled to receive this grant. In the case of children who need special education this is extended to 21; the same top age limit applies to children attending secondary and high school (SEDESOL, 2008a:5).

Table 5.1 shows that there were 117 children under the age of 21 in the 103 *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient households that agreed to answer the questionnaires. Of these, 96 (82%) attended school, while 13 children under 21 in *Oportunidades* recipient households and 8 in non-recipient households did not go to school.

Table 5.1: No. of children under 21 living in the research setting

	Number of households	Attending school		Not attending school		Total number of children	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Oportunidades</i>	71	81	86	13	14	94	100
<i>Non-Oportunidades</i>	32	15	65	8	35	23	100
Total	103	96	82	21	18	117	100

Source: Author (2007) from data collected through household questionnaires.

A more specific level of analysis indicates that in both groups of households most children were attending primary school (grades 3-6)⁴⁸ (see Table 5.2 below). This could be explained by the large number of young families in the research community (about 60 per cent), with the parents in their late 30s to early 40s on average.

⁴⁸ For comparative purposes, data related to school attendance covers grades 3-12 which are the school years to which the educational grant of this programme apply. However, data from household questionnaires indicate that there were 23 children (13 girls and 10 boys) attending grades 1 and 2 at primary school.

Table 5.2: Number and percentage of children of *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient families attending school*. (Distributed by school level)

	<i>Oportunidades</i>		Non- <i>Oportunidades</i>		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Primary school	58	72%	13	87%	71	74%
Secondary school	20	25%	2	13%	22	23%
High school	3	4%	0	0%	3	3%
Total	81	100%	15	100%	96	100%

* All of the above children attend state school

Source: Author (2007) from data collected through household questionnaires.

Table 5.3: Number and percentage of *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient boys and girls attending school

	Primary School				Secondary School				High School				Total			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
<i>Oportunidades</i>	18	69%	40	73%	8	31%	12	22%	0	0	3	5%	26	100%	55	100%
Non- <i>Oportunidades</i>	8	89%	5	83%	1	11%	1	17%	0	0	0	0	9	100%	6	100%
Total	26	74%	45	74%	9	26%	13	21%	0	0	3	5%	35	100%	61	100%

Source: Author (2007), from data collected through household questionnaires.

The data in Table 5.3 (above) suggest a positive effect of the *Oportunidades* education grants on children's – and more specifically girls' – access to further education (secondary and high school level). While girls tend to attend school until they finish secondary school (grade 9), boys are more inclined to leave when they finish primary school (grade 6). This is shown in Table 5.4, below, which presents data related to the education levels of *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient household members aged 15 to 21 currently non-attending the school.

Table 5.4: Educational levels of household members aged 15 to 21 non-attending attending school (*Oportunidades* programme recipients and non-recipients)

	Boy		Girls	
	Grade 6	Grade 9	Grade 6	Grade 9
<i>Oportunidades</i> *	1	1	---	6
Non- <i>Oportunidades</i>	2	---	2	4

* Information about two girls and three boys is not included in this table. One girl attended school to grade 11 and the other has Downs Syndrome and is illiterate. One boy had just finished 3rd Grade and the other two boys have a hearing impairment and are illiterate.

Source: Author (2007), from data collected through household questionnaires.

Girls tend to have a higher level of school education than boys, which may be due to the higher grant paid for them to attend secondary and high school (equivalent to grades 7-12) (SEDESOL, 2008a). But since this pattern is not restricted to *Oportunidades* recipients, other factors such as gendered access to labour markets may explain this trend.

The gendered effects of the *Oportunidades* programme education grant on boys and girls' school attendance are explained in subsection 5.3.1.

Use of state health care services

Table 5.5, below, shows patterns of health service use amongst the *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient households when a family member is facing a health problem.

Table 5.5: Use of LHCS services by recipients and non-recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme (No. and % of households)

	Always		Sometimes		Never		Total No. of Households	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Oportunidades</i> ^{a/}	53	76	17	24	---	0	70	100
Non <i>Oportunidades</i> –	5	15	18	55	10	30	33	100
Total	58	56	35	34	10	10	103	100

^{a/} *Oportunidades* programme recipients mostly interact with the LHCS at least once a month in order to fulfil the requirement of the programme.

Source: Author, from data collected thorough household questionnaire.

A Chi-Square (X^2) test revealed that household attendance of the LHCS is related to fulfilment of the programme requirements (for detailed results see Annex V).

Data collected in 30 semi-structured interviews summarise patterns of use of local health services amongst rural households (23 recipient and 7 non-recipient families). These describe the circumstances under which families interact with the LHCS, including the fulfilment of the *Oportunidades* programme requirements (educational health workshops and preventive medical check-ups) and medical treatment. The information collected in these semi-structured interviews also describes situations where both groups of household participants prefer to use private medical services (see Table 5.6, below).

Table 5.6: Patterns of use of health care services *Oportunidades* programme requirements and medical treatment (Households recipients and non-recipients)

Always	<p>Constant interaction with local health care services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health educational workshops and family health check-ups. - Families use the LHCS for <u>non-serious</u> illnesses (e.g. colds, headaches and gastrointestinal infections), injuries and checking blood pressure or in the <u>early stages of any illness</u> for a medical diagnosis. - For <u>emergency</u>, <u>serious illness</u> and <u>long term medical</u> treatment the respondents commented that they use private health services. <p>All 17 households with this pattern of interaction are <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipients. There are no responses from non-recipient households'.</p>
Sometimes	<p>Sporadic interaction with the local health care services:</p> <p>Five of the ten households in this category were <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipients. They visit LCHS at least once a month to attend educational health workshops and family health check-ups.</p> <p>Both groups of households present an irregular pattern of interaction with the LHCS for medical treatment for <u>non serious illness</u> or <u>medical diagnosis</u> in the early stages of any illness.</p> <p>Two of the families interviewed (receiving <i>Oportunidades</i> programme benefits) have access to state social security (Army forces; HH-014 and IMSS; HH-022). In household HH-002, a recipient of the programme, the person interviewed declared that her husband, who works for local government, has private health insurance.</p>
Limited	<p>Limited or no interaction with the LHCS:</p> <p>The three households interviewed with this pattern of interaction were not <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipients.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two of the three families have access to state social security (IMSS; HH-090 and HH-104). However, they usually use private health services

Source: Author, from data collected in household-level semi-structured interviews (fieldwork, second stage).

From Table 5.6 it is possible to assert that *Oportunidades* programme family recipients mainly use the LHCS because they are obliged to fulfil the requirements of the programme.

On the other hand, data related to the 17 that report 'always' using local health services for medical treatment suggest that compulsory events, such as those described in Table 5.6 (above), encourage the use of the LHCS for minor illnesses. However, for emergencies, serious illness or long-term treatment, both groups still rely on private health services rather than using the public hospitals. In a rural context of moderate poverty and a significant level of migration to the US labour market, such as in this case study, families tend to rely on remittances to cover this type of health event.

5.2.2 Perceptions and opinions of the quality of services at ground level

Perceptions and opinions of the quality of state health and education services emerged from rural households' explanations of their patterns of using these services. Most of the focus group discussion participants considered the quality of state education good as long their children could learn how to read and write and execute arithmetic calculations. It is understandable that among the mothers who attended the focus group discussion there is a widely held notion that basic levels of literacy are qualification enough to gain employment. This could be due to the basic level of education of the mothers attending this focus group discussion (grades 3-6) and low-skilled employment in the local and US labour markets that is fairly accessible to young men, who can earn up to ten times the salary that they would make in Mexico (Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2009).

In the semi-structured household-level interviews it was possible to explore the opinions of mothers in the *Oportunidades* programme about the quality of the education that their children were currently receiving at the local school. Julia (HH-001; 47 years old), who plays the role of *vocal de control y vigilancia*; Olivia (HH-002; 23) (also *vocal de salud*); Josefina (HH-005; 58); Arcelia (HH-021; 44) and Gabriela (HH-085;) (*vocal de nutrition*)⁴⁹ talked about the economic support they receive, twice a year for children attending primary school and once a year for those at secondary or high school, from the *Oportunidades* programme with which to buy school supplies for their children (SEDESOL, 2008a:7). None talked about the quality of education in terms of gaining knowledge or good teaching practice; they spoke only of the tangible things they were able to purchase for their children such as stationery, uniforms, shoes etc, with the money received from the programme.

In comparison, rural households' (state policy recipients and non-recipients) perceptions and opinions about health services were more evident than in relation to education services. The majority of households interviewed found that the LHCS provided basic and poor quality services. Table 5.7, below, summarises the most frequent topics discussed during the interviews with recipients and non-recipients.

⁴⁹ The *vocal de education* (educational volunteer worker) did not agree to participate in any of the three stages of the fieldwork. As result her perceptions and opinions of the quality of the health services are missing.

Table 5.7: Rural households' perceptions and opinions in relation to health services provided by the LHCS (Number of interviews that discuss the topic)

	<i>Oportunidades</i> (23 participants)	Non- <i>Oportunidades</i> (7 participants)
Lack of medicines (sometimes out of date)	14	4
LHCS not well-equipped for diagnosis	12	5
Medical check-ups very basic	16	N.M.
Lack of courtesy during medical appointments. Most complaints were about the treatment that <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipients receive from the nurses working at the LHCS	16	N. M.
Opening hours of emergency services. Officially emergency services at the LHCS are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. However the households interviewed complained about lack of services at night and at weekends.	8	6
Often the waiting time could be more than three hours. This issue was mostly mentioned in the context of <i>Oportunidades</i> medical check-ups.	14	1 ^{a/}

^{a/} The interviewee mentioned this issue but as a rumour coming from her sister (an *Oportunidades* recipient) rather than as own experience.

Source: Author, from data collected thorough household semi-structures interviews (fieldwork second stage)

The information collected from 30 household-level semi-structured interviews revealed that at ground level, users of state health services share similar opinions and perceptions of their poor quality and basic provision. Some examples quoted below illustrate common perceptions of state policy recipients and non-recipients.

The first opinion comes from Magali (HH-101; 47) who had received the *Oportunidades* programme benefits in the past. However, since the cash transfers she used to receive were insignificant for her, he decided to exit the programme a few years ago. She gave her opinion of the lack of medicines and the time she spent waiting for attention:

LHCS does not have medicines, even for the most common disease: a cold, for example. If you go there they just give you the prescription and then you need to buy the medicine.

When we get sick we never go there. There are always a lot of people there, so we would rather go for private medical attention.

In Mexico the medicines included in the *Cuadro Básico de Medicamentos* (Basic Formulary Medications) are considered essential to satisfy the medical needs of the population and must be available free of charge at all times.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ <http://www.facmed.unam.mx/consejo/publica/cbm/cuadro.htm> (accessed 09/07/2009)

Another example is Pedro (HH-004; 57), a male state policy recipient with his wife Maria (HH-004; 56):

The services are very basic. They do not check us properly – they just ask us questions [...]. If they really want to know whether we're sick or not, then they should do the check-up much better. Otherwise, how do they know when we are sick?.

The same opinion was expressed by other *Oportunidades* programme recipients such as Julia (HH-001; 47), Susana (HH-026; 38); and Arcelia (HH-021; 44).

Carolina (HH-022; 33) affirmed that the emergency opening hours do not work as they should:

[L]ast Sunday when my husband injured his head, we went to the health centre, I rang the bell several times and they didn't answer the door.

The data presented in the first part of this section suggest that while both groups tend to follow the same pattern of interaction with state educational institutions, in the case of the LHCS, families on the *Oportunidades* programme tend to interact more with these institutions than non-recipients.

Bearing in mind that the family on the programme receive money for sending their children to school and bringing family members to the LHCS for medical check-ups even if they are not sick, conditionality may be an operational element in *Oportunidades* programme design that informs their interaction with local state institutions. This is explored in the next section.

5.2.3 Conditionality: The 'behaviour-testing' process of the *Oportunidades* programme at the operational front line

As discussed in the previous chapter, conditionality, co-responsibility and targeting criteria and mechanisms are the three main components that inform the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme. At operational level conditionality is more significant due to the connection between the programme's requirements and cash transfer benefits. This connection is strong due to the moral discourse of obligation and sanction founded on perceptions of poor families' cultural behaviour patterns related to human capital formation such as their lack of interest in investing in health and education. These discursive practices are evident in the interaction between frontline operators of the programme and state policy recipients and reflect a paternalistic relationship between the state and the policy recipients.

According to Scott and Gordon (2005) in a paternalistic relationship the tactic for securing social control over subordinates is to convert power relationships into moral ones. In practice, paternalistic relationships shape many institutional arrangements, a good example being the institutionalisation of gift-giving practices where access to social protection is linked to conditioning poor families' behaviour.

At the ground level of the *Oportunidades* programme, the institutionalisation of the gift-giving practice is expressed in the everyday interactions between frontline state officials (doctors, teachers and *enlace municipal*) and state policy recipients; their interaction is mutually bonded by asymmetric types of reciprocity that involve subtle notions of control on the side of the frontline operators and are expressed through moral notions of gratitude and privilege regulating this latter group's behaviour.

These moral notions of gratitude and privilege are implicitly connected to the notions of inclusion/exclusion that the programme entails due to the implementation of the mechanism that targets the poor. Standing, (2007) in his criticism of targeting and *conditionalities* that cash transfer programmes like *Oportunidades* involve, asserts that these two terms 'go together with the notion of "*the deserving poor*" and with its opposite, "*the undeserving poor*"'. This distinction tends to define the boundaries between those who are capable of work and '(t)hose who fall into the state of "need" [poverty] [...] of assistance to return them to the mainstream of society, capable of labour' (ibid:25). The result is, as he states, 'a mix of *means-testing* and *behaviour-testing* [a psychometric test used by employers to determine if job candidates' profiles suit the organisation], coupled with a drift towards *social therapy*'.⁵¹

The previous statement that there is a behaviour-testing mechanism embedded in the notion of conditionality reinforces the idea that there is an implicit moral discourse informing state policy design in which a bi-parental and nuclear poor family with gender-prescribed domestic labour (father as the breadwinner and mother at home fulfilling the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme) is depicted as the 'ideal state policy deserver' (see social construction of needs in Chapter 4).

What is more, the mix of targeting mechanisms and conditionality implies a privilege in being selected as recipients, but at same time obligation which the mere anticipation of probable sanctions (ranging from cash transfer reductions and deferments to total exclusion from the programme) is often sufficient to regulate *Oportunidades* recipients' behaviour.

Evidence of how the notions of privilege and obligation are brought together at the ground level of is provided in an interview with the '*enlace municipal*':

This programme is a great opportunity for women. Those who are receiving its benefits are really lucky. Therefore they have to fulfil their obligations. The participants signed a document agreeing to the programme; hence they have to fulfil their obligations. (Key informant 2)

⁵¹ Standing (2007) uses this term as a practical expression of his idea of the implications of 'conditionality' at the frontline of implementation.

This quote suggests a paternal authority implicitly contained in the normative framework of the *Oportunidades* programme, played out by the *enlace municipal*, to regulate the behaviour of the recipients. As Jackman (1994:10) declares, 'Good children learned to comply and defer to the wishes of their fathers', so no digression on the part of the recipients is expected or tolerated. This argument is reinforced in the following quotation:

In the programme there are no preferences. Whatever the reason they may have, if they don't fulfil [the programme requirements] they do not receive the payment; its as simple as that. (Key Informant 2)

Bearing in mind that this interview was carried out in the presence of two women on the *Oportunidades* programme, the quotation above adds force to the argument that at the frontline operation level state officials exercise their authority over recipients by emphasising that under no circumstances can the rules of the programme be transgressed. Based on Foucault's (1991a:216) discussion of discipline as a type of power, comprising a whole set of procedures and applications used by an institution for a particular end, by declaring that 'In the programme there is no preference', the *Oportunidades* programme *enlace municipal* makes sure that 'discipline reigns over [the state policy recipients] as a whole' with no flexibility (ibid). Moreover, as Scott and Marshall (2005) assert, sanctions do not have to be activated to be effective: often the anticipation of reward or punishment is sufficient to ensure conformity.

However, as fathers love their children, paternalistic relationships must involve a certain level of benevolence and as a result any expression of hostility seems inappropriate (Jackman, 1994). Therefore when the idea of sanctioning policy recipients who do not comply with the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme was brought up for discussion, the *enlace municipal* deployed another moral discourse to ensure conformity. This is that women, the direct receivers of the programme's cash transfers, do not need to be rewarded or sanctioned with money because they feel that by participating in the programme they are supporting their family:

[*Oportunidades* programme women recipients] feel that by participating in the programme they are helping their families, hence they do not care about the difficulties involved in the fulfilling of the requirements of the programme. (Key Informant 2)

On several occasions in the course of the 23 semi-structured interviews conducted with the *Oportunidades*' programme recipients, statements supporting the above argument expressed by the *enlace municipal* were expressed.

However, in paternalistic relationships it is difficult to demonstrate empirically whether the recipient's discursive responses indicate consent to the notions of control and sanctions

implicitly contained in *Oportunidades* requirements or whether their accounts are merely external and calculated behaviour – what has been called ‘the necessary pose of the powerless’⁵². In this sense, the most recurrent responses amongst the recipient of the programme were:

The programme is a great opportunity for us. (Patricia-HH-094; 42)

We have the good fortune to participate in the programme. Therefore we have to fulfil its requirements. (Gina-HH-030; 35)

In the programme we have obligations but also rights. We know that by participating in the programme we are helping our family, therefore we have to accomplish our duties. (Arcelia-HH021; 44)

Some programme recipients like Julia (HH-001; 47), who is also the *vocal de control y vigilancia* in the research setting, presented a more internalised discourse of the transformation of poor families’ cultural habits implicitly contained in the notion of conditionality, considering the fulfilment of requirements as a positive action:

I think that sanctions are good because they make us more responsible.

Other recipients, such as Sandra, a *vocal* of the programme in the locality (fieldwork diaries 12/09/07), expressed their observance of the programme rules rather than their internalisation of the prescribed cultural habits. For example, Sandra asserted:

When the [*Oportunidades*] programme selection process was conducted in my community, other women advised me to not report my husband as migrado [a migrant] otherwise the programme authorities would think I don’t need [the money] because he’s working in the US. But I would rather tell the truth; can you imagine what would happen if the doctor at the health centre asked me to bring my husband to the LHCS for his medical check-up – where could I get another husband from?!

On the other hand, Socorro (HH-087; 49), another female recipient, asked to comment on the requirements to fulfil the programme, stated that she carries out her duties despite the fact that on some occasions this may entail significant effort for her and her family, particularly in meeting the health requirements. She affirmed that sometimes she does not have money to pay for public transport to take their three children to visit the LHCS doctor. When they are in this situation she and her three children walk for an hour to get there: ‘Otherwise they cut our money’.

However, it is also important to bear in mind that policy recipients are individuals with agency and hence their behaviour cannot be predetermined by state policy interventions, as implied by elite policymakers who justify conditionality as an operational element in the *Oportunidades* programme. On the contrary, despite the uncertainties and the programme’s

⁵² The expression ‘the necessary pose of the powerless’ is borrowed from Joyce (1980:91).

limitations that policy recipients face in their everyday interaction with frontline state authorities, they can ‘devise ways of solving or if possible avoiding “problematic situations” and thus actively engage in constructing their social worlds, even if this means being “active accomplices” to their subordination’ (Long, 2001:24). Therefore when policy recipients were asked in semi-structured interviews about the difficulties they have faced in accomplishing the requirements of the programme the majority declared that they do not have problems complying with them.

At the same time, most of the household recipients that agreed to participate in the semi-structured interviews tend to fit into the ideal of the poor family implicitly embedded in the *Oportunidades* programme design: 21 of the 23 households interviewed are bi-parental and nuclear, most with the women working at home, and their children attend school; mainly primary school (see Table 5.2, above). As stated by Escobar & González de la Rocha (2009), household composition and life cycle stages are relevant in the fulfilment of the requirements of the programme, and these households tend to be better equipped to fulfil the *Oportunidades* programme requirements.

However, for mothers who are female household heads who perform odd jobs outside the home it is more difficult to fulfil conditions of the programme. Josefina (HH-005; 58) is a single mother and works as a domestic helper in Morelia during the week; she travels to the community every weekend to visit her son Marcos (HH-005; 11), who attends secondary school (grade 7) and her parents, both over the age of 70. She affirmed that sometimes it is difficult for her to attend the health education workshops because they are organised during the week:

I have to admit that sometimes it is a little bit problematic to attend the education workshop, but my *patrona* [boss] is a very nice woman. Also, before I accepted the job she was offering me I explained to her about the *Oportunidades* programme [and its requirements] and she agreed that I could miss one day at work every month in order to attend the workshops [...]. Sometimes she asks me to work late on a Saturday or Sunday; these are the days I would normally spend time with my son and parents but I cannot say no, because otherwise it would be difficult to ask permission to take other days off in order to fulfil my obligations to the programme.

As mentioned, the household lifecycle is relevant in fulfilling the *Oportunidades* programme requirements. When children – especially boys – reach the age of 12 they can start taking low-skilled jobs which bring in income for the family, hence families need to make more complicated decisions. For example, when Susana (HH-026; 38), who is living with her husband who lives and works in the community and has never migrated to work in the US and two of her four sons, was asked to explain her difficulties in achieving the requirements of the programme, she asserted:

Sometimes we do not have time to attend the LHCS for the medical check-ups. For example, yesterday my husband and I were talking about our son Jorge [HH-026; 17], because some relatives want him for a job as a painter and the money is really good. So we have decided to take our boy to talk to them tomorrow. But then I have been thinking: 'Well, if [my relatives] decide to take Jorge to perform this job, we have the medical check-ups this coming Thursday [...]. So sometimes is difficult to organise ourselves to do both at the same time.

Another way of exploring conditionality as a behaviour-testing mechanism at the front line is through the opinions of the *Oportunidades* programme frontline operators.

Amongst policy actors working at the frontline level of implementation, perceptions of poor families' cultural patterns of behaviour are also evident among teachers at the secondary school and LHCS doctors.

In an interview with a doctor who is the director of the LHCS (Key Informant 1), when asked if the health care workshops have internalised the habit of preventive health care among *Oportunidades* recipients he responded:

Well in this case the obligation lies with the mothers [...] It is them that we need to have an impact on [in order to internalise the habit of preventive health care in poor families], because of the role they play in the sanitation of their houses. (Key Informant 1)

He explained that quite a few of the mothers on the *Oportunidades* programme are not really interested in the health and nutritional condition of their children; if they go to the health centre for the medical check-up and the workshops it is because of the money they receive from the programme. Then he clarified:

Not all of them, but let's say around 20 percent. (Key Informant 1)

Most of the time, when we go to visit a [poor] household and we arrive without any advance notification. We find that things there are wrong, hygienically speaking. We find rubbish spread around the floor; the children are in a really bad condition – they are dirty and unwashed; [the women] do not change the children's clothes every day; and it's [through these everyday practices] that we can see whether the programme has had an impact or not [in internalising preventive health care habits] on them.

We understand that their houses are quite poor and most of the time they do not have any kind of floor covering, therefore they are dirty. But then when they come [to the LHCS] because they have to fulfil the *Oportunidades* medical check-up requirement, their children are dirty and they just wipe their face and that's it: they try to excuse themselves by saying that at home there was a water shortage, or the lack of infrastructure is another excuse [...]. So they do not take into consideration that hygiene is part of the health condition of their children. (Key Informant 1)

Poor families are often depicted by state authorities as showing no interest in interacting with state institutions and living with 'poor housing conditions, crowding, gregariousness' (Lewis, 1970:71-72), but also with a minimum of organisation in their everyday lives.

Certainly it is true that hygienic factors such as cooking the children's food in clean conditions, boiling their drinking water and providing them with a healthy diet are important, but attending the LHCS after taking a shower (as the above quotation suggests), which in fact it is social convention, it is not as determinant as other structural factors such as the quality of the health service and medical attention, to internalise good preventive health practices amongst poor families.

Moreover, it is important to take into account that in a rural context access to water is not very reliable. For instance, in this community households receive water only for three half-days a week. The priority for mothers in these households is to use this to cook, as drinking water, once boiled, and for washing clothes; bathing their children is not a priority.

In relation to the teacher's perceptions of poor families' behaviour regarding education and school attendance requirements, the director of the *Telesecundaria*⁵³ school located in the community (Key Informant 6) affirmed:

We are very strict about school attendance. When parents come to ask permission to take their children home because of an apparent family reason, we don't lend [he uses this expression] children – especially boys, to them very easily. Unless we're sure they are not going to send them to work somewhere else.

Most of the time we know when boys are not at home helping their family. This is because we can ask one of their neighbours. So when this happens we talk to the child and say to him: 'We know you were not at home helping your family, because someone else saw you working somewhere else'. Then we explain to him that he cannot miss school, because if he misses school three times during the report period [two months], his family will receive a sanction [cash discount or temporary deferment] from the *Oportunidades* programme. We are very strict, but sometimes this does not work. When families find it difficult to send children to the school on regular basis, the parents prefer to move them to another secondary school in the next community (3-5 km distance). The teachers are more flexible there. (Key Informant 6)

The doctor's and teacher's accounts above show that conditionality was initially set up to encourage poor families' use of state services through the fulfilment of health, nutritional and school attendance requirements. However, at the front line this process is judgemental, and even if they fulfil all the requirements of the programme the recipients are then required to meet further targets such as attending the LHCS in a clean condition and behaving properly while waiting to be seen. Marcia (HH-051; 30) and Delia (HH-091; 30), interviewed separately during the second stage of the fieldwork asserted:

⁵³ *Telesecundaria* is a system of distance education programmes for secondary and high school students created by the Mexican government and available in rural parts of the country (retrieved 15/03/09 from <http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/lwf/doc/portfolio/abstract8.htm>).

We were told off by nurses at the LHCS because our children were running around and playing in the health centre waiting room while waiting to be seen by the doctor.

Furthermore, the Director of the *Telesecundaria* (Key Informant 6) stated:

In the past, children were scruffy and unkempt and had nits in their hair, and their families were the same. Actually, some of them still do not take regular showers because that is one of their customs. If the children see that their father only has a shower once every three days you can't expect anything different from them. But we can see that the doctors at the LHCS insist on the hygienic requirements of recipients of the programme and now you can see the benefits, as the number of diseases amongst the students has reduced a lot [the speaker does not connect the vaccination programme which now takes place twice a year to the reduction of disease in the school]. But also, we are reinforcing the changes in their behaviour and are also improving the way they speak by removing the slang which is used in rural areas; now you can see that they talk more like people in the city.

The threat of being sanctioned has led poor families to organise themselves, individually and collectively, in a variety of ways when they have to interact with the state education and health centres to fulfil the *Oportunidades* requirements. At this ground level of state policy implementation, interactions between state policy actors and family recipients tend to be shaped by moral discourses of compliance and discretionary practices (Lipsky, 1980).

Although both compliance and discretion inform the interactions between teachers/doctors and policy recipients, the level of compliance and discretion is different in each case. While compliance tends to be more common in interaction with teachers at the local school, with doctors and nurses at the local health centre discretion tends to predominate (as later is discussed). Furthermore, the moral discourses of compliance and discretion informing the *Oportunidades* programme recipients' interaction with these two state institutions operate at different levels among their members.

Whereas the programme's educational conditions involve only the mother and young children of the household, the medical check-ups require the compliance of other adult members of the family, whose attendance (especially in the case of adult males) suggest different degree of discretion, or exception to the regulation of the *Oportunidades* programme, on the side of LHCS doctors. This has led to gendered patterns of interaction between recipients and these two state institutions at ground level. The different patterns of interaction in local schools and health centres (see subsections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2, respectively) and their gendered nature are explored in the next two subsections.

5.3 Gendered effects in poor rural households' interaction with state institutions at ground level

5.3.1 Educational institutions

In the *Oportunidades* programme elite actors working at the policy design level assume that poor Mexican families do not invest enough in education, and this lack of interest in education is mainly perceived as a cultural pattern of behaviour. Therefore school attendance is one of the conditions of receiving the programme's cash transfer benefits.

Discursive responses from mothers on the *Oportunidades* programme suggest that they feel positive about the effects of the programme on their children's school attendance. For example, Josefina (HH-005; 11), whose son Marcos is in the first year of secondary school (grade 7), expressed her opinion:

Before, we were very ignorant; now children are more awake, you can see that they are more independent. I think this is good because they can defend themselves much better in life.

Patricia (HH-094; 42), whose daughter Monica (HH-094; 12) is in the last year of primary education (grade 6), describes the sexual education given at school as a positive benefit for children:

Nowadays, children discuss things in a more open manner. We were very ignorant. For example I was quite grown up and still didn't know where children came from. Our parents never talked to us about these things.

Carolina (HH-022; 33) has never attended school and taught herself to read and write. She is married to a man who used to work in the US, and their three children receive the benefit of *Oportunidades* educational grants. She emphasises the positive benefits of girls having access to education:

I always tell my daughter [the eldest, in grade 7] that you need to study and do your best at school because in the future if you get married and you can't get along with your husband you won't have to put up with him just because you aren't well-prepared. (HH-022, semi-structured interview; second stage fieldwork)

The above accounts suggest that after over a decade of implementation, among policy recipients the benefits of education already seem to be internalised, therefore families comply with the educational requirements of the programme more because they perceive the benefit to their children than because of the programme's sanctions for non-attendance.

However, it should be borne in mind that the positive attitude to children's access to school has been promoted through the allocation of cash transfers. This account above does not provide enough evidence to determine whether there has been a transformation in poor families' patterns of behaviour or whether government incentives are still required in order

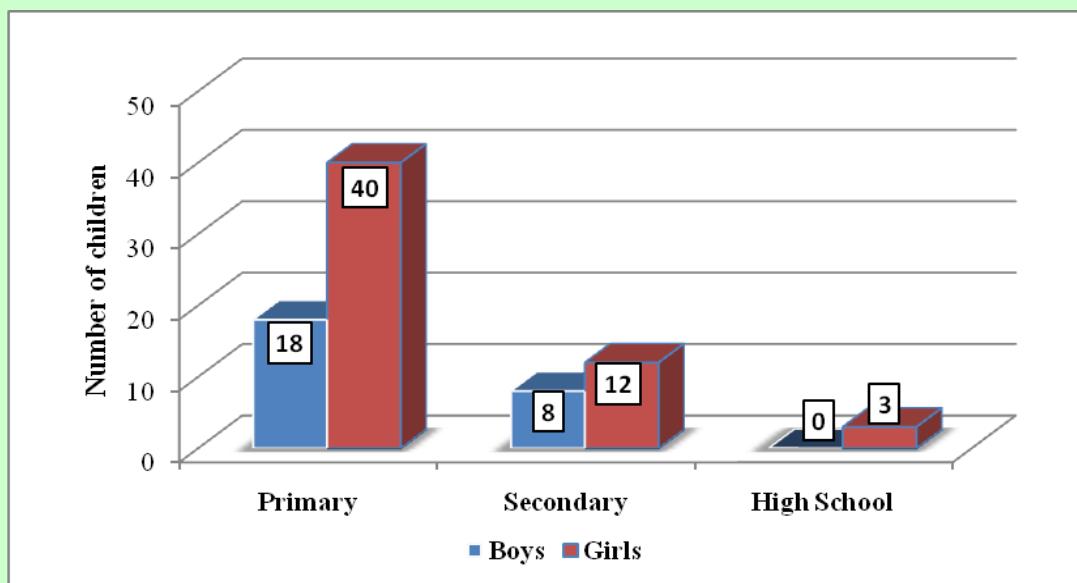
that poor children, and particularly girls, have full access to human capital development benefits.

As mentioned earlier, the cash transfer benefits are higher for girls attending secondary or high school (equivalent to grades 7-12, US educational system) (SEDESOL, 2008a). The gap between boys' and girls' educational grants widens with each grade starting from the first year of secondary school, and in the last year of high school (grade 12) they receive US\$10 a week more than boys. For instance, during July-December 2008 the educational grant for girls in the last year at high school was around US\$80, while boys received around US\$70 (SEDESOL, 2008a).

The rationale informing the decision to give more money to girls than to boys is based on girls' and boys' unequal access to education, mainly explained by social conventions that define men as breadwinners and women as dependants; therefore parents prefer to send boys to school rather than girls (Molyneux, 2006).

Data related to the use of educational services by rural households show that ten years after the *Oportunidades* programme (initially PROGRESA, 1997) started operating in this community this gender gap has been not only reduced but also reversed. At the time the fieldwork for this research was conducted (May, 2007-January, 2008) the number of girls attending secondary and high school (12) was greater than that of boys (8). In fact, there were no boys attending high school at all (see Figure 5.1, below).

Figure 5.1: *Oportunidades* programme at the research site. Number of boys and girls receiving educational grants⁵⁴



Source: Author (2007), data collected through household questionnaires.

The fact that more girls than boys attend secondary and high school in the case study area can be explained by several factors. One, as previously mentioned, is that boys can take work and earn money from the age of twelve (Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2009), so sending boys to school represents a higher opportunity cost for their families than sending girls. Moreover, girls tend to have fewer options for work and earn lower wages (*ibid*). Because of this, compliance with the conditions of the *Oportunidades* programme is easier to achieve for families with children attending primary school or teenage daughters at secondary and/or high school. Families with teenage boys find it more difficult to comply with the school attendance requirement, and here discretion on the part of teachers comes into play. This was discussed in an interview with the director of the secondary school (Key Informant 6) on the research site:

Here there is no complicity between teachers and parents: at the beginning of the school year we call them for a meeting and at that meeting we let them know the amount of money they are going to receive for each child.

⁵⁴ According to the *Oportunidades* programme official data there are 97 household and 87 children receiving the benefits of this programme. However, when the household questionnaires were applied, just 70 of the total households participating in this programme agreed to answer the questionnaire. As result, data related 81 (out of 87) children receiving the educational grant were included in the questionnaires. The data (year of school and sex) concerning to the other 6 children are missed. Information retrieved 04/05/09 from:

http://www.oportunidades.gob.mx/Wn_Inf_General/Padron_Liq/Padron_Benef/Pad_Familias/padron_familias_det.php?opcion=2&estado_id=16&estado_des=MICHOACAN&maxid=14&fechagenero=01/1/2008

The aim of this meeting is to ensure that they do not remove their children from the school. We are very strict and absences are noted in all circumstances. We are constantly reminding them that there is no flexibility to this rule. They are allowed three absences a month; this includes family reasons such as health problems. When they come and say, for instance, 'My mother is going to have an operation', we allow them to leave school, but they know that this will be recorded as an absence. We accept that we have had cases, especially among boys, where they have been removed from the *Oportunidades* programme because they have exceeded the total annual number of absences [permitted] during the year, which is twelve. In addition, it is sad, but since we have become stricter with school attendance the numbers of students attending school has dropped. As I have mentioned before, some families would rather move their children to one of the other two local schools where the teachers are more flexible, and we know that these teachers allow children to miss weeks of school without applying any sanctions. This can sometimes cause us problems with parents, especially when their children are removed from the programme, because when they compare their case with those of other children they ask: 'Why have my children been removed from the programme when I know that there are other children who miss more school than mine?'. We tell them that this is not our fault; this is the responsibility of the *Oportunidades* programme. We report all absences to them and if there is a mistake on their part it is not our fault.

When asked about special circumstances or exceptions to the rules he said:

Well, yes; we need to accept that there is a human dimension here and we need to take the context into account, such as the community, the family and the students themselves. [...] Every two months we need to report the number of absences to the *Oportunidades* state level office and we (the other teachers and I) need to evaluate situations where we need to make exceptions to the rules. For example, we have the case of a boy whose father is not supporting him [in his studies], so he needs to ask for support from other people. Sometimes he comes to the school and says: 'Teacher, I need to leave the school to go and work'. For example, today he came and told me: 'Tomorrow I need to work, I need to collect some pumpkins at 0900 so what can I do?' I told him: 'You need to come to school at 0700 as usual and then go and collect the pumpkins at 0900 and come straight back'. I always do this because I want to demonstrate that there is no complicity here. I insist that usually we know when they are telling the truth and we know when they are not helping their family and are working somewhere else. The *Oportunidades* programme is very clear about this situation, and we do not consent to children being removed from the school by their parents to work and bring money into the home.

As can be deduced from the account above, compliance is easier than discretion, and there may be several reasons for this. One of these is that the primary and secondary schools are located in the research setting, so no time or investment in transportation is required and families find it easy to send children to these schools. Another reason is that members of the community observe one another, so children working when they should be at school are seen by others, including teachers. The other reason is the role that the teacher plays in the community. After working there for ten years he has developed a status that involves notions of authority and prestige as a strict, but at the same time supportive and honest, person. Because of this it is possible to argue that his discourse about compliance with the rules is

more oriented to the parents, while his interaction with the children is informed by notions of 'flexible' sympathy – especially in the case of boys, who, he perceives, find it more difficult to comply with the regulations of the *Oportunidades* programme due to family work commitments. Hence his interaction with them fluctuates from observance of the rules to leniency in certain circumstances.

For instance, during one of my visits to the secondary school one of the children asked permission to leave to take his car to the garage. He explained that it was extremely important that he do so as his family used the car for transporting merchandise. The teacher agreed to his request, telling him to return to school afterwards. As an observer it was difficult to determine whether the boy was telling the truth or not, and I do not know whether he returned to school that afternoon (fieldwork diaries, 05/11/07).

In the *Oportunidades* programme the moral discourse of discretion informing the interaction of teenage boys with state educational centres tends to be more recurrent when they start taking on odd jobs in the local labour market while at secondary school. But when they have completed their secondary education they are 15 years old and are predisposed to drop out of school to migrate to the US labour market. According to information provided by the Director of the *Telesecundaria* School, until autumn 2007 when this interview was conducted no boys in the community who had completed secondary education at that school had gone on to high school:

Unfortunately, the students' perspective is quite clear. They are just waiting to finish secondary school to go to the US. Most of the students that decide to continue with their high school education are women. But this is because they do not have many options: either they go to high school – just a few of them, or they go to work as domestic helpers until they get married. (Key Informant 6)

The director of the *Telesecundaria* affirmed that the rate of migration to the US for work by young men in the community is very high, with only around ten per cent remaining in the community:

When boys are around 15 or 16 they have developed good physical condition for work. At this age their body is strong enough to start working, hence they go to the US [...] just those boys who are not strong enough stay here. (Key Informant 6)

The absence of young men of 18 (or even younger) to 25 years old in the community is quite visible. During the fieldwork stage it was possible to meet a few of the seven or so boys living in the community and informal conversation with some of them and with their mothers revealed that they were doing odd jobs while waiting for an opportunity to go to the US.

On the other hand, it is evident that the *Oportunidades* programme plays a significant role in giving girls full access to secondary and high school education. The affirmative action of

giving more money to girls attending secondary and high school – with the more restricted labour market for females, – has had a gendered effect on rural household interaction with state educational institutions. Currently girls remain at school for longer than boys; the data presented above (Figure 5.1) indicate that eight out of the twelve girls attending the secondary school are receiving *Oportunidades* programme educational grants. What is more, the only three students attending high school are girls, and they are all receiving the education grants provided by the programme.

While the US labour market is fairly accessible to young Mexican men, as undocumented workers the work available to them is low-skilled labour which nevertheless pays about ten times what they can earn at home. There is a widely-held notion that schooling will not help them to get better employment in the US and boys' education beyond secondary school is seen as having no value.

Regarding this reduction or reversed gender inequality in access to education, Escobar and González de la Rocha (2009:278) state: 'A difficult question that must be asked is whether the change is permanent because families have been convinced that it is worthwhile investing in girls' education or whether they will need a permanent government incentive to stay close to gender parity'. By contrast, the same authors affirm that due to past inequalities the gender gap in the working-age population persists (*ibid*).

Jackson (1998:74) uses Sen's capabilities approach to argue that 'the question of women's land rights is not one of mere possession, but of what such possession allows them to be and do'. With this in mind and applying her statement to the analysis of the positive gendered effects of the *Oportunidades* programme on girls' access to school, it is possible to say that girls' right to education is not merely concerned with access to state education services; what is more significant is what this access allows them to be and do.

According to the data earlier discussed in Section 5.2, there are 8 girls between 15 and 21 years old living in households participating in the *Oportunidades* programme. Apart from one girl with Downs syndrome who has never attended school (HH-074; 18), the other seven girls had received the educational grants in the past. Of the six that finished secondary school (grade 9) four were working in Morelia as domestic helpers and the other two, who are sisters, were working in low-skilled jobs on a chicken farm near the research site. The seventh girl had completed the second year of high school (grade 11) and is currently married with a new baby and is a housewife.

Women's access to the labour market is very recent. The interview with the director of the *Telesecundaria* School, Key Informant 6, provided evidence that girls started working outside their home just five or six years before the research was conducted. Although his explanation

gives value to the fact that they are receiving the *Oportunidades* educational grant, he explained this change mainly as the result of better public transport links with Morelia, the state's capital city. However, he explicitly emphasised that girls only work until they are married.

Finally, the gendered effect of the affirmative action of giving more money to girls attending secondary and high school is reflected in the higher level of education in girls than in boys. The direct recipients (mainly mothers) of the *Oportunidades* programme are still not very clear about the moral rationale informing the positive action, which is to give girls full access to education. In the focus group organised during the first stage of the fieldwork with female policy and non-policy recipients aged 25 to 50 the higher grants for girls attending secondary and high school were discussed and all the mothers agreed that girls are more expensive than boys. When asked to elaborate on this they stated that girls need more clothes than boys to attend school. Two of the participants, Irene (HH-019; 42) and Alicia (HH-013; 35), both *Oportunidades* recipients, stressed the point that the girls need money to buy essential items such as sanitary accessories and bras and importance of non-essential cosmetics such as make up and hair dye. This was supported by the whole focus group.

When the field research was conducted no girls on the *Oportunidades* programme had yet finished high school. Sonia (HH-052; 20), Camila (HH-085; 17) and Tania (HH-013; 15) are the first girls –together with the girl mentioned above who dropped out of school after Grade 11 – to receive the high school grant.⁵⁵ As a result it was not possible to collect evidence of whether the affirmative action of giving girls full access to education up to high school improves their economic opportunities, to value the human capital invested in them, or to know whether they will still end up in low-skilled jobs such as domestic work.

Even though it was not possible to collect data about girls' access to the labour market after high school, at least six of the 23 household-level semi-structured interviews revealed moral discourses of mothers expressing their support for girls' access to the labour market. However they mainly referred to job opportunities in female-dominated occupations such as secretary, shop assistant and schoolteacher.

The lack of evidence of the impact of *Oportunidades* on girls who complete high school does not allow us to examine whether the affirmative gender discourses of giving girls full access to education still operates when they have to negotiate going to university with their parents, if they decide to do this, or whether they remain marked by cultural constructions of femininity, which in this particular rural context are strongly identified with the traditional

⁵⁵ Interview with the director of the *Telesecundaria* school (Key Informant 6).

social role of getting married at the age of 15 to 18⁵⁶ (high school finishes at around 18-19), having children and fulfilling their responsibilities as mothers, with little recognition of their ‘strategic needs’ (Molyneux, 1985) such as further education that may enhance their economic opportunities and increase their autonomy.

5.3.2 State health institutions

Just as *Oportunidades* rural recipient households have to interact with their local schools, they must also attend the LHCS (local health care service) to comply with its health and nutritional requirements. This includes medical check-ups and health education workshops. Doctors and nurses often also demand that they perform additional community tasks. In the specific case of the rural community where this case study took place these are a monthly meeting in the community organised by the *vocales* of the programme to disseminate operational information among the recipients like the calendar of the educational health workshops and the organisation of *faenas* (unpaid community work) groups, another requirement of the programme, to collect the rubbish every other Tuesday. Chapter 7 explores these requirements in more detail.

Family medical check-ups consist of a ‘basic health package’ of preventive health services. These are extended to all family members and mainly include the prevention and control of several illnesses such as pulmonary tuberculosis, hypertension, diabetes and cervical uterine cancer. However, most of the programme’s medical interventions centre on newborns, children under five years old and women, in particular when they are pregnant or during the puerperal and breastfeeding periods (SEDESOL, 2008a:36-41)⁵⁷.

According to the normative framework of the *Oportunidades* programme (ibid), attendance at the workshops is mandatory for mothers and for children attending high school and receiving the *Oportunidades* educational grant.

Mothers’ workshops are organised as thirty-two monthly sessions (SEDESOL, 2007a) covering topics such as vaccinations, childcare, birth control, preventive care during the early stages of pregnancy, breast and cervix-uterine cancer. Children (usually aged 15-18) at high school need to cover 10 of 32 topics discussed in school workshops throughout the school year from September to May. These are mainly related to sexual and reproductive health issues, prevention of addictions and family violence (SEDESOL, 2007a, 2008a).

⁵⁶ According to information provided by the Director of the Telesecundaria school (Key Informant 6) girls’ have access to job opportunities until they get married.

⁵⁷ For a full account of the 108 preventive health services included in the *Oportunidades* programme see

http://www.oportunidades.gob.mx/Wn_Reglas_Operacion/archivos/Reglas_de_Operacion_2009.pdf (ANNEXE II) (Accessed 20/04/09).

While the *Oportunidades* programme alleges a human capital development orientation for all poor family members this is mainly aimed at poor mothers, mainly when pregnant or breastfeeding, and their children under five, and in discursive terms at the front line most of the preventive health measures and nutritional benefits are oriented towards children under five, born and unborn. Molyneux (2006) asserts that this narrow orientation of the state policy reveals a gender and age distinction, with children the actual recipients of the state health and nutrition policy benefits and their mothers playing a relevant role in their gaining access to them.

The health and nutritional benefits that are part of the conditionalities of the *Oportunidades* programme also reveal elite constructions about the poor's preventive habits. This involves processes of control and regulation in state policy towards the poor in general, with a specific focus on children's health and nutrition. Since children under five are too young to fulfil their obligations their mothers are the focal connection. Therefore, when the doctor who is an LHCS director (Key Informant 1) was asked which members of the family interact most with this local health institution his answer was:

...on the majority of occasions mothers are the member of the family who interact with us most. [Adult] men almost never interact with us. The main reason for this [pattern of interaction] is because mothers need to bring their children (those under five) to the LHCS for their nutritional and health control.

As the doctor stated, in the *Oportunidades* programme adult men tend to interact with the LHCS less or not at all, mainly because the normative framework of the *Oportunidades* programme (SEDESOL, 2008a) just requires that adult members of the household – married and unmarried men and women of all ages – attend for medical check-ups twice a year.

Each of 23 *Oportunidades*-recipient women interviewed declared that they fulfilled the requirements of the programme without problems, and they all alluded to their husbands' supportive attitude every time they have to attend the LHCS for the medical check-up.

In contrast, while the LHCS doctor (Key Informant 1) did not report any problems with the adult women (mainly mothers) attending the medical check-ups and workshops, he asserted that husbands often miss the medical appointments:

What I see here is lack of responsibility in the men [...]. Sometimes [female *Oportunidades* programme recipients] come and report them as *migrados* (emigrants). Others come and tell us that their husband is living here but that he does not want to come because he cannot take time out from his job [...]. Then I tell them: 'Look, if they come just once a year it's enough.' [The programme stipulates two medical check-ups a year for adult men].

Doctors at the LHCS are responsible for the execution of the health component of the *Oportunidades* programme at frontline level of operation, so allowing men to miss one of the

two medical check-ups a year suggests a degree of discretion on the part of the doctor. Doctors working at the front line of the *Oportunidades* programme also play a policy-making role that considers interrelated ‘facets of their position: relatively high degrees of discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority’ (Lipsky, 1980:13). Therefore, as ‘[j]udges decide who shall receive a suspended sentence and who shall receive a maximum punishment’ (ibid), LHCS doctors have discretion in determining the number of medical appointments that state policy recipients can miss and which members of the family receive the benefit of an exception to the rules.

However, the discretion regarding men’s work commitments does not apply in the same manner to women who need to work outside the home. It is therefore relevant to examine why and under what circumstances discretion became one of the characteristics of LHCS doctors.

Lipsky (ibid), in his analysis of the individual dilemmas of the bureaucratic services at the operational front line, understands the discretion about frontline workers’ behaviour as part of the situation these workers have to face in their everyday interaction with the users of public services. ‘[They] often work in situations too complicated to reduce to programmatic formats’: every client requires a response appropriate to their specific context (ibid:15).

During the interview with the (Key Informant 1) director of LHCS it was possible to identify four situations where he expressed a degree of discretion regarding the fulfilment of the *Oportunidades* programme requirements. These were in relation to men who migrate to join the labour market in the US; men’s work commitments in the community; elderly people; and ill-health.

In the particular context of this case study, migration to the US is relevant, hence the *Oportunidades* regulation about men attending the LHCS for medical check-ups has been adapted to this context.⁵⁸ Gabriela (HH-085; 38) is married to a migrant; they are *Oportunidades* programme recipients, but she also plays a role as *vocal de nutrición* in the community. She reported:

My husband has been reported as ‘*migrado*’. So basically he goes to the LHCS for a medical check-up every year when he is around [...] usually between November and December. (HH-085, semi-structured interview; second stage fieldwork)

Gabriela was not the only participant in the household-level semi-structured interviews with a husband working in the US. Griselda (HH-061; 46), Tania (HH-066; 28), Arcelia (HH-071;

⁵⁸ The normative framework (SEDESOL, 2008) does not mention any deference to the household with one of its member under the status of *migrado*.

43) and Delia (HH-091; 30) were in the same situation at the time. They were interviewed separately and in all cases they asserted that their husbands were working in the US. When they are home they go to the LHCS for their check-up.

There is another reason for frontline policy operators exercising discretion regarding men's work commitments. Some men (mainly husbands) whose families receive *Oportunidades* benefits remain working in the community or nearby but do not always fulfil the programme's health requirements.

In the study setting, men tend to take temporary jobs, for instance as bricklayers or *jornaleros* (farm hands), to complement the income from their crops. These are paid daily, usually at around US\$10 a day), so if they miss a day at work to fulfil the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme they lose a day's wages.

In these cases the doctor (Key Informant 1) reported that he makes allowances for working husbands:

I told them:⁵⁹ 'Look, he just has to come once in the year, and he just has to ask to leave his job for one hour'. However, here [the LHCS] there are always a lot of people and [it] often takes longer [...]. Then I told them: 'If he just comes to have his blood pressure measured or if he just comes for a chronic disease detection test – which is done by filling out a questionnaire with their weight, size and body mass index –, it is enough.'

As mentioned earlier, the discretion that doctors show towards men's work commitments does not apply in the same manner to the women who work outside the home. In the research setting adult women tend to be mothers working at home. It may be that doctors and nurses working at the LHCS take it for granted that women do not find it difficult to fulfil the *Oportunidades* health and nutrition requirements, therefore it is difficult for them to identify specific situations in which to apply discretion in their everyday interaction with them.

The only two of the 23 female policy recipients interviewed (household-level interviews; fieldwork second stage) who are currently working outside the home are Juliana (HH-001; 47) and Josefina (HH-005; 58). Both declared that they have no problem with the family's medical check-up requirements. Considering this together with the data collected in the household-level questionnaires, perhaps they do not face problems mainly because in both cases all of their family members are adults; hence they just need to attend for medical check-ups twice a year.

However, a gender bias can be revealed through careful analysis of their everyday working situations. As previously mentioned, Josefina (HH-005; 58) declared that she had to negotiate

⁵⁹ The person interviewed portrays himself as if he were talking to the women recipients of this programme.

her attendance at the monthly health educational workshops with her *patrona* rather than with the LHCS doctors and nurse. Juliana (HH-001; 47) did not report any problems fulfilling *Oportunidades* health and nutritional requirements.

Eight of the twenty-three women interviewed in their households commented that they have the option of 'taking their husband' to the LHCS on Sundays for the medical check-up. This expression was recurrently used. As men use their work commitments as an excuse for not attending the medical check-ups and women are the direct recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme benefits, there is a widely-held notion amongst policy actors at the front line (LHCS doctors, female recipients and their families) that the fulfilment of the requirements of the programme by other adult members of their families is also part of women's obligations.

An example of this was found in the semi-structured interview with Marcia (HH-051; 30) during the second data collection stage:

When (my husband) is working. I take him (to the LHCS) on Sunday.

Lipsky, (1980:15) in his analysis of the discretionary behaviour of state government officials working at the front line, asserts:

[They] work in situations that often require responses to the (humane) dimensions of situations. They have discretion because the accepted definitions of their tasks call for sensitive observation and judgement, which are not reducible to programme formats [...]. In short, to a degree society seeks not only impartiality from its public agencies but also compassion (or sympathy) for special circumstances and flexibility in dealing with them.

In terms of impartiality, in this case understood as an strict observance to the rule, the LHCS doctor (Key informant No.1) explained that the preventive health requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme are centred on the newborn and children under five years old, and women in particular when they are pregnant or during the breastfeeding period, therefore the regulations of the programme tend to be more strictly at this member of the family:

An example of how the regulation (of the *Oportunidades*) programme is stricter with these members of the family recipients is the number of times they need to come to the LHCS for medical check-ups. These are: when children are under 2 years old they need to come at least once a month – once for measuring and weighing and the other time to pick up formula. The same number of appointments are demanded when children over 2 years old present levels of malnourishment..

This account does not take into consideration the monthly educational workshops, and because of this situation, mothers need to go to the LHCS more than once a month.

On the other hand, compassion (or sympathy) and exceptions to the rule are applied to the elderly people participating in the programme. Key Informant 1 explained:

With elderly people [fulfilling the *Oportunidades* conditions] is even more complicated, especially with patients who present the secondary effects of a stroke, or if they have a physical impairment because of their age [...]. Sometimes it is very difficult for them to come because they live far away from the LHCS and their families do not have a car to bring them in. Others live on their own because their families have migrated to the US [...]. So in these cases, although they are required to come here twice a year we [I and other staff⁶⁰ at the LHCS] allow [their families] to fail. We tell them: 'Just bring her/him at least once a year'.

In the research setting there were no reported cases of elderly people having problems fulfilling *Oportunidades* requirements. Two elderly sisters were interviewed separately during the second stage of the fieldwork. *Doña*⁶¹ Luisa (71) and her husband *Don* Polo (77) were living in the same household (HH-005) with Josefina (58) and her son Marco (11) at the time of the interview. All were receiving *Oportunidades* benefits. *Doña* Luisa said:

'We always go together to the LHCS [for the family check-ups]' (HH-005, semi-structured interview; second stage fieldwork)

Doña Elisa (HH-092; 78) and her husband *Don* Artemio (HH-092; 85) have no children living in the same household. However, they share their plot with their son Armando (HH-093; 59). Then she declares:

My husband and I do not have any problem with the medical check-ups. [Armando] always takes us to the LHCS. (HH-092, semi-structured interview; second stage fieldwork)

The LHCS doctor (Key Informant 1) reported that elderly people living on their own get support from the *vocal de salud* (volunteer health worker):

The *vocal de salud* is responsible [...] for keeping an eye on their carnet [health appointment record] but sometimes this is not enough. Hence we have to accept that we have some problems with elderly people's medical check-ups.

The doctor later explained that the *vocales de salud* are volunteer workers, but at the same time they are also recipients of the programme and tend to prioritise fulfilling their family commitments to the program to avoid getting their cash transfers cut.

Even though there are no direct accounts of elderly people having problems with attending programme check-ups, at one of the meetings (fieldwork diaries 17-07-07) attended by the *enlace municipal* (Key Informant 2) and all the programme *vocales* in the locality⁶², the former affirmed that there were some reports of problems with the elderly people in the programme. According to her explanation there are some situations where elderly people do not receive (or only just partially receive) their cash transfer benefits (around US\$ 26 per

⁶⁰ Three doctors (director included) and three nurses.

⁶¹ *Doña* and its masculine meaning *Don* are common terms used in Mexico to show respect to elderly people.

⁶² The total number of *vocales* in the locality is between 40 and 46 (Key Informant 2).

month), and are not brought to the LHCS for their check-ups. However, soon after the meeting was over I asked the *enlace municipal* for more detail of the problems that elderly people face in the programme. She replied:

Here everything [related to the *Oportunidades* programme frontline implementation] works normally. If I mentioned that, it was because I wanted to anticipate any problematic situation. (Key Informant 2)

The idea of anticipating problems contained in the everyday interface between the *enlace municipal* and *vocales* (who are also policy recipients; see Chapter 6), resembles a notion of hierarchical surveillance (Foucault, 1991a) more than a moral discourse of compliance and discretion.

The notion of being permanently observed helps this state policy to operate efficiently; it reduces the inefficiency of the state policy implemented in mass numbers to compact groups of individuals. The idea of 'to anticipate any problematic situation' (Key informant 2), involves a notion of being constantly observed that allows the frontline operators to control the state policy recipients. The idea of being permanently observed creates order and discipline among the state policy recipients and plays out notions of '[...] hierarchical surveillance, continuous registrations, perpetual assessment and classification' (Foucault, 1991a:220).

Discretion through compassion is also applied when a recipient of the *Oportunidades* programme presents a medical condition that hinders his/her attendance at the LHCS for a check-up. Socorro's husband (HH-087; 34) has muscular dystrophy; she reported that doctors allow her to not take him to the LHCS for his medical check-up:

The doctor knows that my husband is sick, so he always puts his name on the list, so I don't get [my cash transfers] cut.

There may be other extreme cases where men do not go for their check-ups because they feel embarrassed at being identified as *Oportunidades* recipients. *Don Ramon* (HH-006; 66) said:

...I have no problem about going to the LHCS but other men do not want to go; they feel embarrassed when they have to go there for the family check-ups.

Antonia (HH-002; 54) and her husband *Regino* (HH-002; 58) receive *Oportunidades* benefits. He has a job in local government administration. *Antonia* declared:

I don't know when my husband goes to the LHCS for the medical check-up. He never wants to go with me. But he must go because [they never cut my money].

A fifth level of discretion is employed when the LHCS doctors and nurse are overloaded with work. An informal conversation with *Sonia* (HH-052; 20: fieldwork diaries 15/07/08) revealed that she and her father do not attend the LHCS for check-ups on a regular basis. When she was asked to explain the doctor and nurses' reaction to this, she replied:

The doctors and nurses really don't care if you go or not; actually they are happier if you don't go. We are doing them a favour because that place is so packed that two fewer people makes it easier for them.

The doctor (Key Informant 1) explained that LHCS centres, like the one in the research area, have an operational capacity of to a maximum of 3,000 people for medical consultation, vaccination campaigns and emergencies, and this is not restricted to *Oportunidades* programme recipients. In practice around 9,000 people are registered at the centre. It can be assumed, then, that the everyday working conditions that doctors and nurse face on the ground also have a role in the degree of discretion applied.

At this frontline level of operation, the tasks are complex therefore state government officials working at this level consider necessary to employ discretion to make services effective (Lipsky, 1980). What is more, Lipsky (ibid:15-16) asserts, is that: 'For both workers and [service users], the maintenance of discretion contributes to the legitimacy of the welfare state'.

Another account of discretion comes from a household-level semi-structured interview conducted with Susana (HH-026; 38: fieldwork, second stage), who in the past was a *vocal de salud* in the same setting. She declared:

When I was a vocal it was easier to deal with the family's medical check-ups. I would go to the doctor on my own and tell him: 'You know that my family are healthy', so he just used to sign the [*Oportunidades* programme] report stating that my family has attended for medical check-ups [...]. When you are a vocal things are easier.

This suggests discretion in interactions between the *Oportunidades vocales* and LHCS doctors. Nonetheless, this dispositional agreement is informed more by their role as *vocales* than as female recipients. The role played by these frontline volunteer workers is examined in Chapter 6.

Table 5.8 summarises the specific circumstance of negotiation between doctors/nurses and families in relation to the accomplishment of *Oportunidades* programme medical check-ups.

Table 5.8: Grounds for check-up exemption among *Oportunidades* recipients (No. of state policy recipients interviewed)

No problems	Migration	Men's work commitments	Elderly people	Ill-health
7	5	8	2	1

Table 5.8 shows that the majority of the state policy recipients interviewed could identify some specific circumstance, rather than difficulty, that they had to negotiate in their interaction with frontline *Oportunidades* operators working at LHCS (doctors and nurses) to comply with the medical check-up requirements of the programme. Julia (HH-001), who was not in a conjugal relationship at the time, and two male participants (HH-004 and HH-035) did not identify any problematic situation or deference on the side of the LHCS.

State-planned interventions like the *Oportunidades* programme are ongoing transformational processes that are constantly reshaped by their own internal organisational dynamic and by the specific conditions they encounter or create (Long, 2001). This includes the responses to the regulation of this programme on the side of doctors working at the frontline operation of the *Oportunidades* programme and its beneficiaries. At this level LHCS doctors may struggle to define and defend their own space for interaction in the organisational structure of the programme. They need to make complicated decisions about whether to apply the norm strictly and exclude poor families from the benefits of the programme or to negotiate between the regulations and the reality that they face in their everyday interactions.

Also, due to the gender and age distinctions embedded in the programme's design, the family members who interact more with the LHCS are adult women fulfilling their maternal responsibility for their children, who are the actual targets of this social protection policy (Molyneux, 2006:426-427) (see Chapter 7).

Whereas the moral discourse of compliance and the degrees of discretion emphasise the formal processes of the state policy, at the front line there are also other patterns of interaction between state authorities and policy recipients that have emerged as 'unintended consequences' (Giddens, 1984) of the policy interventions. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the different patterns of interaction between state institutions and recipients only become clear when not just the dynamics in the state institutions themselves but also the 'informal processes of negotiation and settlement' (Nuitjen, 2003:22) are taken into account. These processes are reflected in the mechanisms of intermediation developed by local actors (*Oportunidades enlace municipal* and *vocales*), who have an ambivalent position at the front line of the programme. The patterns of interaction between local actors and *Oportunidades*

recipients and the moral discourses played out around their everyday interfaces with each other are discussed in the Chapter 6.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has presented empirical evidence from the front line of the *Oportunidades* programme to examine the morality that operates in the state policy which influences access to social protection, and its implications for rural households.

Descriptive statistics connected to the use of education services indicate that in participant households girls tend to reach higher levels of education than boys at secondary and high school (grades 7-12). The fact that the higher levels of education are not restricted to girls receiving the *Oportunidades* programme educational grants (which involves an affirmative action of giving bigger grants to girls than to boys) suggests that other factors such as gendered access to the labour market informs households' use of state educational services. In rural Mexico boys under the age of 15 can take low-skilled paid work in the local or US labour market, hence sending them to school represents a higher opportunity cost for their families than in the case of girls, whose job opportunities tend to be paid less well.

Descriptive statistics indicate that *Oportunidades* recipient families tend to interact more often with these institutions than the non-family recipients of this programme. This is mainly due to the requirement that family recipients have to fulfil the programme's health and nutrition requirements (medical check-ups and monthly health educational workshops). These data were complemented by 30 household-level semi-structured interviews (with 23 state policy recipients and 7 non-recipients), and qualitative empirical accounts which reveal that in the case of a health event (especially an emergency or serious illness) recipient and non-recipient families tend to use private medical services.

This section also discusses rural households' perceptions and opinions of the quality of education and health services at ground level. Most of the households interviewed considered the quality of education good, as long their children could learn how to read and write and execute arithmetic calculations. This is connected to the low-skilled employment available to children; it is understandable that among the mothers interviewed there is a widely-held notion that basic levels of literacy are qualification enough to gain employment. The quality of education was discussed in depth in the household-level semi-structured interviews, in which respondents centred their opinions on the tangible items that they were able to purchase for their children with the money they received from the *Oportunidades* programme, rather than the quality of education in terms of knowledge, learning and good teaching practice.

In comparison, rural households' perceptions and opinions of state health care services at ground level were more evident than those related to educational services. The information

collected in the 30 household-level semi-structured interviews reveals that the users of state health services share similar opinions and perceptions that state health care services are basic and poor quality.

Bearing in mind that the family recipients of the programme receive money on condition that they send their children to school and attend the LHCS for medical check-ups and educational health workshops, I propose that this operational element of conditionality considered in the *Oportunidades* programme design is informing their interaction with local state institutions.

The last part of this section explores the interaction between the local state institutions and policy recipients in fulfilling the *conditionalities* of the programme. The interaction between both groups of policy actors is mutually bonded by asymmetric institutional gift-giving practices that involve subtle notions of control on the part of the programme's frontline operators, expressed through moral discourses of obligation and sanction regulating recipients' behaviour through behaviour-testing mechanisms. These mechanisms are founded on perceptions of poor families' cultural patterns of behaviour and their lack of interest in building human capital through investment in health and education. Moreover, behaviour-testing mechanisms reinforce the idea, discussed in Chapter 4, of the bi-parental and nuclear poor family with a steady and organised life as 'ideal state policy deservers'.

At this ground level of policy implementation, the interaction between state policy actors – teachers and doctors – and recipient families tends to be shaped by moral discourses of compliance and discretion. Although both compliance and discretion inform their interactions levels of compliance and discretion are different in each case. While compliance tends to be more persistent in teachers' interactions with poor recipient families at the local school, in the case of doctors and nurses working at the LHCS discretion tends to be more predominant. Furthermore, the moral discourses of compliance and discretion informing *Oportunidades* recipients' interaction with these two state institutions operate at different levels. This has led to gendered patterns of interaction between recipients and frontline of the programme operators (teachers and LHCS doctors) which are examined in the last two subsections of this chapter.

Mothers and their born and unborn children under five are the members of the household who are required to comply with the requirements of the programme more than other family members, therefore they interact more often with the local state education and health care services. Adult family members' interaction with state services oscillates around different circumstances involving discretion: men's migration or local work commitments, compassion for elderly people's difficulties, ill-health. In the case of teenage children (mostly boys)

attending school, the exception to compliance is informed by a notion of sympathy on the side of the teachers working at the local school.

The current chapter has focused its attention on the following research questions: How do poor households perceive the social protection offered by the state in the moral dimension; and how does this perception affect how they interact with the state institutions at the frontline of the policy implementation? The empirical discussion conducted in this chapter has been extended to examine state policy actors' implementation and degrees of discretion in their everyday interactions with poor families.

Along with the formal implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme (the fulfilment of requirements and sanctions) there are mechanisms of intermediation between the state and policy recipients that remain outside the formal sphere of control of state policy design and are relevant in its implementation at ground level. Chapter 6 examines these mechanisms of intermediation through 'the image of the effective broker' and 'the notion of necessary connection' (Nuitjen, 2003:3), employing two specific patterns of interaction between frontline programme operators and recipients, *payday* and *faenas*, to illustrate the discussion.

Chapter 6 EMERGENT STRUCTURES IN SOCIAL POLICY INTERFACES

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the mechanism of intermediation that operates between the state and *Oportunidades* programme recipients, in which local actors who work as formal frontline policy implementers influence the operation of the programme on the ground.

The empirical data included in this chapter were mainly gathered through participatory observation, listening and informal conversations with local frontline *Oportunidades* operators (the *enlace municipal* and *vocales*) and recorded in fieldwork diary notes. This information is complemented by the data from the semi-structured interviews (twenty-three policy recipients and two state officials). The data analysis mainly uses QTCA (see methods in Chapter 3).

From an actor-oriented perspective, the state policy process is understood as a ‘socially constructed and [constantly] negotiated process, not simply the execution of [a top-down plan] of action with expected outcomes’ (Long, 2001:72). This theoretical perspective introduces the notion of social interface analysis to examine encounters between diverse groups and individuals in the policy process. Interface analysis facilitates understanding of how the *Oportunidades* policy operates on the ground, emphasising the differences between its formal content and emergent structures that come into play as a result of the ‘unintended consequences’ of planned interventions over which the state has limited control (Giddens, 1984; Long, 2001). In the *Oportunidades* programme these emergent structures are reflected in the mechanisms of intermediation developed by local actors: the *enlace municipal* and *vocales*.

Mechanisms of intermediation between the state and policy recipients involve a wide range of activities that remain outside the control of state policy. At the community level the ‘image of effective brokerage’ and the ‘notion of necessary connection’ (Nuitjen, 2003:3), are useful entry points from which to explore these emergent structures in the analysis of the policy interface. Both concepts are associated with the idea of local policy actors situated in an intermediary position influencing the implementation of the policy at ground level. While the ‘image of effective brokerage’ centres its attention on the interface between the *enlace municipal* and state policy recipients, this includes the monthly meetings⁶³ with the

⁶³ In this locality monthly meetings, usually on the 20th of each month, are attended by the *enlace municipal* and the *vocales*, although *Oportunidades* programme state level officials often chair the meetings. Their main purpose is to disseminate operational information concerning to this programme.

programme's *vocales* and *el día de pago* (payday); the 'notion of necessary connection' informs the interface between *vocales* and recipients in the the different activities that the recipients have to carry out in their community and households in order to receive the economic benefits of the programme.

6.2 The role of local state actors at the front line of policy implementation: the image of effective brokerage

Nuitjen (ibid) argues that local actors who apparently do not have a position in the policy implementation process often depict themselves as effective brokers connecting communities and people with higher levels of the state bureaucracy. This constitutes a centre of power and negotiation between these policy actors and recipients, who are also continuously searching for the 'right intermediary' to connect them with state institutions (ibid).

There are two specific social arenas (see Chapter 3) where the *enlace municipal* – a position filled by a member of local government – intersect with *Oportunidades* programme recipients: at their monthly meetings with the *vocales* and on payday. Both are apparently routine actions where this local policy actor does not necessarily have a role in the operation of the programme, but nonetheless play an intermediary role and in their everyday practice the image of the effective broker is relevant.

6.2.1 Monthly meetings

At their monthly meetings with the *vocales*, the role of the *enlace municipal* is only to notify the *vocales* of operational information related to the programme. For example, at the monthly meeting attended during fieldwork the *vocales* were informed about changes in the holograms that the state policy recipients needed to hand in on payday to receive the cash transfer.⁶⁴ As a result of this change, the *vocales* had to inform the rest of the recipients in their communities about a specific local event to which *Oportunidades* state-level officials were coming to replace the previous holograms with new ones.

Nuitjen (2003) affirms that the image of effective brokerage is accompanied by the idea of a strong and coherent state system in which power is concentrated. In rural Mexico, the author explains, power is concentrated in the hands of local elites who 'can easily bend bureaucratic procedures to their own advantage'. They continuously propagate the idea that the state operates in a 'modern, technocratic, professional manner', and often portray themselves as providing effective brokerage between the policy recipients and higher levels of bureaucracy (ibid:226). Despite the fact that the first intention of the meeting was to disseminate routine

⁶⁴ Every year state policy recipients receive six holograms that identify the two-month cash transfer periods (i.e. hologram no. 1 is for the cash transfer for the two month period of January and February).

information, the *enlace municipal* took the opportunity to stress the relevance of this meeting, how extremely important it was to propagate this information in the right way, and the risk of not attending this event:

As you know, originally people from the state office level were going to chair this meeting. But they had to cancel at the last minute. You know how busy these people are and unforeseen circumstances didn't allow them to be here with you. However, they have asked me to inform you that the holograms to collect the payment are going to be replaced. They are going to call me again to confirm the day of this replacement [...]. However, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you how important it is that you make clear to the rest [of the recipients] that they need to come and do the replacement themselves. Nobody else can do the replacement on another's behalf. If they do not come, there is no way they can collect their next payment. You know how strict the people from the state level office are and I wouldn't like to see any difficult situations next payday. So, please tell them that there are no excuses and that they must come (fieldwork diaries 20/06/2007).

Nuitjen (2004:226) argues that 'institutional practices with uniform procedures and standardized administrative techniques are of limited value for the analysis of discipline and rule in Mexico'. Other government techniques⁶⁵ such as 'official unintelligible terminology' and 'stamps' (or holograms, in the case of *Oportunidades*) also play a relevant role in everyday state policy implementation.

During the household interviews conducted with *Oportunidades* recipients I discussed the purpose of the holograms. Five respondents asserted that the hologram is one of the documents that they have to present with their ID (eg passport or voter's ID card⁶⁶) in order to collect their payment. One of the recipients Gabina (HH-061; 46) explained further:

Each year we receive six holograms and every time we go to collect our money we have to hand one of them in. Each hologram has a number: number 1 to number 6. So, for example, if we receive the payment for the first two months of the year, January-February, then we have to hand in hologram number 1. But once the programme authorities asked us for two holograms instead of one. On that occasion we had gone to collect payment number 5, so we gave to them the holograms 5 and 6, but we received just one payment. I and other recipients asked the *enlace* for an explanation, and she said: 'We're just following instructions, but later I'll call the state office and try to find out what happened' [...] We're still waiting for a response: let's see what happens.

Nuitjen (2003) describes the Mexican bureaucracy at ground level as 'hope-generating' in nature and asserts that this characteristic of Mexican state officials is in part explained by the central and top-down design of the state policy interventions, but is also based on the fact that frontline bureaucrats portray themselves as effective brokers always willing to offer support

⁶⁵ Based on Foucault's notion of governmentality) (see Chapter 3).

⁶⁶ In Mexico the voters' ID cards is commonly known as '*credencial del IFE*' (or IFE card) and is considered official proof of ID.

and initiate a process. As in this case, the *enlace* offered to ask for clarification about the outstanding cash transfer payment. ‘The bureaucracy never says no and creates great expectations’; but these are rarely fulfilled (Nuitjen, 2003:16).

Reports of irregularities in the implementation of the programme can be made directly to the national *Oportunidades* office (SEDESOL, 2008a). The reports are treated as anonymous and can be made by telephone, email or post. The person quoted above accepted that even though she and the other recipients know of this possibility they had not considered it yet. The speaker avoided explaining further.

Contrary to the common view that brokers emerge as a ‘dysfunctional side-effect of the bureaucracy’ (ibid), intermediary practices often occur in agreement with policy recipients who are continuously searching for an intermediary who can connect them with the state institution. A common pattern in these irregularities ‘becomes clear by the fact that [state policy recipients] know where they have to go to have their affairs settled [...], what languages and arguments they have to use in negotiations with the official of the bureaucracy’, and ‘how much they will need to pay for certain services’ (the latter is discussed later in this chapter) (ibid).

Nuitjen (2004) explains that rather than produce rational and coherent explanations of the policy implementation process, local actors’ (or brokers, as she describes them) explanations are often confused and tend to suggest a possibility of help to overcome any difficulty in relation to the policy process. For instance, at the end of August 2007 the *enlace municipal*’s husband stood as the official PRI party candidate for the local mayoral elections in November, and the *enlace municipal* had to resign from her position, as laid down in the rules of the programme currently in force (SEDESOL, 2008a) (fieldwork diaries). An informal conversation with Julia (HH-001; *vocal de control y vigilancia*) and Gabriela (HH-085; *vocal de nutricion*) (fieldwork diaries 30/09/07) revealed that at the last meeting before the *enlace* resigned she gave notice to all the *vocales* that she was not going to attend the next two paydays in October and December, 2007, because the political election process would still be ongoing. But she did not clearly state that she had resigned her position with the *Oportunidades* programme.

However, the *enlace municipal* let the *vocales* know that they could contact her by mobile phone for any information or help they might need. As a result, it was not clear to the two *vocales* whether the *enlace* had already resigned or had just asked for temporary leave. By offering help and close communication with the *vocales*, even though she had already resigned from her position, this local actor was not clearly delimiting her role in the operation of the *Oportunidades* programme.

Indeed, by ‘searching for the “right intermediary” and by presenting themselves as the “right connection”’ (ibid:211), both state policy recipients and local policy actors are implicated in the construction of the image of the effective broker. At this level, frontline officials are motivated because they believe they are helping others; and so creating expectations to be reciprocated by the people they have assisted.

Observation data collected by attending a monthly meeting organised by the *enlace municipal* to disseminate operational information to all the *Oportunidades vocales* in the locality (fieldwork diaries 20/06/2007) show that at the end of this meeting the *enlace municipal* called the three or four *vocales* together for a private conversation. The *vocales* involved in this conversation were from two specific communities on the outskirts of the municipal seat. In an informal conversation with a local government official immediately after the monthly meeting (ibid), these *vocales* were identified as close collaborators with the *enlace municipal* and PRI party adherents. Rumours collected from informal conversation with the same local government official suggest that in that the private conversation the *enlace municipal* was asking the *vocales* to organise a meeting with members of their villages to support her husband in the PRI party’s selection of a candidate for the local mayoral election. The legal framework that regulates *Oportunidades* programme officials’ public actions during political elections (SEDESOL, 2008a) stipulates that state authorities cannot use public resources – including the use of working time – to spread political propaganda that might favour one particular competitor or to distribute money to social programme recipients in exchange for votes.

As Agudo Sanchíz (2009:97) proposes, state officials working on the ground are not just channels or mechanisms for transferring cash benefits and information to policy recipients. They are also actors with loyalties, problems and their own interests. In this specific case the *enlace municipal* and *vocales* were not the only local actors with a political interest in the internal PRI party competition: the local government official who provided the information above (fieldwork diaries 20/06/2007) had her own interest in this internal competition, as she was supporting the other PRI mayoral candidate. Her impression was that if this latter candidate won the local mayoral election she might be able to gain a better position in the next 2008-2012 local government administration (ibid).

Policy recipients are encouraged to confide in the state authorities with whom they interact, and they permit themselves to be manipulated and ordered in the expectation of receiving help from state authorities (Lipsky, 1980). This is suggested in Gabriela’s (*vocal de nutrición*)

account, quoted below, in which she emphasises the improved position of the *enlace municipal* in the local government if her husband were to be elected as mayor:⁶⁷

I think she had to resign from her current position. But can you imagine what will happen to her if her husband wins the election? She'll have a better position in local government. (Fieldwork diaries 30/09/07)

Since the *enlace municipal* was married to the official PRI party candidate it is likely that this local actor was trying to gain support for her husband's political aspirations from the programme recipients, and not just by portraying herself as an effective broker. The good rapport she had developed with the beneficiaries of the programme was also relevant. I use payday to illustrate how the empathy between local policy actors and *Oportunidades* recipients had an effect on the construction of the image of the effective broker.

6.2.2 Payday

Payday is a public event at which state policy recipients receive their cash transfers. In the *Oportunidades* programme around 77 per cent of the cash transfers are paid directly by hand to the recipients (the other 23 per cent are deposited in recipients' savings accounts). As a result, every two months 7,630 cash transfer delivery points are allocated throughout the country (SEDESOL, n.d-b). The event is coordinated by local governments through the *enlace municipal*, who is responsible for the event's logistics (SEDESOL, 2008a).

In the municipality where the research community is located the state policy recipients (all women) collect their money every two months from a cash transfer delivery point in the main square of the municipal seat, outside the municipal city hall (fieldwork diaries). At this level of the policy interface the role of the *enlace* is restricted to receiving a telephone call from the state level office indicating the day and hour that the cash transfers will be distributed and passing this information on to the *vocales de control y vigilancia*, who then circulate the information among the state policy recipients (Key Informant 2).

On payday the *enlace* and *vocales de control y vigilancia* organise the 1,150 female recipients living in the municipality by community, and each group queues on a first come, first served basis (ibid).

Even though the role of the *enlace municipal* tends not to be a determinant of this pattern of interaction between policy recipients and the state, the image of the effective broker comes

⁶⁷ The PRI candidate (the *enlace*'s husband) won the local mayor election with a minimum difference of 116 votes in relation to the other closest contender (PAN candidate). Information retrieved from the Michoacán State Electoral Institute (IEM) website: <http://www.prep.com.mx/> (retrieve 08/12/2007 and 21/11/2008).

once again into play and is reflected in the good rapport between this state policy actor and the programme recipients.

Despite the fact that the *enlace municipal* had announced her resignation, on the next payday (October, 2007) she could be seen walking around the main square and interacting with state policy recipients as they queued to collect their money, asking them if they were experiencing any problems with their payments, and several state policy recipients were overheard proffering expression of friendliness and good wishes to the *enlace* regarding the forthcoming local mayoral elections (fieldwork diaries 05/10/07).

In the 23 interviews carried out with state policy recipients there were some expressions of sympathy towards the *enlace municipal*:

She is very nice; every time we go and visit her she's very friendly (Alicia HH013; 35)

If we need to ask her some questions, she never says, 'I'm busy, come back later'. (Martha HH-079; 41)

Every time that we go to visit her, we don't have to wait long for her. (Gina HH-030; 35)

She just calls us for a meeting when necessary; she never calls us just because she wants to see us. (Olivia HH-002; 23, *vocal de salud*)

She always lets us know in advance what day we are going to receive the payment. (Griselda HH-061; 46)

On payday she doesn't show any preference for anybody. The first to arrive are the first to receive their payment. (Arcelia HH-021; 44)

The information above can be complemented with opinions extracted from an informal conversation with Sandra, one of the the *vocales* in the municipality:

[The enlace] is a very understanding person. We [the *vocales*] meet her every month but sometimes it is difficult for us to attend the meeting. So if we let her know in advance that it is not possible for us to attend she always expresses her consideration for us and says: 'Don't worry, we know that sometimes it is not possible to attend the meeting, but try not to miss the next one'. (Fieldwork diaries 12/09/07)

The good opinions of the *enlace municipal* collected from the recipients and the *vocal* contrasted with Gabriela's (HH-085; 38, *vocal de nutrición*) opinion of her predecessor.

We are much better with this enlace. The previous one would always get confused when she was trying to organise us on payday. She used to give preference to her friends so they got their payment before others who'd arrived before them. Sometimes she allowed her friends to not attend the (*vocales* monthly) meetings, but she was very strict with the rest of the group. (Fieldwork diaries 02/08/07)

The above suggest a model of interaction between recipients and local authorities that rests mainly on the belief of *Oportunidades* recipients that the *enlace municipal* is efficient and supports them. However, this model of interaction includes contradictions; the service delivered by this frontline operator invokes a caring model of human interaction, with the *enlace* portraying herself as efficient, approachable and understanding, but in fact the state service that the policy recipients receive is a ‘detached model of equal treatment’, with an implicit message that resources are limited and thus need to be rationed (Lipsky, 1980:71). The rationalisation of the resource becomes more visible in the queue on payday (Picture 6.1):

Picture 6.1: The queue on an ordinary payday



Source: Author; payday, personal archive (July, 2007)

According to Lipsky (1980:95), queues – in particular in welfare offices – are arranged according to how the officials require the policy recipients to present themselves. Bearing in mind that the delivery of the *Oportunidades* cash transfers is dependent on fulfilling certain requirements, it is possible to suggest that with a long queue, even though this is organised on an apparently fair, first-come-first-served basis, the state sends an implicit message that access to social protection resources is limited and therefore recipients are forced (or conditioned) to wait. This is comparable to the length of time that family recipients have to wait at the LHCS to fulfil the medical-check up part of the programme’s health requirements.

Lipsky (ibid) says that long lines processed on a first come, first served basis relatively tend to benefit people who can afford to wait; usually the poor, and more often than not, the women. The fact that these poor mothers are asked to queue for about three hours to collect their payments (fieldwork diary 10/07/07; 05/10/07), suggests that there is a general assumption among state policy officials that, since mothers often work at home they have no other obligations, so waiting costs them nothing.

In separate informal conversations, two frontline officials working for the local social development office were asked their opinions of why *Oportunidades* programme recipients do not receive the money directly in a saving account. Both asserted:

Because [the poor] are ignorant and they don't how to use the ATM. (Fieldwork diaries 18/08/07; 13/09/07)

There is clearly still a deeply ingrained perception among welfare frontline officials that the poor are ignorant, or as Stain (2004) puts it, they are perceived as 'culturally deficient' and therefore unable to make use of technology if it were to be provided.⁶⁸

In comparison, in the research setting remittances from the US are significant to household income, and families receiving remittances tend to have saving accounts. During my fieldwork, when travelling with families of *Oportunidades* recipients and non-recipients to Morelia City or other localities around the research setting I saw both the men and the women withdrawing money from ATMs on countless occasions.

According to Gabina (HH-061; 46), a policy recipient interviewed in her household (fieldwork, second stage), on payday when the women collect their money they have only a few minutes to check that the contents are correct. The money is received in a plastic bag closed with staples, with the receipt inside. Gabina (*ibid*) described how, without opening the bag, they need to make sure that the amount on the receipt is the same as the amount in the envelope. Picture 6.2 below illustrates her description:

Picture 6.2: An *Oportunidades* programme recipient on payday⁶⁹



If the money received is less than expected, Gabina said, if they ask for clarification they are told: 'You, more than anyone else, know what you have done wrong; you should know why

⁶⁸ When the fieldwork was conducted there was no ATM in the locality.

⁶⁹ Source: 'Oportunidades programme recipient attending on payday' (January, 2007). Local government of Mazatlan, Sinaloa, press release at: <http://www.codetur.gob.mx/modules.php?name=sprensa&func=Paginas&ano=2007&mes=01&paginaActual=2®istros=42&paginas=5> (Accessed 15/12/08)

you have received less money' (ibid). So instead of receiving a clear explanation of the reduction or deferment of pay, the response the policy recipients receive is an accusation of unspecified failure and guilt (internalisation of the guilt complex).

Another element that informs the state policy process at this ground level are the moral discourses constructing and representing the image of policy recipients used by state officials working at different design and implementation levels of the policy

In an interview with the state-level official Key Informant 5, he told me that he tries to visit different cash transfer delivery points on paydays and interacts there with recipients, mostly mothers. He illustrated how he interacts with recipients by reproducing moral discourses that implicitly describe the ideal policy deservers, labelling them as poor and highlighting the responsibilities of good mothers:

This money is given from the taxes paid by Mexicans. The government is only administering this money; the money belongs to the people that are more in need and you are the ones who need it most.

In my speech I constantly repeat to them: 'Who brushes [their children's] hair every morning? Who prepares their breakfast every morning? Who goes to buy the medicine and looks after them every time they get sick?' [...] They always answer in unison 'Us!' [...] 'In *Oportunidades* we trust you, that is why we give you the money.' I always do this because I want to make sure that they use the money sensibly. (Key Informant 5)

His statement: 'I always do this because I want to make sure that they use the money sensibly' suggests that one of the characteristics of a good mother is to be a good administrator.

The speaker continued:

That's why I constantly ask them to use the money properly, and I actually clarify: 'We give the money to you, but I'm sorry, the money doesn't belong to you, the money belongs to your children. You need to make the most of it'. (Key Informant 5)

In the quote above he implies that the real policy deservers are the children, with the mothers just the channel through which to give them the benefits (Molyneux, 2006).

Key Informant 5 concluded his illustration of poor and good mothers that administer the cash transfer benefits directly to the final policy recipients, their children:

And at this point I encourage them and say: 'Look after the money and spend it wisely, otherwise next time we're going to call your husbands and give the money to them'. At this point the women start shouting like crazy people: 'NO, NO, NO!'

In contrast, there are 'hidden transcripts', usually generated behind the scenes, in 'a social space in which offstage dissident to the official transcript of power relations may be voiced'

(Scott, 1990:85; see also Lukes, 2005:125); they can be interpreted by decoding diverse forms of expression such as linguistic disguises, gestures or jokes, and ‘insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind the innocuous understanding of their conduct’.

This was the case with Olivia (HH-002; 23, *vocal de salud*) (fieldwork diaries 10/07/07). On payday I came across her at the street market that runs concurrently with this event, and in a joking manner she asked:

Are you checking whether we’re using the money properly?

Certainly *Oportunidades* programme recipients are constantly under scrutiny regarding how they use the money. But when criticisms are made the state tends to protect them in a paternalistic manner, as reflected in the following extract from an interview with a Mexican state policymaker working at the high design level (Key Informant 3)

Payday has received many criticisms. Some people blame us for taking [mothers] away from their home; because they need to queue to receive their payment and then they spent the rest of the day hanging around outside. But I always tell them: ‘Well, payday is like a party for them’. In our case, every time we receive our ‘*quincena*’ [fortnightly pay] we go to the cantina, or we go out on Friday night; or on Saturday with our friends, [...] don’t we? Well for [the mothers] payday is their day off. So allow them to enjoy it!

This account offers good evidence of how the state’s ‘hope-generating machine’ (Nuitjen, 2003) operates at different levels of the policy process in its interaction with the recipients. It generates perceptions of relieving their condition of being poor (although temporarily), as Delia (HH-091; 30), an *Oportunidades* programme recipient asserted in a household interview (fieldwork; second stage):⁷⁰

The money isn’t great, but at least it’s enough to buy food for a few days

At the same time the state authorities foster fear in the recipients of being sanctioned with cuts to or deferrals of their cash transfer as a result of not complying with the requirements of the programme, but also a sense of enjoyment, such as on payday.

Evidence collected from the research setting suggests that tipping is widely practised in the *Oportunidades* programme. Through several conversations with policy recipients I found that every payday each *vocal de control y vigilancia* in each community collects 1 peso (approx. US10 cents) from every recipient to give to the state officials who pay out the cash transfers on payday (fieldwork diaries). Recipients are told that this is to buy food and refreshments for them. However, it was not possible to confirm whether the money collected was used for this purpose.

⁷⁰ Since Delia’s daughter is two years old and not attending school yet, Delia just receives the food, gas and electricity component of the *Oportunidades* transfers, which amounts to around US\$20 a month.

Likewise, tipping (*la propina*) is woven into the fabric of Mexican culture in both urban and rural settings. It plays a significant role in the informal, cash-driven economy of the country in general, so is not restricted to shaping the interaction between the state and *Oportunidades* programme recipients in their everyday discursive practices, where the latter not only have to pay to be linked to the state by waiting in a queue; they also have to compensate frontline operators with for their intermediary services (or brokerage).

It is not just the officials who distribute the cash transfers on payday who receive tips from the policy recipients: the *vocales* also receive a quota of MXN\$5.00 every month in return for their ‘voluntary’ services for the programme. This issue is explored further later.

6.3 State policy recipients in a broker position: Vocales’ role at the ground level

The *vocal* is a voluntary position in the operational structure of the *Oportunidades* programme. This position is filled by recipients publicly elected by other recipients at a community assembly⁷¹ who constitute the *comité de promoción comunitaria* (community participation committees (CCP)) that is usually made up of four *vocales*.⁷² The CCPs act as a link between the state and recipients, their main purpose being to promote the *Oportunidades* programme’s education, nutrition and health activities in the community (SEDESOL, 2008b). Since these activities are strongly related to the conditions the programme , the CCPs have essentially been created to monitor the policy recipients’ fulfilment of their obligations.

The *vocales’* responsibilities are defined at policy design level by the *Coordinación Nacional del Programa Oportunidades* (National *Oportunidades* programme Office) and mainly involve disseminating operational information related to the conditions of the programme (health, nutrition and education requirements) (SEDESOL, 2008a:6). The *vocal de control y vigilancia* is in charge of the list of attendees at community meetings, *faenas* (community freework) and notifying recipients about payday (SEDESOL, 2008b; Key Informant 2).

Even though the *vocales’* role is restricted to disseminating operational information about the *Oportunidades* programme, they act as brokers. While they are elected to represent the policy recipients and help them to interact with the state institutions, their activities and functions are defined by the state itself, so they are also a ‘platform for representation of the programme vis-à-vis beneficiaries’(de la Jara, 2007:67)

⁷¹ The number of *vocales* in each community varies depending on the number of family recipients. In situations where there are fewer than 25 recipient families there is one just *vocal*; in communities (or neighbourhoods, in urban areas); for 25 to 199 families there are four *vocales*; when the number goes above 200 families it increases by one *vocal* per every extra 100 families.

⁷² When the number of policy recipients in the community is less than 25 there is no CCP and one recipient is elected by her peers to act as *vocal*.

‘[A]ctors in brokerage positions may link pairs of other actors who need to communicate as a result of a specific policy initiative that unexpectedly makes their interest interdependent’ (Fernández & Gould, 1994:1460). In this case, compliance with the *Oportunidades* programme regulations attracts the attention of both the authorities and recipients of the programme. Thus the *vocales* are tied to both interest groups and their double role can be conflicting, but at the same time they benefit from their broker position. As state policy recipients they need to comply with the programme regulations, and simultaneously they are policy monitors that can develop resources to resist compliance (Lipsky, 1980:25).

For instance, as discussed in Chapter 5, frontline operators such as doctors at the LHCS are inclined to exercise discretion regarding *vocales*’ fulfilment of the *Oportunidades* programme requirements (i.e. they may sign their medical check-up report even though members of their family have not fulfilled this requirement). The relationship between the frontline *Oportunidades* operators and the *vocales* is characterised by degrees of reciprocity due to their mutual dependence. Both policy actors have an intrinsic shared interest in achieving their own agency objectives of maintaining (or expanding) their autonomy from the higher organizational levels of this programme (*ibid*). As Lipsky explains, street-level bureaucrats cannot resist organisation pressures using only their own resources and often share a common interest with other, lower-level workers, as in this case the *vocales*.

On the other hand, since the *vocales* are in a broker position the notion of mutual dependency also informs their interface with the *Oportunidades* programme recipients. This is due to two reasons. In the first place, the policy recipients perceive the *vocales* as a ‘necessary connection’, in their interaction with the state (Nuitjen, 2003:17). Secondly, *vocales* accumulate information that puts them in a better position than other recipients, so even if the role of these grassroots policy actors is not relevant to the implementation of the state policy they tend to transform it for their own benefit. For example, these actors receive monthly ‘economic compensation’ (explained below), from recipients in exchange for their voluntary services.

At the community and household level there are three salient points of interface between the policy recipient and *vocales* where the latter are perceived as necessary to connect the state with the policy recipients. These are *faenas*; *vocales*’ household visits to ensure the fulfilment of the nutritional requirements of the programme; and the monthly meetings in the community to disseminate operational information about the programme.

6.3.1 *Faenas*

In the case of *faenas*, the notion of ‘necessary connection’ is relevant due to the fact that recipients sign up to a list controlled by the *vocal de control y vigilancia* (Juliana-HH-001; 47; 04/09/07), and refusal to attend this ‘voluntary’ community work on the part of recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme invokes sanctions.

The *Oportunidades* programme regulations (SEDESOL, 2008a) do not explicitly mention *faenas* as a programme requirement. However, according to a state-level official of the programme, Key Informant 5, the economic sanctions (reduced or deferred payment) imposed are only applied on failure to comply with the health (medical check-ups and educational workshop) and education requirements. In other words, the *vocales* tend to exaggerate the possibility of sanctions in the case of the *faenas*; recipients are simply supposed to be encouraged to participate in unpaid voluntary community work.

The informant also said that *faenas* are organised at a community assembly where the recipients decide the type of activities to be conducted:

[I]n some communities [the recipients] decide to paint the school, in others to clean the LHCS or to collect the rubbish. It depends on the particular forms and levels of participation that the *faenas* encounter. [...] The [Oportunidades recipients] assume these activities as a moral commitment; therefore to not participate in such activities involves a notion of social rather than economic sanction. However, we must admit that often doctors, teachers, local authorities or even the programme *vocales* tend to give the impression that if they do not participate in the *faenas* they will be removed from the programme. But being honest, this is not possible, even I can't do that!

The most relevant aspect of *vocales*’ agency is the impression of obligation and sanction around *faenas* and their role in these community activities.

Observation and informal conversations with the *vocales* and recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme showed that the only type of *faenas* associated with the *Oportunidades* programme is the collection of rubbish in public areas, which is mainly carried out by the female (mostly mothers) recipients of the programme. Recipients tend to associate this voluntary activity with the programme’s health requirements. One of the reasons for this association is that ‘hygienic disposal of rubbish’ (*eliminación sanitaria de la basura*) is one of the topics discussed at the monthly meetings attended by the recipients (SEDESOL, 2008a). Another reason is that this activity is usually organised by the *vocal de salud* (Olivia-HH-002; 23) in coordination with the *vocal de control y vigilancia* (Juliana HH-001; 47), who is responsible for attendance at *faenas*.

While we see here that *vocales* can actively produce over-compliance with the programme, Lipsky (1980:23) suggests that low-level workers also exhibit a degree of noncompliance.

The potential for resistance that *vocales* have, due to their brokerage position, is shown in how the doctor recommended that pregnant Olivia, *the vocal de salud*, did not carry out work that involved heavy physical activity (fieldwork diaries 02/08/07). Hence she excused herself from organising or attending *faenas*. In the same way Juliana, the *vocal de control y vigilancia*, also explained (fieldwork diaries 04/09/07) that due to her being a single mother she needs to also be the breadwinner in her household, and spends her time working as a domestic helper in Morelia and selling second-hand clothes at street markets around the community, therefore the time she can dedicate to fulfilling her responsibilities as a *vocal* is very limited.

The responsibility for organising the *faenas* mainly lies with Gabriela (HH085; 38), the *vocal de nutrición*. She asserted she is the one amongst the other three *vocales*⁷³ with the most time to organise the *faenas* since she works at home, her husband is away working in the US and her daughter Camila (HH-085; 17) is old enough to help her with the household responsibilities (this includes looking after her youngest son while she is away attending meetings or organising other activities related to the programme), (25/08/07).

Gabriela also explained that in the past the organisation of the *faenas* was difficult because the women did not want to participate in collecting rubbish:

At the beginning most of the women [recipients] didn't want to participate in this activity, mainly because the previous LHCS doctor [and director] told them that [rubbish collection] was a voluntary activity and not one of the requirements the programme. But then when the current director came to work at the LHCS [around two years ago] ... we [vocales] talked to him and explained the situation. He attended one of the community assemblies to explain to us the importance of keeping our area clean and in a good hygienic condition. Then we committed ourselves to cleaning the road and disposing of the rubbish appropriately⁷⁴ (Fieldwork diaries 25/08/07)

This contrasts with what the doctor at the LHCS (Key Informant 1) said:

Problems with the interpretation of participation in *faenas* are recurrent. The state office authorities of the *Oportunidades* programme have asked the community authorities, together with the *vocales* of the programme, to generate a community activity with the programme recipients. These activities are not a requirement of the programme and initially they were to be performed on a voluntary basis. But for some reason nowadays most of the women recipients of

⁷³ The *vocal de educación* refused to participate in this research. Data collected about her are very limited; all of them were collected through informal conversations with other *vocales*, community members and observation. Juliana –*vocal de control y vigilancia*- is her eldest sister. In addition, the *vocal de educación*'s husband owns one of the biggest local convenience stores inside the community (located at the front of their house), she works there full time (fieldwork diaries).

⁷⁴ In the research setting, every other Wednesday in the afternoon the *Oportunidades* programme female recipients collect the rubbish in public areas and dispose of it in a specific area. This rubbish is then collected the following morning (Thursday) by a lorry provided by the local government (fieldwork diaries).

the programme perceive cleaning roads and collecting rubbish in public areas as an obligation.

As Lewis & Mosse (2006) assert, local actors in a broker position operate as active agents building social, political, and economic roles rather than simply following formal policy scripts. In this case, the *vocales* not only exaggerate the need for compliance; they also determined what activity this ‘community work’ should consist of. Their agency is clearly important in shaping the character of the programme and the experience of the recipients. Therefore another relevant aspect to discuss regarding the organisation of *faenas* is the idea among the recipients that this community work – originally a voluntary activity – is now compulsory. *Vocales* have reinterpreted the rules regarding *faenas* for two reasons: first, the fact that the *faena* are perceived as routine practice to fulfil the requirements of the programme rather than a voluntary activity, simplify their implementation; otherwise their organisation would demand more time and consensual participation from both *vocales* and recipients; and second, that disseminating the notion of compliance shows the *vocales* as ‘necessary’.

Observation showed that recipients’ main concern every time they attend a *faena* is that their name is entered in the notebook that records attendance and other information about recipients, which is usually controlled by the *vocal de control y vigilancia* (fieldwork diaries).

On the other hand, Goetz (1997:189) affirms that grassroots workers – like the *vocales* – have to establish credibility in their own context, ‘and find ways of forming groups without offending’ local social structures. As a result, family and friend relationships were important to integrate the four groups to carry out the *faenas*, which are carried out on a fortnightly basis by groups of 20 to 25 female recipients and are responsible for cleaning the roads and collecting the rubbish once every two months (Gabriela HH-085; fieldwork diaries 25/08/07).

We have seen that the *vocales* have a degree of discretion in determining the nature of the ‘benefits and sanctions provided by their agencies’ (Lipsky, 1980: 13). Another area for the discretionary interpretation of *faena* ‘rules’ is seen in the way Gabriela (HH-085; 38) the *vocal de nutricion*, decided that elderly women over 65 years old should not be required to take part in *faenas* (fieldwork diaries 25/08/07).

From the perspective of the recipients we see they inject their own views and develop practices to adjust programme requirements to their needs (Goetz, 1997). Some *Oportunidades* recipients pay young girls to carry out the *faenas* for them. Maria (HH-004; 56), whose husband Pedro (HH-004; 57) owns a local convenience store at the front of her mother’s house, in which she works, and Josefina (HH-005; 58), who works as a domestic helper in Morelia, were interviewed separately; both claimed to be too busy to carry out the

faenas, so each pays her niece around \$15 to 20 pesos (US\$1.50-2) to carry out these activities on her behalf.

Grassroots policy actors such as *vocales* often express favouritism for certain members of the group. Their choices involve continued negotiation between their own interests as state policy frontline implementers (Goetz, 1997) and their family members which may inform this kind of discretionary agreement. Allowing a recipient to contract out her *faenas* obligations is at the discretion of the *vocales*, and it is no accident that Gabriela (HH-085; 38), one of the *vocales* directly involved in the organisation of *faenas*, is Josefina's (HH-005; 58) youngest sister and Maria (HH-004; 56) is her cousin.

In their role as grassroots policy actors *vocales* 'symbolically mediate reality, because they can give weight to their interpretations of discretion by assigning or withholding resources' (Goetz, 1997:177). Thus the arrangement to pay young girls is not always accepted by the *vocales*. Irasema, another policy recipient (HH050; 34), stated that on one occasion, despite having a medical condition 'the *vocales*' did not allow her daughter to carry out the *faena* on her behalf (household level semi-structured interviews; fieldwork second stage).

Martha (HH-079; 41) is convinced that the former *vocal de salud* never included her name on the list of *faena* participants and therefore in the past she had received continuous cuts in her cash transfers:

...She [the former *vocal de salud*] is my niece...actually we are almost the same age. In the past we used to hang out together, we were very good friends. But she does not like me any more. When she was the *vocal de salud* I always used to attend the *faenas* and I'm sure my name was never put on the list because my money was always cut [...]. I think she's still jealous because I'm married to a man she was in love with when we were young [...]. I'm sure this is the reason, because with the *Oportunidades* programmes in the past, and now more recently with some family situations she's always causing me problems.

It seems from the above that the *vocales* are often suspected of indulging their own biases in everyday state policy implementation due to the perception that their role is 'necessary' for policy recipients' access to state social protection resources. In general the *vocales* contend with 'hostility and suspicion' (ibid) which can be exacerbated by diverse circumstances, the local political or religious context, or merely unresolved personal problems.

However, the *vocales* occupy the lowest hierarchical position in the frontline operation of the programme, so they have minimal control over the sanctions and benefits the programme provides.

6.3.2 Nutritional complement

Another interface between policy recipients and *vocales* is related to the nutritional formula that recipient pregnant women and children under two, or under five if malnourished, must take as a requirement of the *Oportunidades* programme. Here it is considered ‘necessary’ for the *vocal de nutrición* to conduct household visits to ensure that recipients are carrying out their obligations (fieldwork diaries 25/08/07).

Struggles over an authoritative interpretation of poor and female recipients’ needs embedded in the state policy design are ‘waged at every level of the policy making process’, from the high level of the state policy design ‘to the intimate confines of the household and the individual consciousness of the policy [recipients]’ (Goetz, 1997:170). At this lower level of policy implementation the role of the *vocal de nutrición* is seen as central by *Oportunidades* programme authorities. This was explained in an informal conversation with Gabriela (*ibid*):

My responsibility is to remind the recipients about the nutritional formula that pregnant women and young children [...] need to take as part of the nutritional requirements of the programme. This reminder usually takes place at the monthly meeting, but then I visit households on a random basis to ensure they are fulfilling this obligation – I have to admit that despite the household level visits, it is still difficult to know if they are taking nutritional complements (and)/or giving the ‘formula’ to their children. The only way to find this out is when I arrive at their home, I ask them to show me the container and check if this is unopened or almost full [...]. But in any case, some of them they just throw it away or give to their animals. So there is not much to do about this, really...

The speaker stressed that recipients who do not fulfil this requirement do not receive any economic sanction:

There is no economic sanction involved in this requirement – let’s say that the sanction imposed is moral, because when [female recipients] go to the LHCS for their medical check-ups, if they or their children present a certain level of anaemia or malnourishment they are told off by the nurse. But that’s it; they don’t receive other sanctions.

I know many women do not carry out this requirement. But I’m sure that this is not because they don’t understand: of course they do. They receive all the information first at the LHCS and then this is reinforced at the monthly meetings [the speaker stresses this point to highlight the relevance of her own role at these meetings]. So I think this is more about female [recipients] not liking someone else telling them what to do.

It is in the interests of the *vocales* to represent the recipient as recalcitrant, as this justifies her job. At the frontline level this struggle over the interpretation of the poor’s needs and interests takes place in everyday policy implementation where the *vocales* constantly engineer the ‘fit’ between state policy goals and the reality that they encounter (Goetz, 1997). It is evident that the role of the *vocal de nutricion* is very limited, as she admits above; however,

this local actor is perceived by the programme authorities as an important mechanism of control to ensure the achievement of the policy objectives.

But the degree of enforcement can be possibly limited for what Lipsky (1980:117) states: 'Every social order depends on the general consent of its members'. Even the most authoritative institutions, such as top-down state policy interventions, function only if those affected by these interventions cooperate in their implementation.

Of the 23 households interviewed, 6 have children under 5 and 4 of these asserted that they comply with the nutrition programme. On the other hand, more in-depth conversation revealed that the other two recipients, Elena (HH-051; 30) and Delia (HH-091; 30), have developed alternatives to conform to the nutritional requirements:

When I was pregnant, the doctors prescribed folic acid and other nutritional formulas for me and I took them [...]. But in the case of my two children [a boy of three and a girl under two], I think they do not like the formula because it is a little bit tasteless. So I always add twice the amount recommend by the doctor at the LHCS. The problem is that the nutritional formula is distributed every two months, and adding double the measure every time makes it last for just one month. So I exchange half of the nutritional component with one of my sisters: she is not an *Oportunidades* recipient and she usually buys formula from the drugstore. If we mix-up both the nutritional formulas, they last longer. (Elena)

My daughter is three years old and still has a certain level of malnourishment so she needs to take the nutritional component, but the problem is that she doesn't like it. There is no way to make her to take it. Just recently I started mixing it with cereal as the doctor at LHCS recommended this to me, but sometimes this strategy does not work. (Delia)

When she was asked to explain what she does with the formula her daughter does not take, Delia answered:

I have to admit that my husband likes it; he says that with milk and cereal it doesn't taste too bad. So he usually finishes it.

Mothers may present several reasons for their lack of compliance with the *Oportunidades* programme nutritional requirements, either that the children do not like the formula or that they consider the product poor quality. In any case, the sanction they receive is not just moral (being told off by the doctors and nurse and LHCS): children (the unborn and under fives) are directly affected by their mother's agency, and the effects of this process are reflected on children's nutritional levels. This is the real sanction.

If mothers have developed alternative ways to comply with the nutritional requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme it is because they perceive them as an obligation that they must fulfil in order to receive money, rather than for the benefit of their children. As Long (2001:35; 250) explains, state interventions should not be seen as merely a distribution of material benefits: these processes of intervention also involves a 'trade of images' where

‘communication methods and skills [are a] critical ‘leverage instrument’ for promoting behavioural change’. The implementation of a policy intervention requires shared meaning between the state authorities (working at different levels of the policy process) and the recipients; otherwise the encoding of the message by the sender and its decoding by the receiver will not lead to the intended effect on the latter (ibid).

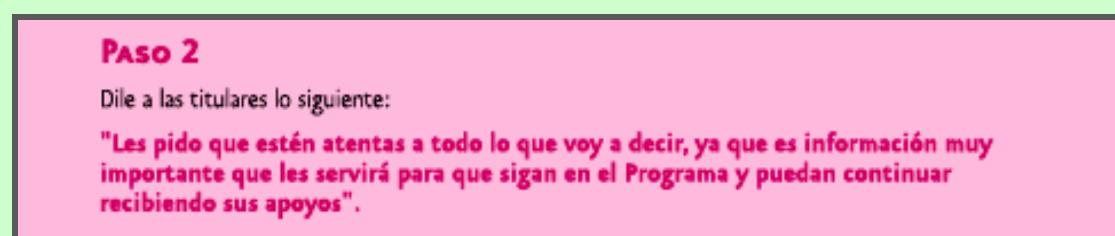
6.3.3 Monthly meetings

Unlike the two previous interfaces (*faenas* and nutritional requirements), the monthly meetings on the sixth of every month are a formal requirement of the *Oportunidades* programme. The policy recipients receive an economic sanction if they do not attend. The purpose of the meetings is mainly to disseminate operational information about the programme to the recipients.

I attended a number of monthly meetings. The teaching and learning material presented is set out in advance at the design level of the programme in a guide book, *Guia de Apoyos para Vocales y Representantes de Grupo* (or *Vocales* and Group Members Representatives Support Guide), and distributed to all *vocales* around the country through the 32 state offices (SEDESOL, n.d-a). These offices are responsible for organizing monthly meetings in coordination with the *enlace* municipal (as discussed) where the *vocales* are taught about the information contained in the guide book for their further explanation to the rest of the recipients (SEDESOL, 2008b:23).

The guide book is so carefully detailed that it includes the specific words the *vocales* must use when addressing the recipients at the meetings. Image 6.1 gives an example of the script that they must follow before proceeding to explain some operational information about the programme:

Image 6.1: Extract from the Guia de Apoyos para Vocales y Representantes de Grupo used by the vocales during the monthly meetings⁷⁵



Source: SEDESOL (n.d-a)

⁷⁵ English translation of Image 6.1, above:

Step 2

Tell the recipients the next instruction:

‘Please pay attention to the following information I’ll give you, because it is very important. This information will help you to continue in the program and to be able to receive the stipend’.

The requirement that the *vocales* follow detailed scripts could be interpreted as an operational mechanism to standardize information transmitted to all the recipients of the programme in the country. But it also reveals a paternalistic assumption on the side of the elite *Oportunidades* policymakers, where policy actors (both *vocales* and recipients) are implicitly depicted as illiterate and incapable of organising and selecting the topic they consider relevant or want to speak about at the monthly meetings.

Moreover, the fact that all the *vocales* use the same guide book at all the monthly *Oportunidades* meetings in the country is not simply efficient execution of a ‘top-down’ policy for lessons in good motherhood practice. Instead, it suggests a form of social control: as Long (2001) explains, knowledge processes are embedded in social processes that involve aspects of power and control.

The state government techniques to control policy recipients can be manifested by producing knowledge and certain discourses to be internalised by individuals to guide their behaviour. ‘[Policy interventions] also [signify] problems of self-control, guidance for the family and for children, management of the household, directing the soul, etc’ (Lemke, 2000:2). In other words, planned interventions also can be interpreted as the ‘the conduct of conduct’ (Foucault in Gordon, 1991:2;48), in disciplinary institutions (such as state health and educational institutions), as well as forms of knowledge ‘aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons’ (Gordon, 1991:2)

At the community interface the role of the *vocal of control y vigilancia* is clearly considered ‘necessary’, since recipients must sign in to prove their attendance at the meetings. This is clearly specified in Step 1 of the guide, which the *vocales* follow step by step in the session (SEDESOL, n.d-a).

According to information collected from an informal conversation with Juliana, the *vocal de control y vigilancia*, there are several different topics to discuss throughout the year at the monthly meetings (fieldwork diaries 04/09/07). I observed that these meetings generally last between an hour and a half and two hours, and tend to be divided into five sections:

- 1) Welcome and attendants signing in
- 2) Self-esteem exercise. For instance, in one of the meetings I attended it was possible to observe the recipients conducting an exercise called *Soy especial* (or I’m a special person), oriented to build up the confidence of the participants. After the meeting, in an informal conversation (06/09/07), Juliana was asked to explain the purpose of this exercise. She simply answered: ‘In the *Oportunidades* programme they want us to realise that as women we have value’.

3) Dissemination of operational information: Recipients are reminded of different aspects and regulations of the programme. For instance, a review of the rights and obligations of policy recipients. On this specific point the *vocales* advised the recipients to pay special attention to the official documentation that the teachers and doctors have to sign to prove that they and their families have complied with the education and health requirements of the programme. The *vocales*, Julia and Gabriela, emphasised that *Oportunidades* state services are free of charge, so the recipients must report it if a frontline state authority (including doctors, teachers or other state programme officials) asks them to give something in return, whether this is to do a particular job or to attend public events to support a contender's attempt to gain a political position, as a condition of signing their attendance record regarding any activity related to the programme (school, medical check-ups and monthly meeting). At the monthly meetings, the recipients were constantly reminded to fulfil their obligations to the programme (e.g. to use the money to buy food for their family and for their children's school expenses.)

Even though the beneficiaries made no complaints about the misuse of the programme by *Oportunidades* programme frontline operators (although perhaps my presence at the meeting prevented this), an informal conversation with Sandra, another *vocal* in the locality (fieldwork diaries 12/09/07) showed that the previous *enlace municipal* had attempted to use the programme as a vote-catching mechanism during the local elections in 2004. She and her husband were active participants of the PRD (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*; Democratic Revolution Party), and at several meetings she had tried to influence the recipients to support her attempt to gain a position as *Regidor Municipal*.⁷⁶ The state level authorities were notified of this irregularity⁷⁷ and the *enlace municipal* was removed, after which some *Oportunidades* programme state level officials organised a meeting with all the state policy recipients in the municipality at which they were told that 'gossip and disagreements' between them and the *enlace municipal* could not continue, and if it occurred again the programme would be removed from the locality and 'given to other people who can look after it much better' (fieldwork diaries; 12/09/07).

⁷⁶ 'Regidores' are members of the local authority (*Ayuntamiento*). Local governments are usually composed of a local major (*presidente municipal*), one or two councillors (*sindico procurador*), and several *regidores*. These positions are political and elected simultaneously with the local mayor election. For further detail see: 'Congreso Gobiernos locales: el futuro político de México' <http://www.iglom.iteso.mx/HTML/encuentros/congresol/pm2/mtema2.htm> (Accessed 24/11/2008).

⁷⁷ *Oportunidades* programme regulation establishes that the role of state authority at national, state and local levels (the latter includes the *enlace municipal*) is based on 'non-party' principles and any act of political propaganda may be reported to the programme authorities, who must investigate the report and (if appropriate) sanction according to the legal framework of this programme. http://www.oportunidades.gob.mx/htmls/REGLAS_2007_DOF.pdf (Section 5.1 Coordinación Institucional) (Accessed 28/11/08)

4. Practical household advice: For example, saving energy through sensible use of electrical appliances; correct disposal of rubbish; the benefits of a well-designed wood stove at home. Gabriela (HH-085; 38) the *vocal de nutrición*, stressed the importance of cooking soya at home instead of beef ‘due to the high level of hormones’. She included a soya recipe (fieldwork diaries 06/10/07).
5. Meeting closure: The *vocales* usually finished the meeting by saying: ‘Thank you for coming’, then asked the recipients to give themselves a ‘big clap’ and come to the next session with the same enthusiasm.

Since the monthly meetings are organised in the community it appears that there is no room for discretion on the part of either *vocales* or recipients. As a *vocal*, Juliana (fieldwork diaries; 04/09/07) declared that she did not have a problem with women recipients not attending the monthly meetings:

They like to try to attend the meetings; on just a few occasions they miss them. In any case they have an absence on the attendance list, it is very difficult to offer concession, they are too many. So if I allow one to miss the meeting, then the other wants the same treatment. So I think it is better to be strict with the attendance.

Most of the recipients interviewed said that they do not have problems attending the meetings:

I find the information I receive at the monthly meetings very useful. (Patricia (HH-094; 42))

Her sister (Gina; HH-030; 35) likes the idea of spending some time with her two sisters, Patricia and Delia (HH-091; 30), who are also *Oportunidades* programme recipients.

Tina (HH-066; 35) said:

Although sometimes we spend a lot of time at them, they’re a good excuse to get out of the house. So we can get a little bit of fresh air...

Just one recipient, Carolina (HH-022; 33), recalled that during the past Easter week (2007) the monthly meeting took place on Good Friday when she was away visiting her mother, who lives in a nearby community:

I just completely forgot that the meeting was taking place that day. It was on the way home that I remembered it. I tried to explain the situation to Juliana but she said there was nothing she could do about it. So I’m expecting a cut on payday.

6.3.4 Tipping

Notwithstanding that the regulation of the programme (SEDESOL, 2008a) describes the *vocales* as a volunteer frontline position, in their everyday practices this position allows them to receive economic compensation for their ‘brokerage’ services.

As mentioned, tipping is a widespread practice in the *Oportunidades* programme. Through several conversations with *vocales* and state policy recipients it appears that the *vocales*

receive a monthly tip (or ‘compensation’, as the recipients call it) from the recipients of MXN\$5.00 (around US\$0.50) a month for their ‘voluntary’ services. The amount varied in other communities in the same municipality, reaching as much as MXN\$10.00. When asked why the recipients from her community had to contribute more money than those in other communities, Sandra (12/09/07), a *vocal* who represents a small group of eight families in another rural community in the same municipality, replied:

In my community we total nine family recipients and we’re located far away from [the seat of the municipal government], so travelling to there is more expensive, and we are fewer families sharing the cost of travelling. So recipients need to contribute more money every time I attend monthly meetings or other activities related to the (*Oportunidades*) programme. (ibid)

Three of the four *vocales* living in the research setting were asked the purpose of this tipping, and all affirmed that they use the money to pay for transportation and food every time they attend monthly meetings held in the seat of the municipal government (fieldwork diaries 30/09/07; 13/09/07). Other information from households and policy recipients suggests that most state policy recipients saw themselves as paying for the information they received. They were convinced that paying ‘compensation’ to the *vocales* was more convenient, otherwise they would have to invest more money and spend time travelling to the seat of municipal government themselves to receive information about the programme or to verify when the next payday is.

Arcelia (HH-021; 44) an *Oportunidades* programme recipient, asked to express her opinion about the monthly compensation the recipients give the *vocales*, said:

I think it’s fair enough, because they help us to save money and time.

Then she pointed out that the *vocales*’ role is important because they represent the policy recipients in their interaction with the state authorities at the front line. She illustrated her opinion with the following account:

In the past, [a nurse] working at the LHCS used to tell off and blame us for everything that happened in the LHCS...children running and shouting, flowers cut from the garden or things that got broken inside the clinic. [...] I think because we are one of the largest groups of recipients [in the municipality]. So every time we attended the [health educational] workshop we were told off. But then [the former *vocal de salud*] asked to talk to the doctor and explained to him this situation. She also told him that this situation could not continue, otherwise she was going to report them to the programme authorities. Since that day, I feel that things are better at the LHCS.

Nuitjen (2003:17) suggests that the notion of ‘necessary connection’ is often surrounded by ideas of conflict and negotiation between recipients and the bureaucracy. Therefore recipients perceive the *vocales* as efficient – and therefore necessary – at linking them with the state, and this perception is reinforced by practices of ‘impression management’ in which the role of

the brokers is exaggerated to convince the policy recipients that the former have the necessary access and connections to make the bureaucracy work efficiently.

The *vocales* were asked how it was decided that they should be given a tip. They answered that this arrangement had started before they became *vocales*: 'We're just observing it' (Olivia (HH-002; 23, *vocal de salud*).

Social practices widely observed in a group are described as conventions and are usually in place to facilitate interaction among members of the group (Bicchieri, 2006). From the above it appears that tipping is a social convention shaping the interaction between *vocales* and recipients. Nonetheless, despite the fact that it is usually seen as a mere convention it shows characteristics of a social norm describing state policy recipients' behaviour. Indeed, the same author (ibid: 40-42) says that when a conventional manner of interaction has acquired an important social meaning in a specific context a 'social norm is born', therefore recipients' compliance with paying the tip is expected, and breaching it may bring about a sanction.

The notion of compliance and sanction is suggested in the following account from Gabriela (HH-085; 39) (30/09/07) the *vocal de nutrition*:

The compensation is paid on voluntary basis; we cannot oblige them to pay. But we always insist to them that we don't get any payment for our work, and they know that without their contribution we would need to take money from our own pockets to fulfil our responsibilities as *vocales*. I think this is fair, because we help them... we make things easier for them. Most of [the recipients] understand our situation and co-operate with us, but a few still complain. Some recipients do not want to [tip] us because they say we're useless and we do not provide them with accurate information. Therefore I always tell the recipients: 'Take my place, and then you'll see that it's not easy to be a vocal..., some day you are going take on this responsibility and you'll see. So, then, do not complain.'

Irasema, a policy recipient (HH-051; 34), suggested that tipping is regular behaviour in the interaction between the policy recipients:

I don't understand how the programme works.[...] I say this because despite the fact that I have fulfilled my obligations to the programme, my money is still cut sometimes [...]. On the other hand, I know that some of the recipients do not [go to the community meetings and *faenas*] but they pay the monthly compensation to the *vocales* with no complaints. So their money is not reduced. Actually, there was a recipient – she died three years ago from cancer – she never did the community activities. [The *vocales*] used to excuse her because she was sick, but we know that even before she became sick, she was always skipping community work and just paying the monthly compensation.

Even though the size of the tip is insignificant, this social practice invokes compliance and reinforces the idea that the *vocales* provide the 'necessary connection' for the state policy recipients and control their access to state social protection resources. This is reflected in the idea widely held among the *Oportunidades* recipients that they must not complain about these tips even though they are not part of the legal regulation of the programme, or their cash

transfer might be reduced. But at the same time, tipping emphasises the *vocales'* position compared to the rest of the state policy recipients, and some *vocales* may use it to access other benefits like job opportunities.

Guillermina, another *vocal de control y vigilancia* in the same municipality who coordinates a group of 74 policy recipients, referred to how her position as *vocal* allowed her to get some work experience and to try to get a job in the LHCS:

In the past the recipients of the programme used to go and clean the LHCS. We don't do this any more because nowadays there is a person doing this job. Cleaning activities were organised on rota basis, so each time – about two or three times a week – a group of recipients from different communities had to go and clean their [local] medical centre. In my case, every time that my community needed to carry out this task, I was the only one who used to go and clean the LHCS – no one else. I did this for two years because the previous director at the LHCS told me about the possibility of getting a job as a cleaner there. So I thought that by carrying out the cleaning at the LHCS I could get some experience and get the job for myself. But then [the director] told me that there was no possibility of me getting the job there. Then I told the women [recipients] in my group that I was not going to clean the LHCS on my own any more and that they needed to come and help me – they did this for a while until some other person was hired to do the job. (18/08/07).

The interface between frontline *Oportunidades* operators and recipients in the fulfilment of the programmes requirements has developed patterns or routines of interaction. On the one hand, these routines become a recursive element for both policy actors to reduce the complexity of the state policy and make the everyday interaction more manageable and predictable. On the other hand, these patterns of interaction tend 'to reinforce or challenge the institutionalization of gender hierarchy in the family and the community' (Goetz, 1997:188). Consequently, since the introduction of this social protection scheme in the last decade, community arrangements and household level institutions – conjugal and parent-child relationships – have been adapted or reinforced in terms of social roles and responsibilities. The gendered effects of the programme at community and household level are examined in the next empirical chapter.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has focused attention on the mechanisms of intermediation that operate between the state and *Oportunidades* programme recipients, where local actors (the *enlace municipal* and *vocales*), in their role as formal frontline policy operators, have influenced the implementation of the programme at the ground level.

The analysis of mechanisms of intermediation facilitates understanding of how the state policy operates on the ground, emphasising the differences between the formal content of the

policy (fulfilment of requirements and sanctions) and emergent structures resulting from unintended consequences of planned interventions that remain outside the control of the state.

The *enlace municipal* (a member of local government) and *vocales* are local policy actors who conduct routine actions and do not necessarily have a relevant position in the operation of the programme. Nonetheless, both have developed mechanisms of intermediation in everyday policy practice. These intermediary practices constitute a centre of power and negotiation between these actors and programme recipients, who also are continuously searching for the right connection in their interaction with the state institutions.

The mechanisms of intermediation explored in this chapter take place in two different patterns of interaction. The first section of this chapter has explored the pattern of interaction between the *enlace municipal* and state policy recipients, including the monthly meetings with the *vocales* and *el día de pago* (payday). In this first pattern of interaction 'the image of the effective broker' is introduced as an effective tool with which to explore local actors' aspirations and interests influencing the operation of the *Oportunidades* programme at the front line.

The second section considers the patterns of interaction between the *vocales* and policy recipients which occur at the *faenas*, at *vocales'* household visits to ensure the fulfilment of the nutritional requirements included in the programme, and at the monthly meetings organised in the community to disseminate operational information about the programme. In these patterns of interaction the idea of the 'necessary connection' becomes relevant. The *vocales*, who are policy recipients in a brokering position, are seen by the recipients as efficient – and therefore necessary – in linking them with the state. This perception is reinforced by practices of 'impression management' in which the *vocales* exaggerate their role to convince the policy recipients that they have the necessary access and connections to make the bureaucracy work efficiently. *Vocales* accumulate information that puts them in a better position than the rest of the recipients, so even where their role is not relevant to the implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme they tend to use it for their own ends, as examined in the last part of this chapter where empirical evidence is presented of the monthly 'economic compensation' (or tips) that these actors receive from recipients in exchange for their brokerage services, although this was originally intended as volunteer work.

This empirical chapter has focused on the following research question: How does the role of local actors influence the interface of individuals with the state at the lowest level of the policy implementation?

The interface between frontline *Oportunidades* programme operators and family recipients in the fulfilment of the programme's requirements has developed gendered patterns and routines

of interaction between both groups of policy actors. These routines have a recursive effect on both policy actors, reducing the complexity of the state policy on the ground and making everyday interactions more manageable and predictable. However, the introduction of this social protection scheme in the last decade has had a gendered effect on community arrangements and household-level institutions – conjugal and parent-child relationships – in term of their social roles and responsibilities. The gendered transformative character of the state policy at community level and household level is examined in the next empirical chapter.

Chapter 7 SOCIAL POLICY AND GENDER RELATIONS AT COMMUNITY AND HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the gendered nature of the state's social policy, examining the morality (cultural norms informing the allocation of roles and responsibilities) that operates in community arrangements and conjugal and parent-child relationships. How this morality controls access to material and discursive social protection resources is examined, and how these social arrangements have changed since the *Oportunidades* programme (initially PROGRESA from 1997-2002) was first introduced in rural Mexico over a decade ago.

Households are a primary site where gender relations of power between men and women operate and are reproduced. But gender relations are not confined purely to household institutions such as family and conjugal relationships: they are reproduced across other patterns of socialisation such as community arrangements. The moral character informing community and household gendered patterns and their possible transformation (or reinforcement) through the design and implementation of state policy calls for critical feminist analysis (Fraser, 2003) to examine to what extent Mexico's social protection policy development has been sensitive to recognising and therefore enhancing women's social status and economic autonomy over the last decade.

A gender-transformative social policy can only be recognised when it includes both economic distribution and social recognition (Fraser, 2003). This two-dimensional gender model of social justice brings to the discussion debate about affirmative action to redress social injustices implemented through state policy intervention.

The gendered nature of the *Oportunidades* programme considers three affirmative actions: direct allocation of the programme's cash transfer to the female head of recipient households; the reproductive health benefits provided to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and their children under five years old; and the educational grants available through the programme for girls attending secondary and high school which are higher than those for boys (SEDESOL, 2007a, 2007b). These affirmative actions are designed to tackle women's poverty by providing them with economic, educational, health and nutritional benefits. However, they deflect attention from other dimensions of gender inequality in communities and households (Adato, 2000; Chant, 2008; Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2009; Molyneux; 2006; 2008 Vizcarra, 2000).

In the specific case of the *Oportunidades* programme, the fact that women are considered the main focal connection in the interface between the state and poor households suggests a moral representation of the ideal poor recipient family as a male-headed nuclear unit whose women stay at home to do the housework and therefore have more time than men to fulfil the requirements of the programme. However, poor family units are not homogenous, and other factors such as household composition and the domestic cycle (Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2005; González de la Rocha, 2006) are also relevant in the impact of the policy.

This chapter consists of three main sections. Section 7.2 discusses the effect of the policy at community level and once again brings the *faenas* (community voluntary work) into the discussion to explore class and gender discourses informing this type of community activity. Section 7.3 centres its attention on household-level institutions (conjugal and parent-child relationships) to examine gender roles and responsibilities in everyday household practices and their possible transformation (or reinforcement) through the design and implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme. The last section presents a summary of the chapter.

7.2 Class and gender discourse in *Oportunidades* programme *faenas*

As explained earlier (see Chapters 2 and 6) *faenas*, voluntary work organised by members of a community for the common benefit, have long been a part of rural communities in Mexico. Usually this type of community work is associated with the development or maintenance of physical infrastructure like schools and roads.

At the research site *faenas* play a role in the social and economic organisation of the community and are traditionally mostly attended by men: women rarely participate, although occasionally they carry out complementary activities such as cooking for the male participants (fieldwork diaries; 26/05/07).

Women-only *faenas*, compared to other *faenas* already institutionalised by the community, are only attended by female recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme and were not common until this programme first started in the community (ibid). The main activity organised by the *Oportunidades faenas* is the collection of rubbish in public areas. Occasionally recipients are also asked to clean the *salón ejidal* (community hall) and sometimes they are involved in the maintenance of the chapel, although here they share the responsibility with other, non-recipient women (focus group discussion).

The *Oportunidades faenas* were seen as the cause of community division and disputes between recipients and non-recipients of the programme during the early stages of its implementation (Adato, 2000; Vizcarra, 2002). According to both these authors, when they were introduced both male and female non-recipients of the programme refused to participate

in the long-standing *faenas*, the most frequently cited reason being that they should not have to do voluntary work because they were ‘not being paid’ by the government (Adato, 2000:24).

More than a decade after the *Oportunidades* programme was first implemented, there is a distinction between *faenas* organised by this programme and other voluntary community activities. At the research site the director of the local *Telesecundaria* School (Key Informant 6) stated that nowadays the long-standing *faenas* are completely disassociated from those organised by the *Oportunidades* programme. But he accepted that in the past non-recipients of the programme thought that they should not do any voluntary work because ‘they didn’t receive any *apoyo* [support]⁷⁸ from the government’.

Even if there is a clear distinction between *faenas* organised by *Oportunidades* and those institutionalised by the community, the gendered division of roles still informs the latter. According to information provided by Key Informant 6, boys do not participate in the same manner as girls in the *faenas* organised at the school:

For example, every week we organise *faenas* to clean the school and do some gardening and all the students must participate. However, while boys are more inclined to participate in the gardening activities – either fumigating or applying fertilizer to the fruit trees – girls are more involved in cleaning activities like sweeping and mopping the classrooms. Girls are more willing to be involved in gardening activities but boys are still reluctant to do any activity related to cleaning. After a couple of years, a few of [the boys] agreed to bring the bucket with water, but there is no way to make them participate in these activities. Furthermore, on one occasion one of the boy’s fathers came to the school and asked why we were forcing his son to perform ‘girls’’ activities.

The account above testifies explicitly to how norms in the domestic domain intrude into other social domains – in this case the school – and gendered roles are reproduced across a range of other institutions (Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1999)

In the case of the *Oportunidades* programme *faenas*, an informal conversation with two female recipients while one of these *faenas* was being carried out (fieldwork diaries; 22/08/07), revealed that:

⁷⁸ This term is usually translated as ‘help’, which is a direct translation of the Spanish word ‘ayuda’. However, in the research context of this case study *Oportunidades* government officials at different levels of the state policymaking process, local authorities, recipients and non-recipients of this programme generally called the cash transfers ‘apoyos’, whose most accurate translation is ‘support’. This latter Spanish term often involves a broader connotation of protection, help or favour. Although both *apoyo* and *ayuda* have the same conceptual meaning, this slight change in the *Oportunidades* programme jargon reflects the intention of the state policy discourses to transit this conditional cash transfer programme from being perceived as *asistencialistas*, where the poor are portrayed as passive recipients of government ‘help’, to a duty bearing ‘co-responsibility’ where the government supports the recipients of the programme in their attempt to overcome the condition of being poor.

Generally speaking the [other] community members are supportive of us, though there are still some neighbours that throw away more rubbish when they know we are collecting it.

When asked to comment in more detail on the people who still manifest an insensitive attitude towards the policy recipients, the two women agreed:

Because they may still feel envious about the fact that we are the ones who receive the [government] support, we know that some of them have asked the [*Oportunidades* programme] authorities to put their name on the list of [recipients], but they have not been included yet. But these cases are uncommon; most of the people show respect to us when we are sweeping the roads and collecting the rubbish.

Data collected by observation add evidence that in general terms this type of *faena* is widely perceived by the community as routine practice necessary to fulfil the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme. As a result it was not possible to collect any open expression of hostility against the recipients of this programme (Fieldwork diaries 05/09/07; 03/10/07).

In another informal conversation with the *encargado del orden* (community authority), when asked to comment about such women-only activities he acknowledged their work and expressed his gratitude to them:

These women [recipients] work very hard; thanks to them the community is now cleaner than before. (Fieldwork diaries; 19/09/07)

Although the *Oportunidades* programme has created a distinction between its *faenas* and other voluntary community activities, they still implicitly contain a gender and class distinction discourse. Interlocking class and gender discourses and practices show how cultural constructions around occupation reinforce social group representations, as in the case of the female *Oportunidades* recipients. As Eder (1993) suggests, the social status of an individual is usually deduced from his or her occupation, and this is significant in terms of gender and class. Therefore, taking into consideration that cleaning the roads and collecting rubbish are often seen as occupations for the poor and undereducated it is possible to suggest that the *Oportunidades* programme women-only *faenas* involve not only a gender but also a class component.

At this point the design of the state policy is relevant (Aronowitz, 1992). For instance, in the *Oportunidades* women-only *faenas* there is a class representation of the female programme recipients. Once again, comparing this type of community activity with the long-standing *faenas*, men's participation is oriented towards agricultural activity or improving the physical infrastructure of the community. In the women-only *faenas* the participants are allocated low-skilled responsibilities. This denotes not just a sexual division of roles, with men and women called to perform separate community activities; it also involves a class representation of poor

women who are implicitly depicted as destitute and illiterate citizens (Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1999).

The above fieldwork data indicate that the *Oportunidades* programme *faenas* are undervalued in terms of female recipients' contribution of labour. Generally the rest of the community members and the recipients themselves perceive the *faenas* as one of the obligations that the beneficiaries of the programme have to comply with. Therefore despite the fact that there is no explicit evidence of a division between policy and non-policy recipients, one of the unintended effects of the implementation of women-only *faenas* is the development of an asymmetrical relationship between the two social groups. The most recurrent argument is that female recipients have to comply with this obligation due to the fact they directly receive the support provided by the government, as suggested in the data below.

In the adult women's focus group participants were asked to express their opinions on why *Oportunidades* programme recipients are allocated responsibility for cleaning the community's roads and collecting its rubbish. A female non-recipient of this programme stated:

I think that responsibility needs to lie with the [*Oportunidades* programme] recipients because they are supported by the government (Female non-recipient).

Most of the female recipients attending the session expressed opinions of their participation in the women-only *faenas*, and most agreed that since they are receiving 'the payment', they are obliged to comply with the *Oportunidades* programme *faenas*.

This shows the asymmetrical relationship between *Oportunidades* programme recipients and non-recipients, with *faenas* currently understood as community service that recipients need to carry out as a matter of compensation towards the rest of the community due to the fact they are direct recipients of the cash transfer. Moreover, since women-only *faenas* are perceived as one of the obligations of the *Oportunidades* programme, women are incorporated into these community activities on an 'individual basis with no clearly defined collective societal project with which to identify' (Molyneux, 2008:55-56). For instance, in the research context there are no empirical data about local projects associated with the *Oportunidades* programme for community development that can provide the driving force to help female recipients (and non-recipients) to start small-scale economic activities that could enhance their autonomy and security (fieldwork diaries).

Data from a semi-structured household interview (fieldwork; second stage) conducted with one of the two elderly female *Oportunidades* programme recipients emphasises the idea that attendance at the *faenas* is perceived not only as the obligation of female recipients but also because these women are mothers. The elderly woman interviewed asserted:

I'm too old to be involved in *faenas* but the women who have children at school have more obligations. (Elisa: HH-092; 78)

Women are called together to the *Oportunidades* programme *faenas* not primarily as citizens but in their social role as mothers and carers (Molyneux, 2006); and also due to a discourse of debt 'you owe us' implicitly internalised among community members (recipients and non-recipients). In fact, their participation in the women-only *faenas* adds force to the argument discussed previously about how gender responsibilities settled in the domestic domain are extended to other social spheres (Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1999). Since mothers are the direct receivers of the *Oportunidades* cash transfer benefits, in performing these community activities they are represented in their social function of carers. In other words they are seen as the person responsible for the family. This also 'has the effect of further marginalizing men from care responsibilities' (Molyneux, 2008:56).

On the "day of payment" the image of mothers queueing to collect the cash transfer reinforces the idea of women's dependence on assistance (see Chapter 6 – Picture 6.1), and women attending the *Oportunidades faenas* also promote this interpretation. Therefore, the idea of women going out home in order to "work" in community clean-ups do not threaten any masculine prerogatives either at community or at household level and men do not object women to attend this type of activities.

Indeed, at the men's focus group discussion, when asked to express his opinion about women-only *faenas* as a requirement to receive the benefits of this programme, a man who declared that his wife was receiving *Oportunidades* programme support, answered:

Well I think they receive the support directly [from the government]. So it is their obligation to comply with the *faenas*.

This argument was supported by two other men, although whether their families were *Oportunidades* programme recipients is not known.

Another male recipient participating in the focus group discussion clarified:

In our case [the rest of the family members] try to *help* each other. So when my wife cannot attend the *faenas* our daughter helps her.

Another implication of labelling *Oportunidades* programme *faenas* a 'women-only' activity is that even in cases like this one, where the family presents a more cooperative attitude, the fact that the speaker asserts that the family offers to 'help' his wife (or his children's mother) reinforces the idea that participating in these activities is still the primary responsibility of the mother (Molyneux, 2006, 2008). Moreover, since the *Oportunidades* programme *faenas* have been labelled merely women's obligations, men's cooperation is not required and most of the 'help' provided by other members of the family is provided by her daughters (with the previous agreement of the *vocal*, as discussed in Chapter 6).

The data presented above show how gender inequalities are socially constructed and are not confined to one social domain; they are reproduced across different institutions. A decade after the introduction of the *Oportunidades* programme's women-only *faenas* women have gained social recognition in the community, but this has been achieved by performing almost the same role that they fulfil at home: that of cleaner and carer. Molyneux (ibid) argues that an element of 'female altruism' informs their participation in the programme: '[a]s many poor women in Latin America routinely speak of "sacrificing themselves" for their children', hence by taking part in the *Oportunidades* programme women-only *faenas* satisfaction is gained by being publicly reaffirmed in their social identity as mothers (ibid:54).

It is not a coincidence that women agree to participate in *Oportunidades* women-only *faenas* cleaning roads and collecting rubbish. As early mentioned (see Chapter 2) women's reproductive role also represents a source of power and negotiation within the family (Calverio, 2005), therefore the female recipients of this programme should not be perceived as powerless in their households fulfilling with this programme requirements. Their attendance to these communities' activities ensures their maternal authority over their children and gives them access to other material benefit such is the case of the cash transfers delivered by this programme (as it is later discussed). Nonetheless the women-only *faenas* reinforce the sex-divided pattern of household labour, limiting women's access to other economic and social spheres such long term remunerative job opportunities and community participation, thus reinforcing their dependence from patriarchal family structures.

7.3 The moral character of gender access to social protection within rural households

This section examines how household-level institutions (conjugal and parent-child relationships) have been adapted or reinforced in terms of gender roles and responsibilities, and the effects of these adaptations on mothers' and daughters' status within the household over the decade since the *Oportunidades* programme was first introduced in rural Mexico. The gendered nature of this effect is examined from different angles, including a comparative analysis of *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient households regarding the gender distribution of everyday household tasks and responsibilities, income-earning activities carried out by female recipients and non-recipients, arrangements of social space, and reproductive health. This *Oportunidades* programme recipient family analysis considers the mode of compliance these households develop to fulfil the programme's requirements, and the gendered effects of the cash transfers on women's control of the money.

7.3.1 Forms of household organisation

This subsection describes the existing sexual division of labour in *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient households. Everyday household practices normatively require that each

member fulfils certain obligations in return for certain rights. These rights and obligations are also defined through gendered attributes that include the division of resources and responsibilities (Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1999).

In-depth household case studies revealed an assumption by both groups that the sexual division of the household is ‘natural or a “given” due to women’s [...] role in reproduction’ (Benería, 1979:204). Most of the female respondents identified two main areas of women’s responsibility in the household: childcare and daily maintenance of the dwelling. Table 7.1 summarises the most recurrent activities reported by both groups.

Table 7.1: Women’s household responsibilities (*Oportunidades* recipients and non-recipients)

- Food preparation
- Fuel collection
- Storing water
- Ironing clothing – most participants reported a washing machine amongst the household assets
- Sweeping and mopping the dwelling

Both groups perceived the husbands as breadwinners and generally described the latter’s role as: ‘to go to work’ or ‘to bring money into the household’. For instance, since Josefina (HH-005), an *Oportunidades* programme recipient, is a single mother living with her son at her parents’ household, she considers her father the household breadwinner: ‘My father is old and sick, but he still shares crops and raises cattle to support the family’. Where husbands migrate to work in the US, both female recipients and non-recipients commented that the responsibility of men is ‘to send us money’.

Throughout the visits conducted to the household participants it was observed that while the men go to work, the women stay at home performing their household duties. However, in several of the households these duties were not restricted to caring and household activities. Women in both groups were often observed carrying out unpaid productive activities like caring for animals, collecting seeds from pumpkins to dry and sell, going to the field to ‘help’ their husband or ‘assisting’ in the family shop (fieldwork diaries) (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Women's Unpaid Extra Activities (*Oportunidades* recipients and non-recipients)

Household ID	Extra Unpaid Household Activities
Recipients	
HH-004- María (56)	Assists her husband in the shop at the front of the house
HH-005-Josefina (58)	At weekends assists her mother in the shop at the front of the house.
HH-022-Carolina (33)	Animal care and collecting pumpkin seeds. Both activities carried out with three out of her four children.
HH-030- Gina (35)	Animal care and collecting pumpkin seeds. Both activities carried out with her two children.
HH-087-Socorro (34)	Fuel collection Has the primary responsibility for her mother and husband. Both are physically impaired due to a stroke and muscular dystrophy respectively
HH-091-Delia (30)	Fuel collection and collecting pumpkin seeds. Since she has a congenital physical handicap of her upper limbs both activities are carried out with her husband.
Non-recipients	
HH-082 -Yunuen (39)	Assists her husband in the shop at the front of her in-laws' house
HH-101-Magali (47)	Animal care and collecting pumpkin seeds

Of the 29 women interviewed in depth, three women – two *Oportunidades* programme recipients (HH-004; HH-005) and one non-recipient (HH-082) – were working as shop assistants in the family convenience store. When asked to comment on this activity, they all responded that it is not a job: 'I just help my husband with [...]' (HH-004; HH-082). Josefina (HH-005) reported that 'at weekends I assist my mother in the shop'. According to their explanation the main reason for not considering this activity employment is that they are not paid for it. Mindek (2003) remarks that in rural Mexico most women's extra-household activities are unpaid, therefore their contribution to productive activities as a source of household savings is devalued.

Magali (HH-101), a non-recipient female (see Table 7.2) was conducting extra household unpaid productive activities at the time of the in-depth interviews. Apart from the animal care and collecting pumpkin seeds that she does at home, when she 'gets bored' of her household duties she goes to the field to 'help' her husband with the crops:

I tell my sons [22 and 18 years old; both currently working in the US] that sometimes when I get bored at home I like go to the field and help my husband. But they always tell me: 'You don't have to do that, my [brother (15 years old)] is there to help my father. You have enough work with all your duties at home'.

Then I explain to them that I help their father because I like to do it, that he – my husband – does not demand any help from me. But my sons always answer me: ‘You should go out and get some distraction; you don’t need to go and help my father. That is not your responsibility’. [...]. In any case, I have always liked to work in the field, even when I was a child I used to help my father.

The above highlights how even when women openly express their enjoyment of performing extra unpaid household activities, in terms of gender discourse the division of housework and responsibilities is still evident. HH-101, quoted above, clearly explained that she ‘goes to the field’ because she wants to ‘help’ her husband. However her sons clearly tell her that this is not her responsibility.

Furthermore, in contrast to the notion of responsibility which in this particular case involves the idea of gendered routine practices conducted over time, the notion of ‘help’ infers that the activity is conducted on a random and temporary basis. As result, even in cases where recipient and non-recipient women have expanded their contribution to some everyday productive household activities their participation is still subordinated to their husband’s role in the household and the latter are still considered the main income provider.

As mentioned, the male role in both groups of households was more strictly delimited to the provision of household income. This suggests that whereas women – both recipients and non-recipients – are still more subordinated to helping men in the accomplishment of their duties or responsibilities, men do not reciprocate equally. Men’s work – understood as the conduct of any income-generating activity – is not just a matter of the male’s role: it is a key element of masculine identity (Edwards, 2006). Therefore men do not need to conduct other household activities to reinforce their identity. If men help women with the housework, they tend to conduct activities that do not threaten their masculinity.

For example, at the time of the interview Delia (HH-091), who presents a congenital physical handicap of both of her upper limbs, was carrying out the extra household productive activity of collecting pumpkin seeds with her husband, Benito. But she was also observed collecting firewood in Benito’s company (fieldwork diaries 07/10/07). While collecting pumpkin seeds is one of Benito’s income-generating activities (when he is not working in the US), fuel collection is generally perceived as a collective activity of the poor families living in the research setting who still rely on collecting fuelwood from the forest for cooking and heating water. Therefore despite the fact that fuel collection is considered a women’s responsibility, as Delia asserts, usually other members of the household help with this. When she was observed having difficulties collecting firewood and asked how she copes with this situation, she declared:

At the moment my husband is here so he *helps* with the firewood collection, but when he is working in the US his family *helps* with it. (Delia; HH-091, italics added).

However, this cooperative scheme does not apply when Delia needs to fulfil her housekeeping responsibilities, where the sexual division of roles is still evident. During the in-depth household interviews she cooked, washed, and cleaned the house, while Benito watched or waited to be served. He was not involved in any of these activities (fieldwork diaries).

The above evidence brings into the discussion the ‘myth of the housewife’ (Richmond-Abbot, 1992). Many women have learned that it is feminine to do child-care and housekeeping tasks, and to not fulfil these responsibilities or to ask men to do them is to not comply with their feminine role of housewife and mother. In contrast, most of the men believe that it is not masculine to do the things that women do. Therefore Benito (HH-087) is willing to cooperate in household activities that do not threaten his masculinity such as gathering firewood, which is perceived as a collective activity, but is reluctant to take responsibility for household activities that are clearly women’s work.

As Young (1993:144) observed three decades ago in Mexican rural households, some women still

[....] do not work in the field except at harvest or occasionally when their menfolk require a helping hand; they do collect water and wood, carry out all household maintenance tasks, care for children and the old, the family livestock and prepare food for eating. Men, on the other hand, do work in the fields but do not collect water or wood (unless their women cannot for some reason) [...], nor do they cook or wash clothes.

Conversely, some of the other women interviewed were observed not doing any unpaid extra household activities. From the interviews conducted with both groups of female participants, it is possible to suggest that one of the main reasons why women do not conduct unpaid activities is that in several households the main source of income comes from a non-agricultural activity, including migration and men’s temporary jobs in the local wage labour market (e.g. as farmhands, bricklayers and bus drivers). Fifteen of the twenty nine household participants in this case study were not involved in an agricultural activity at the time of the in-depth interviews. In 10 of 15 households, remittances from the US constituted the main means of living (see Table 7.3).

Table 7.3: Household's main economic activity

Female group of respondents	Migration	Local wage labour market	Agricultural activities
<i>Oportunidades</i> recipients	7	3	13
Non- <i>Oportunidades</i> recipients	3	2	1

Besides this, an informal conversation with the Secretary of the *Asamblea Ejidal* revealed that international remittances represent the main source of income in about 40% of the households in the research area (fieldwork diaries 12/05/07).

The above account is especially relevant in terms of the high economic dependence of rural households on remittances from the US labour market. It is also important in terms of the sexual division of household labour. Even though some women have been released from extra unpaid household activities, the time saved in this way is not used to generate income. Most women – both *Oportunidades* programme recipients and non-recipients – were observed spending more time at home fulfilling their caring responsibilities (fieldwork diaries). This is because in rural Mexico women's activities generally 'tend to differ according to [economic] class hierarchies' (Benería, 1979:212; Moser, 1993). When families face poverty women tend to carry out the unpaid activities, but when the families achieve a better economic position female household members tend to participate in this type of unpaid activity sporadically. '[They] appeared to be more constrained by cultural requirements that married women should remain in the home and be entirely dependent on their husband' (Benería, 1979:213), and 'tend to concentrate on activities that are [...] compatible with reproduction, and more concretely, with the care of children' (ibid:211).

Even though the empirical account above indicates that the sexual division of labour still persists in both groups of households, one of the interviews conducted with a female non-recipient, Matilde (HH-016; 28), suggests a reallocation of gender roles and responsibilities, at least in terms of discourse. However, this transformation comes more from the effect on the community of migration to the US over time than from the implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme.

Matilde (ibid) asserted:

Sometimes I wonder why when women move to the United States to join their husbands, they [women] are allowed to work there [in the US]. Even more, one of my female cousins who is living there tells me that there her husband tends to 'assist' more in the household ... either dropping their children at the daycare centre or collecting them. Also, she has told me that she and her family hang

around together at weekends ... Other women have told me that there the men go to school after work ... Well, they tell me that, but then when men come back [to the community] the only thing that I can see is that they go early in the morning to work; in the afternoon they are drinking with their friends and at weekends ... while we are at home looking after the children, they are out enjoying themselves.

The gender-normative discourses informing conjugal relationships are affected by the social context. In the research context the sexual division of household labour is directly informed by the phenomenon of migration, but because housekeeping and care responsibilities remain women's roles, the effect of male migration to the US on the fulfilment of *Oportunidades* programme requirements is not significant. So mothers and daughters, who remain at home while men migrate⁷⁹, are more involved in their fulfilment.

Since the sexual division of household labour tends to be similar in both the groups of households compared above, the fulfilment of the requirements of this programme is seen as an additional activity for the recipient households and the responsibility for fulfilling them mainly lies with the female head of the household. Families have developed different modes of compliance, as explored in the following subsection.

7.3.2 *Oportunidades* programme requirements: modes of compliance adopted by recipient households

This subsection examines different modes [adopted by recipients] of compliance with the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme. Female recipients have developed different ways of maintaining their housekeeping and care responsibilities while they attend activities organised by the programme. This mode of compliance tends to depend on families' domestic cycles (Escobar & González de la Rocha, 2005).

In the case of *Oportunidades*, Escobar and González de la Rocha (ibid) distinguish three different stages in family recipients' domestic cycles: expansion (when children are born); consolidation (when the family unit is complete) and dispersion (when children begin to leave home). Among the 23 *Oportunidades* recipient households interviewed in depth it was possible to identify 2 households in the expansion stage, 19 in the consolidation stage and 2 in the dispersion stage.

To explore the modes of compliance adopted by the recipient households in detail, the 23 female participants were specifically asked how they organise the day at home when they

⁷⁹ The fulfilment of *Oportunidades* family medical check-up requirements by adult male members working away from the household (this includes those men who have temporarily migrated to join the US labour market), has been explored in Chapter 5 through the analysis of the different degrees of discretion offered by doctors and nurse working at LHCS.

have to attend an *Oportunidades* activity (a medical appointment, health educational workshop, monthly meeting or *faena*). The responsibilities they found most difficult to cover when they had to attend the LHCS for an *Oportunidades* activity were cooking for their husbands and looking after their youngest children (under 5 years old). Their responses identified two modes of compliance: bringing in support mostly from outside the household and support mostly reliant on intra-household resource (see Table 7.4).

While households in the expansion and dispersion stages of their domestic cycle rely more on external resources to be able to comply with the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme, those in the consolidation stage tend to be better equipped with intra-household resources. In this latter case the intra-household resource is mainly daughters of 10 to 15 years old (as explained in detail later) (see Table 7.4, below):

Table 7.4: *Oportunidades* Programme Recipient Households. Modes of Compliance Adopted by Domestic Cycle

Mode of compliance	No. HH's adopting this model	Domestic cycle *	Main description
Support mostly from outside the household	2	Expansion	<p>Both female recipients' (HH-066, 28; HH-091; 30) husbands work outside the community (in both cases they often migrate to work to the US). Therefore cooking for their husbands was not identified as one of the most difficult responsibilities</p> <p>Lack of resources at home: other female family members living elsewhere look after their young children when they attend some activity organised by this programme (i.e. health educational workshop and <i>faenas</i>).</p> <p>Newborn babies and children under 5 (attending the kindergarten) are taken by their mother to any <i>Oportunidades</i> programme activity. In this point, the teacher at the kindergarten plays a relevant role (see below).</p>
	2	Dispersion	<p>With no children at home, cooking is the only responsibility identified as difficult to fulfil at home when attending <i>Oportunidades</i> programme activities. Both female recipients (HH-004, 54; HH-092, 78) commented that every time they attend an <i>Oportunidades</i> activity, their daughters-in-law (both of whom live outside the household) cook for them and look after their husbands (warming up and serving food to them).</p> <p>Elisa (HH-092), an elderly female <i>Oportunidades</i> programme recipient, commented that her son, who lives elsewhere, drives her and her 85-year-old husband to the LHCS for their medical-check ups (see Chapter 5).</p>
Support mostly reliant on intra-household resource	19	Consolidation	<p>Most of the resources are other female household members, mainly daughters over 10 years old, and just occasionally in specific circumstances they ask for support from other female family members living in the community (as explained later).</p> <p>Some of the requirements contained within the design of this programme, initially labelled mothers' responsibilities such as sending children to school or taking them to the LHCS for their medical check-up twice a year are carried out by the children themselves, particularly specially those at secondary and high school (7th to 12th grade).</p>

*For more specific detail of household participants see Annex VI.

Modes of compliance when support is based outside the household

In both modes of compliance (Table 7.4) support from outside the household mainly comes from sisters, mothers and other relatives by marriage. This support is mainly informed by moral notions of 'generalised reciprocity' (Sahlins, 1972:296) that apply among close relatives, which suppose assistance in any case of need, with correspondingly undefined help in return at some point in the future(ibid). Moreover, the fact that family members are

involved in supporting mother recipients with their housekeeping and caring responsibilities at home is evidence that in Mexico the family is still a relevant institution on which to call for help rather than making arrangements with neighbours and friends (Lomnitz, 1977). However, all the support received from family members comes from women because the sexual division of household roles also informs their calls for help. In other words, if the female recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme ask other female relatives for help it is because they assume that it is morally legitimate to ask women, not men. Since male family members are not involved – at least not on a regular basis – in helping mothers to fulfil the requirements of the programme it is possible to propose that the conditionalities of the *Oportunidades* programme reinforce the sexual division of household work including households that are not necessarily part of the programme.

Thus, from the above insight it is possible to suggest that through modes of compliance developed by recipient mothers the social reproduction of gender roles is reinforced not just at the recipients' household level but is also extended to other households in the same community. As Bezanson (2006:10) states, '[a] gender order is the sum of the gender regimes operating in various [social structures]': in this case the state, the community and the family/household. This gender order refers to a 'set of social relations characterized by a sexual division of labour and [policy] discourses that support the division' (Cameron, 2006:84). In this case the policy discourses are contained in the care requirements that mothers have to fulfil in order to receive the cash transfer benefits of this programme.

Households in the expansion and dispersion stages also use complementary resources from other external sources to fulfil the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme. In households in the dispersion stage, that just include elderly people amongst their members, the LHCS tends to grant the latter medical appointments even though they do not fulfil their medical check-up requirements (see Chapter 5).

Households in the expansion stage are likely to have young children attending kindergarten to grade 2. Recipient mothers here rely on the discretion of female teachers at the kindergarten to be able to fulfil the programme's requirements. Tania, (HH-066), with a four-year-old son at kindergarten, commented that once a month when mothers have to attend the education workshop at the LHCS and every two months on payday, teachers at the kindergarten give all the children – recipients and non-recipients – the day off:

They do this because it is easier for us, otherwise we would be in a rush to come back here before noon to collect our children from the school. In the past mothers used to ask permission from the teachers to not bring the children to school [when they needed to attend some *Oportunidades* programme activity]. But this was more complicated for the teachers because while some children [non-

recipients] were at school the other children [recipients] were away. So they prefer to give them all the day off instead.

Tania's account provides evidence of how other state institution actors, not directly involved in the operation of the *Oportunidades* programme, also play a role as policy makers in the front line operation of this programme. As Lipsky (1980) suggests, street-level bureaucrats – in this case the kindergarten teachers – are characterised by relatively high degrees of discretion in their everyday interaction with clients. Like the doctors at the LHCS (see Chapter 5), kindergarten teachers' discretion is affected by the conditions they face at work. Data from the household questionnaires indicate that 14 of the 21 children attending kindergarten were from *Oportunidades* programme recipient households. As a result, teachers simplified their work by granting all children, recipients or not, a day off school. In the long term, common practices tend to be institutionalised, hence on the research site 'the day off from kindergarten' is becoming institutionalised by both groups of mothers and by teachers.

The fact that mothers who are not beneficiaries of the *Oportunidades* programme are also affected by this process suggests that although they are not a primary source of reference in this decision they have been put in a position of non-voluntary clients of the *Oportunidades* programme. This does not necessarily suggest that they are helpless actors in this mother-teacher relationship. Mothers who are non-recipients consent to the arrangement because they accept the legitimacy of their street-level bureaucrat position and decision and their dissent would not be productive because the number of non-recipient mothers with children at the school is smaller than that of recipients. But they also considered themselves satisfied by this decision (ibid:57), as was evident in the in-depth interview with Consuelo (HH-104), an *Oportunidades* non-recipient with two daughters at the kindergarten:

I think this is good, because nowadays we know in advance when there are no classes at the [kindergarten] ... In the past mothers used to take their children to the school but because a lot of children did not attend the teachers would cancel classes at the last minute. This made us waste time. But now we know this information in advance and we can organise our day at home much better.

Modes of compliance when support is mostly reliant on intra-household resources of cooperation

As mentioned, households at the consolidation stage of their domestic cycle tend to rely more on intra-household resources of cooperation. They are more likely to fit the state policy stereotype of the poor family, which implicitly suggests a gendered division of household labour with fathers going to work and mothers staying at home fulfilling their household and care responsibilities, including sending the children to school.

As discussed in Chapter 4, in the conceptual design of this programme the stereotypical ideal family policy recipient is represented as a nuclear, biparental male-headed household. Of the

19 in-depth case study *Oportunidades* programme recipient households at the consolidation stage, 13 are male-headed nuclear family units. Escobar & González de la Rocha (2008) assert that this type of household performs best in fulfilling the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme. This is mainly for two reasons: firstly, female labour force participation is lower in male-headed nuclear family units (Chant, 1991) than in female-headed family units (which tend to be organised in extended units) (González de la Rocha, 2006). Secondly, as mentioned, this type of household is more likely to have children between 10 and 15 years old who are involved (particularly the daughters) in the mode of compliance adopted by recipient households (Escobar & González, 2008).

For example, during the household interviews with Carolina (HH-022) I observed that her eldest daughter, 11 years old and currently in grade 7, is actively involved in everyday household duties such as warming up food and serving it to her younger siblings (fieldwork diaries: 27/11/07; 10/01/08). When Carolina and her family need to attend the LHCS for the medical check-ups Carolina usually cooks early in the morning before they leave home. When they come home she warms up the food and feeds the children. When she was asked if someone else helps her with this latter activity, she responded: 'Usually my eldest daughter helps me'. Carolina reported the same form of intra-household organisation for the rest of the *Oportunidades* programme activities. However, when her eldest daughter is at school one of her two sisters, who live elsewhere in the community, looks after her younger son (9) and daughter (8) until her eldest daughter finishes school and returns to look after her siblings until Carolina gets home.

In cases like this where women other than the mother and daughter participate in the modes of compliance adopted by *Oportunidades*' recipient households, daughters' school attendance is usually not sacrificed: instead they retain full access to education by performing a double role in the household. Daughters attend school in order to receive the programme's cash transfer benefit, but at the same time past inequalities are still informing their role in the household and they share the responsibility for care with their mothers.

When Carolina (HH-022) was asked to comment on why her husband does not help as her daughter does, she said:

My husband works outside the community [for a building company as a bulldozer operator ...]. He has a continuous working day at his job, so he is not at home most of the time during the week; hence it's difficult for him to help with the children

As noted, state policy interventions like the *Oportunidades* programme are designed to enhance the status of their recipients. However, this type of state intervention tends to reinforce patterns of sexual division of household labour. Therefore, like other frontline

operators (doctors and teachers) (see Chapter 5), female recipients offer a degree of discretion to adult males due to their work commitments, so men's participation in the fulfilment of the programme's requirements is marginal. Instead, women demand support from their daughters, firstly because the programme's requirements are perceived as caring activities which are considered female responsibilities, and because in contrast to their sons, who are seen as prospective breadwinners, daughters are seen as at home learning their future household responsibilities from their mothers. This social reproduction of the sexual division of household labour is implicit in two accounts.

The first account is that of Gina (HH-030), asked to comment about her 8-year-old daughter, who was observed carrying out some household duties:

My daughter is still very young to take on responsibilities at home, but despite this she helps me with some activities at home, like for example she is now setting the table. Of course she cannot do many things on her own, but she is learning. Otherwise, later she will get married and she'll know nothing about her household duties.

Patricia (HH-094) has a 12-year-old daughter:

My daughter is old enough to look after herself; she already knows how to make tortillas (said with pride). On days that I need to attend a meeting or other *Oportunidades* programme event, I cook early in the morning and leave [the food] ready in the kitchen. If I'm not home when she comes from school she can warm the food up and serve it to her father and herself.

As mentioned, households at the consolidation stage are more likely to fit the state policy representation of the stereotypical poor family, which implicitly suggests a sexual division of household labour with fathers going to work and mothers staying at home fulfilling their household and care responsibilities, which include sending their children to school. Nonetheless, this traditional planning stereotype fails to recognize that low-income households are not homogenous in terms of family structure (Moser, 1993:16). Although nuclear families were the dominant type of household in the research context, other structures existed (14 of the 103 family units in the research setting were extended family units).

The extended family is a form of organisation that families often adopt to manage poverty, usually caused by the absence of adult men (generally the father) as the main source of household income (González de la Rocha, 2006). Extended family units tend to include sick and elderly people who are likely to need medical attention and care. Besides this, the women often work outside the household, hence the distribution of their time between household and work commitments is more complicated (*ibid*), and therefore this type of family unit requires more support from other female members of the family living in the household to fulfil the *Oportunidades* requirements. This is the case for two *Oportunidades* programme female

recipients (HH-005 and HH-087) living in extended family households, both at their parent's houses (see Annex VI). Josefina (HH-005) is a recipient mother with a son of 11 in the last year of primary school (grade 6). She moved into her parents' house 11 years ago after the death of her partner, the father of her only son. Even though she works outside the home she is still responsible for looking after her parents, who are both old and have medical conditions: her father (77) has prostate cancer and her mother (72), heart disease. When Josefina was asked to comment on how she organises the day at home every time she attends an *Oportunidades* programme activity, she answered:

I don't notice much difference because I already work outside on weekdays. My mother looks after my son when I'm away from home working in Morelia. She cooks and sends him to school. In our case, we all travel together [this includes her parents, as she later clarifies] every time we need to attend the LHCS for the family's medical check-ups. But this just happens twice a year, so medical appointments do not affect the household organisation much. Usually we eat something on our way back home and then later either my mother or I cook something else [...]. If necessary, one of my sisters comes and helps my mother in the shop, but usually my mother prefers to close the shop. That day is kind of like my mother's 'day out'.

This specific mode of compliance shared between Josefina and her mother reveals how inter-gender responsibilities amongst family members are transformed over the life course and female care responsibilities are reallocated (Richmond-Abbot, 1992). Josefina fulfils her motherly responsibilities of sending her son to school through her mother. On the other hand, parent-child relations in later life are especially likely to be ambivalent, and daughter-mother relationships involve a notion of cooperation but also co-dependency (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). Despite this, it is expected that amongst the extended families units, adult members are more autonomous and self-reliant in complying with *Oportunidades* requirements. The mode of compliance developed by this family unit includes notions of dependency with Josefina responsible for taking her parents to the LHCS for the medical check-up.

The husband of Socorro (HH-087), another female recipient living in an extended family, suffers from muscular dystrophy, a chronic degenerative disease. As a result she and her family have lived at her parents' house for the past five years. Socorro also looks after her 68-year-old mother, who suffered a stroke over five years ago. Socorro's (HH-087) household includes children between 10 and 15 years old: her 2 daughters (14 and 10) are actively involved in the organisation of the household. They share their mother's caring responsibilities, including looking after their grandmother, father and youngest brother (6). Observation showed that the two girls often miss days at school (both attend afternoon classes). Socorro was asked how she organises the day at home when she has to leave to fulfil *Oportunidades* programme requirements:

I'm responsible for looking after my mother. My father is old and sick [he is partially hearing-impaired and an alcoholic]: he never helps at home. My siblings are all married and have their own responsibilities. They never come to visit [my mother]. Therefore I need to rely on my children. So my daughters help me when I'm not at home, either cooking or looking after the family [her mother, father and youngest brother] It does not matter if I'm working outside 'home or attending an *Oportunidades* programme event ... for us it's exactly the same really.

As in the previous cases of girls gaining full access to education by performing a double role in the household, in extreme cases like the above they tend to be loaded with extra household work and their school attendance is sacrificed.

In recipient households that do not fit into the policy representation of the poor Mexican family, such as female-headed households, the mothers tend to be overloaded with extra household responsibilities and the *Oportunidades* programme requirements. As a result such families eventually tend to drop out of the programme. For instance, the in-depth interviews with non-recipient households revealed that Marcela (HH-054) had once been a recipient. Since her husband went to prison about four years ago her two eldest children, a daughter and son, currently 20 and 17 years old respectively, had dropped out of school to join the labour market. Her daughter works on a chicken farm and her son in a garage, and she has had to start earning an income herself, as discussed later. Due to their work commitments it was difficult for all the family members to continue participating in this programme.

Not only is the sexual division of the household labour reinforced through the fulfilment of the *Oportunidades* programme requirements, but there is also a process of unequal access to social protection resources implicitly informing the design of this state policy. As already mentioned (see Chapter 4) the *Oportunidades* programme's conceptual design sees the ideal family policy recipient as a nuclear, biparental male-headed household in the consolidation stage of its domestic cycle. This type of household tends to have better resources that allow members to comply with the conditionalities of this programme. However, as discussed, other families that do not fit this stereotype find fulfilling the requirements of the programme problematic and eventually they tend to drop out of the programme.

The above evidence suggests that poor households that do not fulfil with the stereotype of the 'ideal policy deserver' tend to drop out of the programme. The diverse mode of compliances described in this section, gives an account about how poor families, but above all *Oportunidades* female recipients, have negotiated around this programme's requirements for compliance and how they use their everyday household resources to this end. This suggests a degree of empowerment in women's dealing with the control of the state over household forms of organisation.

Compliance with the Oportunidades programme targeting mechanism

Family recipients, regardless of their demographic structure and stage of their domestic cycle, must to comply with the *Oportunidades* programme targeting mechanism (see Chapter 2 and 4). This mode of compliance is fulfilled through a process of recertification. This process is organised by the national level office of this programme and it is similar to the household survey and discriminant analysis implemented during the initial selection procedure. The income and assets of family recipients are assessed in order to verify if they are still poor enough to qualify for the benefits of this programme. This process is applied on periodical basis (around every three or four years) and families are called to attend an “*evento de recertificación*” (or recertification event) (2010a; 2007a) usually organised in the main square of seat of the local government where families have to queue (as in the case of day of payment; see Chapter 6) in order to response the questionnaire indicating the socio-economic characteristics of their household. According to the regulation of this programme (ibid), this recertification process should involve a household visit with the intention to confirm the authenticity of the information reported by the household recipients. Even so, accounts from female recipients interviewed during the conduction of the in-depth household cases revealed that families were not visited during the last recertification process that took place two years before the fieldwork of this case study was conducted.

This situation was also commented to the director of the LHCS (Key Informant No. 1) and he confirmed the above information:

I think the [recertification process] does not work as it should be. There are many people who are not included in the [*Oportunidades*] program and they should be, but at the same time other people who should not be considered and they are already in the program. Others have been removed from this programme and they should still receive the benefits of the program. Part of the problem lies on the implementation of the household survey [...].

Two years ago, families were asked to come to the main square, here in the seat of the local government, and respond the questionnaire [...]. Several of the questions were related to housing conditions, for instance the building material used in roof(s), walls, floor; number of rooms within the dwelling; furniture and other household assets and appliances [...]. If they want to make an accurate assessment of how people have improved their living conditions since they started receiving the benefit of the programme, then it is important to conduct household visits, as is prescribed in the regulation of the programme [the informant clarifies][....].

I've been working [in this locality] for over three years and I know most of the policy recipients. Some of them come to LHCS [to fulfil the health requirement] in new brand cars and others need to borrow money from relatives and neighbours to pay for the public transportation that brings them here, and I'm sure that household visits can evidence this type of disparity amongst the policy recipients. But these household visits never took place.

The same informant was asked to explain who is responsible for implementing the recertification process. He replied:

Here at the LHCS we are responsible for reporting whether families fulfil the health and nutrition requirements of this programme or not [...]. The selection and recertification of the policy recipients is implemented by the *Oportunidades* national office: local implementers like us do not have anything to do with this process

The above explanation reinforces the idea that there are divergences between how state policy is conceived at the high design level in the national office and its implementation on the ground. While *Oportunidades* policy designers at the national office conceive the selection and recertification of policy recipients as ‘innovative’ and fully accurate through the application of statistical ‘discriminant analysis’ (see Chapter 4), the data above reveal that when policy designers become local implementers they also introduce their own understanding of the policy implementation process. The above accounts add force to the argument about the impossibility of collecting fully accurate information about income and assets merely through the application of household survey methods (see Chapter 4), and bring into question the legitimacy of the programme as means-tested CCT.

7.3.3 Women engaged in income-earning activities

This subsection compares the income-earning activities of some of the female *Oportunidades* programme recipients with non-recipients, to examine the effects of this programme in re-ordering intra-household gender roles and responsibilities (i.e. men’s main role as breadwinner) and attitudes towards women’s autonomy. As Molyneux (2008) explains households respond to macro- and meso-economic changes impacting on personal welfare, modifying incentives and influencing economic behaviour. These effects also occupy a central place in the design of social policy with respect to gender (*Ibid*). As far as the design of the programme is concerned, the intra-household gender effects of the programme are reflected in producing a redistribution of power and women status within households. If so, *Oportunidades* (as it is the case of other CCTs) has not been merely designed as cash transfer programme oriented to lift poor households out of poverty, its design is also concerned with re-ordering gender relations in terms of labour supply, such is the case of women’s income-generating activities and moral discourses around these activities.

Several of the women interviewed had been engaged in income-earning activity during certain periods of their life, more commonly when they were single. 10 *Oportunidades* recipients and 3 non-recipients were engaged in an income-earning activity before marrying. At the time of the in-depth household interviews just 5 of the 29 female participants (4 recipients and 1 non-recipient) were engaged in an income-earning activity. However, as with unpaid extra household activities, women’s income-earning activities are perceived as ‘help’ and are

mostly conducted as coping strategies, therefore they are often a temporary response to a household difficulty usually associated with illness or another risk event involving the main income provider (González de la Rocha, 2007; Mindek, 2003; Mummert, 1994). Data collected from the research setting agree with this argument.

For example, Carolina (HH-022), an *Oportunidades* programme recipient, receives economic remuneration for the clothes that she embroiders at home. However, in her in-depth interview she commented that she does this to 'help' her husband with the household expenses:

[T]his is just extra [income]: this is not a proper job, is it? I do this in my free time to help my husband with the household expenses, but definitely he provides most of the money we need at home (*ibid*).

Carolina (HH-022) described how the last time her husband migrated to work in the US he had a legal problem there and was sent to prison for three months. While in prison he could not send her money and they lost contact, therefore she decided to go back to work as a domestic helper, which she had done before she got married, and she also started selling embroideries. When her husband was released and deported to Mexico she stopped working as a domestic helper:

He says there is no need to do that any more. However, he cannot go back to work in the US, otherwise he could be sent to prison again. I carry on sewing and selling the embroidery to help him with the household expenses.

Patricia, another *Oportunidades* recipient (HH-094), grows flowers for sale, but clarified that she only sells them when someone comes to her house to buy them. She commented that the 'extra' she earns from this is mainly used to buy cooking utensils or other household appliances (i.e. buckets, pans, more flowerpots). However, during the interview she made a particular effort to emphasise that her husband 'is a very responsible man, even though he is sick [with prostate cancer and recovering from surgery]: he still fulfils his responsibility to bring money into the home'. Again, in an in-depth interview Patricia stated that in the past she did other families' laundry at home but since her eldest son went to work in the US 'there is no need to do it any more'.

Julia (HH-001), who is divorced, and Josefina (HH-005), a single mother, both *Oportunidades* programme recipients, have more permanent jobs (both were working as domestic helpers). However, these two cases are considered exceptional. In rural areas adult women are still perceived as being married and mothers staying at home. So, women's income-earning activities are usually reserved for young single women, spinsters, widows and the abandoned; all of these are perceived as exceptional circumstances of women without men (Mummert, 1994). .

Even in extreme cases like that of Socorro (HH-087), an *Oportunidades* programme recipient with a husband unable to work due to a physical impairment, this social order still informs her everyday household decisions. She stated that her condition is extraordinary as she has no option but to work outside the home:

[My father and brothers] wonder what I'm doing outside the home, but my husband has a condition that does not allow him to work and I have four children. So I have no option. I need to work. I can't just stay at home and wait for someone to come and feed me and my children. I need money: that's why I go out to work, otherwise I would stay at home looking after my family.

Marcela (HH-054) was not receiving the benefits of the *Oportunidades* programme at the time of her interview. Since her husband went to prison about four years ago she has had to start earning income through activities like selling milk and selling flowers outside the cemeteries in Morelia. During the in-depth interview she commented that her husband was about to be released from prison and she had already 'asked [him] to allow her to continue selling flowers'. As soon as her husband was released from prison she stopped participating in the in-depth household interviews with no explanation. However, through an informal conversation with one of her cousins it became clear that Marcela was not selling flowers any more because her husband had told her to stop.

As Perez-Prado & Mummert (1998) assert, women's identities are continuously constructed through their everyday interface with men. In this regard, their income-earning activities need to be understood as part of this interface and therefore constituting part of the redefinition (or reinforcement) of their social role and responsibilities. The data above presented reveals, that, in emergency circumstances, women become household income providers and this may constitute a 'magic key' to their gaining certain autonomy (*ibid*:27). However this is not a straightforward process, and according to the previous accounts both groups of women (*Oportunidades* recipients and non-recipients) still tend to label their income as 'help' or 'extra income', that is subordinate to their husbands' income activity. This leads to suggests that *Oportunidades* has not had a significant effect in re-ordering wider intra-household gender roles in terms of labour supply. Even though in practical terms, women's role tends to be redefined as 'income provider', their contribution is still initiated as a coping strategy. In moral and discursive terms their household and family care responsibilities remain as their priority role.

7.3.4 Spending the cash transfer

This subsection examines the gendered effects (moral discourses and everyday practices) of the *Oportunidades* cash transfers on women's control of the use of the money. The direct allocation of the cash transfer to female recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme is

another gendered aspect of this programme (SEDESOL, 2009). Women gain more economic autonomy and control in receiving and spending the cash transfer. However, as some authors (Adato et al., 2000; Maldonado et al., 2006; Molyneux, 2008) state, women's control over the cash transfer is necessary but it is not sufficient to enhance their autonomy and status in the household. Generally speaking, decision-making issues include not only the question of who is in the position to make the decision freely and autonomously. In moral terms it also involves the rules and procedures according to which decisions are made (Young, 1990). Women's economic autonomy requires more than the ability to participate in the household income-earning process through access to labour opportunities or reception of cash transfer benefits: it also involves the negotiation of household expenditure (Adato et al., 2000; Dwyer & Bruce, 1988; Haddad, et al., 1997; Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1999; Roldán, 1988).

In the specific case of the *Oportunidades* programme, cash transfers are deliberately allocated by the Mexican state to female heads of households as affirmative action to redress past gender inequalities (SEDESOL, 2007a; 2009). Even though the idea of female recipients holding the money implies a sense of power in its actual use, the money is deliberately earmarked in advance for children's education and food (*ibid*). So the state is tacitly controlling the money. This reinforces masculine household structures, although in an unintended manner, and in practical terms, female recipients' room for negotiation about how to use the cash transfers is still very limited.

Likewise, selecting women as the direct recipients of the *Oportunidades* cash transfer in exchange for their fulfilment of their social reproductive role and care responsibilities tends to reinforce rather than transform their social role in the household. *Oportunidades* officials emphasise the idea that the children are the final recipients of the programme via moral discourse exalting the virtues of mothers as good administrators. Although this moral discourse is played out constantly by the programme authorities at different levels of the state's policy implementation, one of the most common scenarios where it is reinforced is on payday when the mothers receive the cash transfers (see Chapter 6).

In the same way, most of the discourse around the use of the money played out by the recipients of the programme reflects the naturalisation of this policy discourse. This process of naturalisation refers to what appears to be 'the order of the things' as people learn to see it as normal and natural (Bourdieu, 2001:8; 19). *Oportunidades*' female recipients may contribute intuitively to reinforcing their own subordination to masculine authority in the allocation of household income by portraying themselves with their natural – rather than socially-constructed – attributes of 'good motherhood' through which the state reaches their children. In other words, although the mothers' use of the money to raise their children is socially constructed and reinforced through the policy discourse, they perceive the allocation

of the money to enable them to fulfil their caring responsibilities as normal or natural. This is illustrated by several women's narratives on the purpose of the cash received shown in Table 7.5):

Table 7.5: Women recipients. Moral Discourses around Cash Transfers Expenditure

Household ID	Use of the cash transfers
Josefina (HH-005)	'The authorities of this programme always remind us that this money belongs to our children. So I always use the money to buy [my son's] school uniform and books'
Carolina (HH-022)	'The money we receive from this programme is for our children. I never use the money for anything other than to buy their food, clothes and shoes to send them to school.'
Maribel (HH-038)	'With the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme educational grant I can buy uniforms, new books and shoes for my two daughters attending school.'
Tina (HH-066)	'Definitely, this is a great opportunity for our children. This is the first year I have received money to send my daughter to school [in primary 3 rd grade], and I'm expecting that in the future my son will also get <i>Oportunidades</i> educational grant.'
Gabriela (HH-085)	'In my case I just receive the money for my daughter, who is in the last year of high school (grade 12). Without the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme educational grant [my husband and I] could not have sent her to school ... can you imagine? Just think of the travelling costs: it's a lot of money. Then at that high school teachers always are asking us to buy some [educational] material for the school. So definitely the educational grant has been a great support for us.'
Socorro (HH-087)	'That money is for my children: I'm just responsible for managing it.'
Delia (HH-091)	'My daughter is not at school yet. As a result the money I currently receive is not enough, but it helps us to buy food...at least for a couple of days.'
Patricia (HH-094)	'This programme helps us a lot. The money from the [<i>Oportunidades</i>] educational grant is used to send my daughter to school, buy her books and uniforms. Also I buy food, clothes and shoes for her. But sometimes if there is some money left I use it to buy things for the house. For example, one month I bought an outdoor washbasin; on another occasion I bought a bucket, and last time I bought a cabinet.'

Source: Semi-structured household interviews

Transferring Bordieu's (2001) discussion of symbolic structures of masculine domination to the state policy arena, the *locus* of female subordination is the domestic unit and the state plays a role in reinforcing masculine structures through affirmative moral discourse oriented at legitimising household gender roles and responsibilities. As suggested above, through the *Oportunidades* cash transfers the state plays a role as income provider and food provider, and recipient mothers' social image as good administrators is reinforced as they spend the transfers in their traditional arenas.

Evidence of the constraining natural view of women's participation in the intra-household distribution of economic resources was also found amongst the female non-recipients, all of whom reported that they spend the money they receive from their husbands (HH-016; HH-101; HH-104; HH-105) or the latter's remittances (HH-034) on food, clothes and shoes for their children.

Moreover, in social context like rural Mexico where household labour contribution is highly sex differentiated, the idea of the state taking on men's role as income providers, may give place to unintended effects: Husbands – of both recipients and non-recipients may threaten to lower their contributions for children's schooling, family food and other health costs.

Alternatively, the accounts presented in Table 7.5 (above) lead to the problem of epistemological reflexivity that emerges through explicit acknowledgment of the 'situatedness and partiality of all claims to knowledge' (Marcus, 1998:198). A feminist epistemological reflexivity emphasises the researcher's positionality in the fieldwork setting (see Chapter 3). Thus it is relevant to draw attention to my being an 'outsider' in the research setting where the female recipients I interviewed could possibly have mistaken me as a member of the *Oportunidades* programme staff, which may have influenced their responses.

The above discussion is reinforced with the account offered by Patricia (HH-094) (Table 7.5, above), who illustrates how amongst policy recipients there is room for discretion and the money can be extended to other areas such as domestic devices and household improvements usually controlled by men. Moral discourses around the use of the money are constantly renegotiated by the female policy recipients and they tend to present different responses to the constraints and opportunities available within their social context. This was observed in a *tianguis*⁸⁰ set in the main square of the municipal seat during *Oportunidades*' payday. This *tianguis* was located next to the cash transfer delivery point and many female recipients were observed using the money received on different purchases like snacks, clothes and household appliances (see Picture 7.1).

Picture 7.1: A *Tianguis* on an *Oportunidades*' pay day



Source: Author (July, 2007).

⁸⁰ A *tianguis* is a Nahuatl word for a street market traditionally held on certain days in a town or city neighbourhood in Mexico. This tradition has its roots in the pre-Hispanic period and in many cases its organisation continues essentially unchanged (Orihuela, 2001).

The picture above (7.1) shows that to some extent *Oportunidades*' cash transfers have given mothers intra-household decision-making power on domestic purchases. However, it is important to stress that this power hinges on their ability to play and reinforce their traditional role of being 'good mothers' as devised by the *Oportunidades* programme's obligations.

Authors like Escobar & González de la Rocha (2005) consider that the direct allocation of the cash transfers to female-headed households has a positive impact on their autonomy, and currently the female recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme are seen as creditworthy. However, it is difficult to isolate the effect of the cash transfer as the only or determining factor in transforming women's identity and enhancing their access to credit institutions. The remittances that women receive from the United States also have played a relevant role in transforming their social identity. For instance, in the research context most of the female recipients are the direct receivers of the cash transfers and also, at the same time they receive the remittances sent from the United States through electronic transference. Hence most of the women interviewed reported that their access to credit is mostly determined by their remittances deposited directly into their bank savings account.

The positive effect on female recipients' autonomy from masculine authority suggests that in the long term the initial idea of designating women the direct recipients of the *Oportunidades*' conditional cash transfer may have an unintended effect: the female recipients may turn into consumers – instead of saving the money left in bank account; for example – and with this a risk of indebtedness and dependence on these stipends to pay their debts.

A man widely known as an *abonero* arrives in the community every two weeks, driving a lorry full of household appliances (i.e. electrical appliances, washing machines), all of them sold on credit ('*en abonos*'). On numerous occasions he was observed interacting with women (recipients and non-recipients), selling goods or asking for payment (fieldwork diaries).

In addition, at an *Oportunidades* monthly meeting I attended in the community (see Chapter 6), I observed a catalogue of cosmetic and personal care products being circulated among the female recipients. Through an informal conversation with one of the recipients at the meeting I found that buying these products is becoming popular with all the women in the community and is not restricted to policy recipients (fieldwork diaries 06/09/07). In fact, according to the same recipient this business is run by another recipient. However, when I sought to confirm this the recipient denied that she was a cosmetic seller.

In summary, women as market consumers may increase their autonomy from patriarchal control, and how they exercise agency over the *Oportunidades* economic resources -originally labelled by the state for children education and food-, by using them to buy personal care products and other consumer items. But, on the other hand the idea of women as market

consumers, may also indicate an unintended effect of dependency on the cash transfer benefits and risk indebtedness (Luccisano, 2006; see also in Molyneux 2008:40). Even though there is no empirical evidence from the fieldwork site that can prove this latter argument, it is possible to comment, as Luccisano (2006) also explains, that it is ironic that the economics of debt may have been revitalized by the government cash transfer but not by income from women's employment. The scarcity of work opportunities is a major problem in Mexico's rural areas (*ibid*), and the case study area is no exception.

7.3.5 Arrangements of social space

This subsection considers the gendered arrangements of social space operating in the research setting and how the *Oportunidades* programme transforms or reinforces them. The *Oportunidades* female recipients generally asserted that through their participation in this programme they have gained new spaces for socialisation where they meet new friends and share experiences and everyday concerns with other policy recipients. Nonetheless, these social spaces are associated with the fulfilment of *Oportunidades* programme requirements. The female programme recipients get together in four different social spaces: twice a month at the educational workshops at the LHCS; at monthly meetings in the community; and once every two months they socialise amongst themselves at the *Oportunidades* women-only *faenas* and on payday.

Attendance at *Oportunidades* programme events has created a notion of independence among the women, with a positive impact on their self-confidence and new or strengthened friendship ties. Examples of notions of independence and self-confidence are explicitly mentioned in some of the household interview data presented in Table 7.6, below.

Table 7.6: The *Oportunidades* programme as a space for social interaction

Household ID	Female recipients' perceptions
Juliana- HH-001	<p>'I'm originally from this community. But when I was about 18 I went to work in Morelia ... I got married there and all my social life was there. Then, I got divorced over 10 year ago, and because of this I decided to come back and live here ... At the beginning it was difficult for me to interact with other community members ... Being a divorced woman, other women – especially those who are married – used to be a little distant with me ... maybe they thought I was going to steal their husband. Then I started participating in the [<i>Oportunidades</i>] programme and more recently I became a vocal [<i>de control y vigilancia</i>]. Through the activities organised around this programme I interact more with other female recipients and I can feel that nowadays we are all friendlier and support each other. For example, passing on [operational] information about the programme to the entire group or travelling all together to attend a meeting or to collect "the payment".'</p>
Olivia- HH-002	<p>'In my case this programme has been a great benefit really. Especially in terms of the information that [doctors and nurses] give us at the educational health workshops. But also in the monthly meetings. For example, I and my husband were 16 when we got married ... then my first daughter was born when I was 17 ... So, can you imagine how ignorant I was about how to bring up a child? So at these [events] we share experiences and practical advice with other mothers. For example, at the last meeting we were talking about how to prepare home-made remedies in case [my daughter] gets a fever or a stomach bug, and also how to prevent dehydration.'</p>
Josefina-HH-005	<p>'I work almost everyday -either in Morelia [as a domestic helper] or here assisting my mother in the shop [she specifies]-. So, I do not have time for meeting people. Before I started participating in [the <i>Oportunidades</i> programme]... I just used to visit my grandmother and some very close female cousins [we grew up together and we see each other as sisters; she later details]. But now I have new friends, especially other female recipients living outside this community.'</p>
Carolina-HH-022	<p>'According to my personal experience this programme has helped me a lot. This is not just for the economic benefits, it is also because during the educational health workshops we share our problems with other women and this has made us wake up a lot. For example, before we used to think that to be battered by our husband was something normal [most of us experienced the same situation at home as child; she clarifies and denies any physical violence on her husbands side] but now we know that this is not usual and actually that we can take our husbands to court.'</p>
Griselda-HH-061	<p>'I like to attend the educational health workshops, and I think they are very useful especial for the mother with young children [under 5 years old]. In my case my daughter is a teenager [14 years old] and sometimes I find that the topics discussed in 'the workshops' are not very practical for me and often repetitive. Some of us have complained about this, but nurses [at LHCS] have explained us that one day we will be grandmothers and this information is going to be very useful for us [to look after our grandchildren; she later clarifies ... I think they are right because, in the past we used to learn by doing the same things that our mothers were doing with us and our siblings. Nowadays through the activities organised by the programme mothers get more prepared in these "workshops".'</p>
Socorro-HH-087	<p>'The activities we have to carry out to fulfil of the programme represents not only more [time] for us but also more money, and I think attending the educational workshop gives us a good opportunity to share our problems with other female recipients.'</p>
Delia-HH-091	<p>'Like in my case, some of us weren't born [in this community]. We moved here when we got married. Before we started participating in [the <i>Oportunidades</i>] programme knew each other just by name ... I think that now we talk more amongst ourselves and I feel more confident to approach them when we bump into each other in the street.'</p>
Patricia-HH-094	<p>'... in the community meetings we need to talk. This is because in some exercises we need to ask each other questions or to share experiences about how we handle some situations at home. So I feel that now I have more experience than before. Now I know how to speak more.'</p>

Source: Household level semi-structured interviews

The *Oportunidades* programme offers female policy recipients the opportunity to participate in different social spaces; therefore nowadays they are more visible in their social context than female non-recipients. However, it is important to bear in mind that these spaces for socialisation have been given to, not gained by them through the implementation of this state scheme. This reinforces the idea that the policy design plays a role in how social groups are labelled or represented (Aronowitz, 1992; Wood, 1985), and therefore after a decade of implementation *Oportunidades* programme recipients have an identity as a social group with specific spaces for socialisation where they interact and the support of the state is limited to reinforcing their social representation conducting their reproductive and caring roles.

Even though the accounts presented in Table 7.6 present evidence of an attitudinal transformation and a growing sense of self esteem amongst the female recipients, their empowerment does not rest only on these; it is a multidimensional transformative process that involves more than the provision of material and discursive resources to women (Molyneux, 2008:44) such as social spaces. Women's empowerment is not only an individual process: it often requires collective action and therefore depends on challenging segregated gender patterns of socialisation to transform them into inter-gender cooperative interfaces at the household and community level that allow women to expand their choices, enabling them to gain security and economic autonomy (ibid).

The social spaces attended by *Oportunidades* female recipients are, as Fenster (2008:45) noted in a similar situation in Israel, 'places where women can meet, share problems, and enjoy themselves'. As mentioned, the atmosphere in these women's social spaces reflects a notion of 'intimacy and sisterhood, and constitutes an emotional support system for women' (ibid). However, these top-down-organised spaces for women do not threaten male status in the community and household. In this research it was not possible to collect any empirical evidence of men feeling 'afraid of losing power over their wives' (ibid). In fact, rather than challenge any notion of masculine domination, by attending these spaces of social interaction women are learning how to be better mothers and housewives. In other words, in these spaces their roles and social identity tend to be reinforced.

Apart from participating in different *Oportunidades* events, female recipients present similar patterns of socialisation to those of the non-recipients I interviewed, as shown in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7 shows that despite their patterns of socialisation not being identical both groups of women identified almost the same places or events where they usually meet their friends outside the home. The most relevant aspect is that in all the social spaces where women are visible they are conducting maternal care or domestic responsibilities.

Table 7.7: Social spaces or everyday situations where Oportunidades programme recipients and non-recipients women interact with other women

Household ID	Meeting friends outside the children's school	Waiting or queuing for food parcels provided by the Banco de Alimentos Morelia ¹	Going to the corn mill	Participating in the community chapel group	Visiting family (in or outside the community)	Social events (i.e. baptisms, first communions, girls' 15 th birthday celebrations, weddings)
Oportunidades recipients						
HH-001				X ²	X	X
HH-002	X	X			X	X
HH-004		X	X	X	X	X
HH-005		X ²	X ²	X ²	X	X
HH-013	X				X	X
HH-021	X	X		X	X	X
HH-022	X	X			X	X
HH-023		X	X	X	X	X
HH-026		X			X	X
HH-030	X	X	X		X	X
HH-038		X	X	X	X	X
HH-050			X		X	X
HH-051	X	X			X	X
HH-061		X	X	X	X	X
HH-066	X	X	X		X	X
HH-071	X	X			X	X
HH-079	X	X	X		X	X
HH-085	X	X	X		X	X
HH-087	X	X	X		X	X
HH-091		X	X		X	X
HH-092				X	X	X
HH-094		X	X		X	X
HH-105		X			X	X
Non-recipients						
HH-034	X				X	X
HH-054			X		X	X
HH-076	X				X	X
HH-082	X				X	X
HH-101	X	X		X	X	X
HH-104	X	X	X	X	X	X

1: Catholic charity organisation that collects selects and distributes food in poor communities near Morelia city: see <http://www.bancodealimentosdemorelia.org.mx/somos.php> (consulted: 20/01/10)

2: HH-001 and HH-005 asserted that they only attended these spaces when they are not away working outside the community.

Some differences in the pattern of socialisation described above (Table 7.7) are mainly associated with the age composition of each household. Several participants did not have

young children at school. Also, conflicts with other women prevented some of those interviewed (HH-034; HH-079; HH-082) participating in some of the social activities identified above. For example, Socorro (HH-087) reported a misunderstanding with women in the chapel group, as a result of which she attends chapel in a neighbouring community. Irasema (HH-050) is a member of the Charismatic Catholic Church and because of this is not involved with the chapel group at the research site. Julia (HH-001) identified the street second-hand clothing market in a neighbouring community that she, her sister and mother attend on Tuesdays and Fridays as another place where she meets friends.

Evidence of gendered, segregated patterns of socialisation in the community can also be observed in ordinary daily activities. For instance, while in the morning women are more visible taking children to school and socialising with other mothers after dropping them off or before collecting them from school at noon, in the afternoons men – usually those over 50 years old⁸¹ – tend to be found outside the home drinking and socialising together (fieldwork diaries).

Again, social expectations of women as ‘natural’ mothers and men as heads of household and breadwinners are not confined to everyday activities (Phua & Yeoh, 2008). These gendered, segregated roles are also evident at two community events: men’s attendance at the monthly *Asamblea Ejidal* at the community hall (or *Salon Ejidal*) and women’s at *Oportunidades* meetings. The first community event is mainly attended by men (just three women – two widows and the daughter of one of these – were observed attending this type of assembly) (fieldwork diaries 02/06/07). The *Oportunidades* monthly meetings are attended only by women (fieldwork diaries 06/10/07).

Spaces are socially constructed: ‘the spatial arrangements of [...] buildings and communities reflect and reinforce the nature of gender relations [...] in a society’ (Weisman, 1992:2; also quoted in Phua and Yeoh, 2008:53). Feminist geographers introduce ‘the idea of “patriarchy’s spaces”’, focusing on the way the spatial represents gender identities and relations (Phua and Yeoh, 2008: 52-53). The location and time spent at each of the above events are relevant: the *Asambleas Ejidales* always take place in the community hall on the first Sunday of every month from 10 am to about 3 pm; at this type of meeting the discussion among the men is lively and is always related to community issues (i.e. the construction of a main road and a new bridge in the research setting); men drink beer throughout the assembly (fieldwork diaries 02/06/07). The *Oportunidades* meetings take place on the street on the first Friday of every month, usually starting at 4 pm, and last for one and a half to two hours. Despite the

⁸¹ Due to the migration phenomenon the absence of young males of 18 to 40 is noteable in the research area (fieldwork diaries).

fact that these meetings involve some group exercises and discussion, the female recipients tend to play a more passive role here than the men at the *Asambleas Ejidales*. As mentioned earlier, the topics discussed at the monthly *Oportunidades* meetings are mainly related to operational aspects of the programme, and group dynamics tend to be oriented around practical advice that female recipients (mainly mothers) should implement at home (see Chapter 6).

To sum up the discussion about the gendered arrangement of social spaces of interaction, a decade since the *Oportunidades* programme was introduced the female recipients of this programme have gained more visibility in their communities performing certain activities related to the programme and it is possible to perceive a sense of self-esteem amongst them. However their social visibility has been gained through their social roles as mothers. As Molyneux (2008) asserts, in several cultural contexts such as that in rural Mexico the notion of motherhood has social value but does not confer much in terms of women's empowerment. Some scholars like Ardener (1981), Fenster (2008) and Phua and Yeoh (2008) argue that there are many dimensions of asymmetric social relationships and social spaces give account about the construction and reinforcement of gender identities and hierarchical relations. It is evident that gendered arrangements of socialisation for women's and men's with clear and different social interests and spaces of interaction are still evident in Mexican rural communities.

7.3.6 Reproductive health

This subsection examines the practical reproductive health benefits offered by the state through the *Oportunidades* programme and their effects on reinforcing cultural beliefs about women's reproductive rights. One of the gender-sensitive aspects of the *Oportunidades* programme design is the delivery of preventive healthcare services to women. This includes information on contraceptive methods for all adult women in general and frequent medical checkups for pregnant and breast-feeding women. The women are also asked to have a smear test for the detection of cervical-uterine cancer twice a year as a requirement of the programme.

In general terms, all the female *Oportunidades* programme recipients regard the reproductive health service positively. Some of their opinions of the birth control methods and smear test to which they have access through the programme are presented in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8: Female recipients' opinions of *Oportunidades* programme reproductive health benefits

<i>Birth control methods:</i>	
Julia (HH-001):	The information about birth control is very important. Through this programme I've got some of this information and I use it when I'm talking to my daughters [16 and 14 years old]. I advise them to wait until they are a little bit older to start having boyfriends [the speaker avoids using the words 'sexual intercourse'].
Amelia (HH-023, 60 years old, mother of 8 children):	I'm pleased about the [reproductive health] information we get in this programme. When I was young we didn't have access to birth control information ... actually I did not know that it was possible to plan the number of children and when you want to have them. In the past women just had children like this [her expression suggests that women in the past cared little about this topic] ... because of the fact that we thought this was the way it should be. Nowadays women are more aware about the risks involved in having a lot of children: you can die, the doctor at LHCS has told us... Honestly, I never thought about this before.
Carolina (HH-022):	In my case, I was very ignorant. I used to think that birth control methods could cause cancer, but nowadays I have better understanding about them.
Delia (HH-094):	When I was a child I used to think that I was going to have a lot of children. But now I understand that we cannot have as many children as we would like: there's no point having a lot of children, especially if we do not have the money to support them.
<i>Smear test:</i>	
Olivia's (HH-0002):	I have no problem attending the LHCS for the smear test twice a year; I know that it's for my own benefit.
Gabriela (HH-085):	I had a hysterectomy five years ago ... So, in my case I find the free smear test more beneficial, and all the information that doctors and nurses give us about breast cancer as well.
Maria (HH-004, 56 years old):	I'm a mature woman and I still consider it relevant to be checked periodically in order to prevent [cervical-uterine] cancer. However, at the beginning I was very embarrassed about it, and my husband was a little confused when I explained to him the information that the doctor gave about the procedure; she explained in a funny way, The first time I had the test, we went together to the LHCS, then the doctor explained the test to him again and also offered the possibility of asking a female nurse to take the sample. This made me feel more comfortable
Patricia (HH-094):	One of the [requirements] that was most difficult for me to accept was the smear test. I felt embarrassed about that. But now I understand that it is very useful to detect [cervical-uterine] cancer.

One of the non-recipient females, Consuelo (HH-104) said that she had not had a smear test yet. Magali (HH-101) and Marcela (HH-054) both commented that they tended to use the

smear service when participating in the *Oportunidades* programme, but because they had both decided to drop out of the programme over 4 years ago they have not used it since.

Two other *Oportunidades* programme female non-recipients also made comment on the smear test services offered by the LHCS. Herminia (HH-076) said that she knew of the smear test through her mother and sister in-law (both recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme) and from government campaigns on television and radio. She was thinking of having the test at some point but preferred to do it privately because ‘it’s quicker’. Yadira (HH-082) also knew the benefits of the smear test from female relatives and friends that participate in the programme and from the reproductive health campaign organised by the LHCS, but had not had a smear test to date.

From the above accounts it is possible to say that without doubt, after a decade of implementation, the *Oportunidades* programme has become a determinant in the dissemination of information about contraceptive methods and smear tests amongst its female recipients. This has also had an indirect impact on other female members of the community, who in one way or another have access to this information through *Oportunidades* recipients and the mass media. Other governmental efforts at state and local level actively promote these state services to women in general. Evidence from government reproductive health service campaigns was collected at a health fair event (*Feria Salud Migrante*) (or Fair “Migrant Health”) organised by central and local government and the LHCS in the local government seat (see picture 7.2).

Picture 7.2: Local State Reproductive Health Services Campaign



Left: Women receiving reproductive health information from LCHS staff; Right: woman receiving a contraceptive injection.

Source: Author; *Feria Salud Migrante*, personal archive (December, 2007)

Despite the positive effect of the practical reproductive health offered by the state through the *Oportunidades* programme, moral discourses around contraception and women’s sexual rights are still relevant in the state reproductive health policy. The top-down design of state social

policy interventions generally assumes that one of the causes of poverty is overpopulation and that this can be reduced by limiting fertility. It identifies women, in their reproductive role, as primarily responsible for limiting the size of families (Moser, 1989). ‘[T]he underlying assumption [of antipoverty programmes is] that motherhood is the most important role for women [...] which means that the concern is to meet their practical gender needs relating to their reproductive role [...] without questioning their “natural” role’ (*ibid*: 1809).

Evidence of the emphasis on the moral discourse of motherhood implicitly contained in state policy reproductive health, and how these discourses are reinforced by local health workers setting out their social and cultural values, was found in a semi-structured interview with Socorro (HH-087). Socorro reported that nurses at the LHCS strongly advise female recipients to use a method of birth control only after the first child is born. Otherwise, she asserted, ‘we could face the risk of becoming sterile’.

However, this was denied in an informal conversation with a female doctor at the local health centre (fieldwork diaries; 25/01/08), who clarified:

There are a lot of misunderstandings related to the use of birth control methods among the female recipients, especially the older women. For example, despite the fact that they receive all the information [about contraceptive methods] when they attend the health education workshop or at the medical check-up, they still think that if a woman has a hysterectomy her husband is going to abandon her. Actually we have the case of a female recipient of the programme; she is 30 years old and has 5 children. We have tried to explain to her, and her husband, too, about the importance of using birth control. Actually during the last pregnancy I suggested that she should have a hysterectomy, but her husband did not allow it.

The last part of the account above, ‘during the last pregnancy I suggested that she should have a hysterectomy, but her husband did not allow it’, calls for deeper discussion. One of the women’s strategic gender needs is ‘freedom of choice over childbearing’ (Molyneux, 1985:233; also quoted in Moser, 1989: 1803), and a feminist perspective presupposes that pregnancy is something that women experience for its own sake. This means that women make an explicit decision to become pregnant (Young, 2005:47). The previous empirical account reveals that due to past cultural beliefs about reproductive rights women still lack the autonomy to decide freely and responsibly on the number, spacing and timing of their children, both at household level in relation to their subordinated position in their conjugal relationship and in their interaction with state health institutions. In state health institutions, local health workers play an ambiguous role: at times giving women the ability to access to their reproductive health entitlements, but at others denying them, as Socorro’s account has revealed.

The account above also reflects a notion of authority on the side of LCHS staff, who take control of women's pregnancy and birth process, but also dependence on the part of the female recipients, who rely on their support to negotiate their reproductive rights in the household. As Moser (1989:1809) explains, generally top-down reproductive health policy interventions 'tend to create dependency rather than to assist women to become more independent [in exercising their reproductive rights]'. Nonetheless, these top-down reproductive health policies remain widely accepted by policy designers, 'precisely because they are politically safe, not questioning the traditionally accepted [reproductive] role of women' (ibid).

A semi-structured interview with the director of the LHCS (Key Informant 1) revealed that conjugal relationships in this rural context still start at an early age and there is still a risk of pregnancy in young women aged 15 or so. Key Informant 1 asserted that in a social context of widespread migration to the United States, with men spending long periods of time working away from home, the implementation of contraceptive schemes is problematic due to the fact that 'men do not allow women to use any birth control method while they are away'. Further, Key informant 1 reported that some women refuse to use contraceptive injections while their husbands are away, arguing that these are not necessary. The two previous accounts provide evidence that birth control methods among the Mexican rural population are still directly associated with 'cultural norms that restrict the practice of sexual encounters around conjugal (cohabitating) relationships and maternity' (Szasz, 1995:3), and they also speak of the centrality of a man's sexual control over his wife and anxieties about preserving this in the context of male migration.

In the research context, women's sexuality is still associated with the moral discourse of *marianismo* and the virgin-whore dichotomy deeply embedded in the Latin American Catholic culture. This discourse is founded on the 'virgin' aspect of feminine virtues such as purity and moral strength, and divides women's sexuality into good and bad. Their sexuality tends to be prescriptive and is only accepted within marriage and with procreative intent. Women's sexuality without procreative motivation is still considered a taboo (Rivas Zivy, 1998).

Moral discourse about *marianismo* and women's sexuality offers some explanation of the fact that in this rural context conjugal relationships start an early age, as the doctor commented (Key Informant 1). An informal conversation with a female teacher at the school and the specific case of Socorro's (HH-087) 15-year-old eldest son, who has started a conjugal relationship with a 13-year-old girl, also provide evidence of conjugal relationships in the young rural population (fieldwork diaries).

The accounts presented in this subsection indicate that after over a decade of implementation the *Oportunidades* programme has had a positive effect on offering women access to family planning schemes and preventive reproductive health services. However, the state's reproductive health policy cannot be restricted to the prevention of female reproductive diseases and mostly oriented to reinforce social representation of mother recipients.

I suggest that Mexico's reproductive health policy framework should direct attention to the whole reproductive process, functions and system throughout all stages of life. However, at its lowest level of implementation – at community and household level – there remain social and cultural beliefs around motherhood that suggest that women are still unable to fully exercise their sexual right, which would require their full control of their bodies to ensure a responsible, satisfying and safe sex life with the freedom to decide if they want to reproduce, and if so, when and how often to do so (Rivas Zivy, 1998; Szasz, 1995).

But state policy discourse informing women's access to full sexual rights is still not widely reflected in the rural areas where the *Oportunidades* programme has operated for over a decade, and in the research setting several of the women interviewed in-depth openly admitted that their husbands do not like to use condoms during sexual intercourse. So, contraceptive methods rely on women's responsibility with the attendant risk of sexually transmitted disease; with a high risk propensity in the migration context. Topics such as abortion and domestic sexual violence are still considered taboo by female participants and therefore it was difficult to explore them in the household interviews (fieldwork diaries).

7.4 Summary

This chapter has discussed the gendered character of the state's social policy to examine the extent to which past cultural gender roles and responsibilities have been challenged or reinforced in the decade of this programme's implementation, and the latter's effects on women's status in the community and household.

The gendered character of state policy has been examined at two levels of analysis: community and the household level. The empirical discussion centred on the distinction between women-only *faenas* organised around *Oportunidades* programme and long-standing *faenas* organised in the community and mainly attended by men. The accounts provided in this section led to the suggestion that the women-only *faenas* have come to be widely perceived as a routine obligation of the *Oportunidades* programme. The data presented show how gender norms, in terms of the sexual division of household labour, are reproduced across other community arrangements. The interlocking class and gender discourses and practices that emerged around the organisation of the *Oportunidades* programme women-only *faenas*

show how cultural constructions of occupations reinforce social group representation, as in the case of poor mothers being chosen as the recipients of this programme.

The second section in this chapter directed attention to the moral character of gender access to social protection in rural households, examining how household-level (conjugal and parent-child) relationships have been adapted or reinforced in terms of gender roles and responsibilities and the effects of this adaptation on mothers' and daughters' status in the household. The main line of analysis considered the sexual division of roles and responsibilities in everyday household organisation and how the *Oportunidades* programme reinforces or challenges this. The analysis compared *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient households from different angles: forms of household organisation; income-earning activities carried out by some of the women; arrangements of social space and reproductive health. In the case of the *Oportunidades* programme recipient families, the analysis considered the modes of compliance developed by these households to fulfil the programme's requirements and the gendered effects of the cash transfers on women's control over the use of the money they receive.

The comparative analysis of *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient households indicates that a sexual division of roles is still prevalent in rural households, with a male breadwinning family head and women mainly at home keeping house and fulfilling caring responsibilities. The empirical data presented in this chapter shows how when female *Oportunidades* programme recipients, and non-recipients, take on extra-household unpaid and income-earning activities their role is perceived as 'helping'. Women engaged in income-generating activity mainly do so as a coping strategy. In rural areas adult women are still perceived as married mothers staying at home as housewives. The sexual division of household members' roles is also reflected in the mode of compliance developed by *Oportunidades* recipient households to fulfil the requirements of the programme, where daughters in the middle stage of their life cycle and other female family members – rather than husbands – play a more active role on helping mother recipients with their everyday household responsibilities, while they are attending some activity organised by this programme.

The direct allocation of the cash transfer to the female recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme is another gendered aspect examined in this chapter. In the case of the cash transfer, it is possible to say that while women's control over the money is necessary, it is not sufficient enough to enhance their autonomy and status in the household. The state policy has played a relevant role in reinforcing household-level masculine structures of domination, playing a masculine role through the allocation of the cash transfers, and the mother recipients are reinforced in their social representation as good administrators spending the money in the same arenas where they have traditionally operated. The accounts presented in this section

also suggest that in the long term the initial idea of designating women as the direct recipients of the cash transfers may have an unintended effect: the female recipients may become market consumers instead of saving the money left in bank account; for example, and with this there is a risk of indebtedness and dependence on these stipends to pay their debts.

The *Oportunidades* programme offers female policy recipients the opportunity to participate in different social spaces. However, these spaces for socialisation are clearly associated with the fulfilment of this programme's requirements. Moreover, the spaces have been given to – and not gained by – them through the implementation of this state policy scheme. Therefore after a decade of implementation, female recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme are now more visible in their social context, although they are mainly to be seen fulfilling their maternal responsibilities there.

The gendered spaces of socialisation become more evident on comparing the social space for interaction of female *Oportunidades* programme recipients with those of female non-recipients. Apart from participating in the activities organised by this programme, both groups of women present similar patterns of socialisation, in all of which they are engaged in housekeeping and caring activities.

The last subsection in this chapter considered the reproductive health services offered by the state through the *Oportunidades* programme to examine its effect on challenging or reinforcing past cultural beliefs about women's reproductive rights. The accounts presented in this subsection indicate that after over a decade of implementation this programme has had a positive effect on offering women access to family planning schemes and preventive reproductive health services. However, the reproductive services offered by the state are restricted to the prevention of female reproductive diseases, and mostly oriented to reinforce social representation of mother recipients. In the research site, moral discourses around motherhood suggest that women are still unable to fully exercise their sexual right. Contraceptive methods rely on women's responsibility and the use of condoms amongst the male population is not still a widely spread practice, with the attendant risk of sexually transmitted disease; with a high risk propensity in the migration context.

Chapter 8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

Through an in-depth empirical exploration of the Mexican case of the *Oportunidades* programme, I have tried to examine the moral dimension inscribed within state policies governing access to social protection, and its implications at different levels of the policy making process: design, frontline implementation, community and household.

In this research, state interventions like CCT programmes have not been analysed merely as a policy response to satisfy the poor's material needs (i.e. cash transfers and access to education, nutritional and health services) and their potential outcomes amongst the family recipients. From a moral perspective, the distribution of material benefits also involves a set of social meanings about who the poor are and how they behave. Therefore, one of the major challenges of this thesis research has been to illustrate how the poor's agency is socially constructed and constantly transformed by the social actors involved in the policy making process (state officials, local authorities, policy recipients and non-recipients).

The findings of my research contribute to critical perspectives and debates related to CCT programmes currently implemented in the Latin American context, where these programme have been a focus of debate. Two key debates have focused on the state's paternalistic top-down interpretation of the poor's needs (Farrington & Slater, 2006; Hall, 2008; Handa & Davis, 2006; Molyneux, 2008; Vizcarra, 2002), and the potential effects of these policy initiatives on gender relations within communities and household recipients where women tend to be reinforced in their social roles as mothers and care givers through the fulfilment of CCT requirements (Bradshaw, 2008; Chant, 2008; Molyneux, 2006; Tabbush, 2009).

Even though the empirical analysis in this research was conducted at different levels of the *Oportunidades* policy process, the main findings have emerged from the programme's frontline operation. At this level of the policy process this thesis emphasises the divergence between this official CCT programme plan and its everyday policy interfaces in implementation at the front line, in the conflicts, tensions and negotiations that this programme introduces at this level of operation, the moral discourse and practices deployed by all the policy actors involved in the process (recipients and non-recipients included), and how this policy intervention has come to mean something very different from official intentions at the national office.

More specifically, the empirical analysis conducted at the frontline of the *Oportunidades* programme focuses attention on the moral discourses of obligation and sanction implicitly contained in the notion of conditionality that affect interactions between rural households and

state institutions. The analysis at this level of the policy process emphasises the differences between formal state policy processes (the fulfilment of requirements and sanctions) and its long-term unintended effects, which are gendered patterns of interaction between the state and recipients and degrees of discretion and mechanisms of intermediation exercised by local actors who play the part of broker between the state and policy recipients.

This chapter is divided into four main parts. The first summarises the main findings of the thesis in relation to the five specific questions set out in Chapter 1; the second presents the main theoretical and empirical contributions of the research; the third part discusses some of the key policy issues arising from the research; and the last concludes with a brief discussion of further research possibilities in this field.

8.2 Summary of main findings

The moral dimension governing access to social protection was analysed at the individual and the household levels in relation to state institutions, and at the individual level in relation to communities and households.

8.2.1 Individuals and households in relation to state institutions

RQ (Research Question): How does the morality of state social policy include and exclude individuals in/from social protection?

In Chapter 4 I focused on the moral discourses and practices inscribed in the three key concepts informing the design of the *Oportunidades* programme: targeting mechanisms, co-responsibility and conditionality.

Data presented in Chapter 4 give evidence of the authoritative moral discourse implicitly contained within the programme's selection criteria and targeting mechanism, creating a social category that differentiates policy 'deservers' from 'non-deservers'. The data reveal a moral orientation in the targeting mechanism, with the ideal policy recipient socially constructed by the policy designers as poor, living in a nuclear, bi-parental, male-headed and stable family with an organised everyday life with the children at school and the mothers at home, waiting for them to return. Chapters 5 and 7 illustrated how the CCT's selection mechanism does not take into account (at least in its conceptual design) the different types of household and their life stages (Escobar and González de la Rocha, 2009), because some families, especially those without very young or very old members, tend to perform better than others in fulfilling the programme's requirements.

The empirical discussion centred on the interpretative discourse of citizenship and *asistencialismo*. The analysis shows that at the policy design level co-responsibility is

interpreted as a key element in internalising the notion of citizens' rights amongst families signed up to *Oportunidades*. However, the data reveal a transformation in this concept from a rhetorical position of 'duty-sharing' between the state and the families to the sole duty-bearer status of the recipient, informed by the moral discourse of obligation. This unequal relationship between the state and poor families reveals that moral notions of *paternalismo* are still embedded in Mexican state policy at the design level. On the one hand, policy discourses express fostering care for *Oportunidades* programme recipients on the part of the state but on the other, recipients are conditioned to behave in a certain way by the threat of sanctions.

The empirical discussion conducted in this thesis also provides evidence of elite policy designers' assumptions about poor families' behaviour. At the policy design level, poor families' cultural patterns of behaviour are perceived as one of the major obstacles to overcoming their poverty. Empirical accounts suggest that elite policymakers perceive the introduction of conditionality in the *Oportunidades* programme design, as a positive way of encouraging the poor to use state public services. The empirical accounts in this thesis have shown how state authorities emphasise the positive impact of conditionality on children's school attendance and the internalisation of preventive health habits by poor families. However, from a moral perspective the notion of conditionality entails notions of obligation and sanction that affect the relationship between the Mexican state and poor members of civil society. In this way conditionality is relevant in the everyday policy process where frontline *Oportunidades* operators and recipients interact to fulfil this programme's requirements.

RQ: *How do poor households perceive the moral character of state social protection policies, and how does this affect their engagement with them?*

In Chapter 5 I explored state frontline operators' techniques for securing compliance from recipients and strategies employed by the latter in their everyday interactions with state institutions. The data indicated that girls reach higher levels of education than boys at Mexican secondary and high schools (grades 7-12). This was the case for both recipient and non-recipient households, suggesting that other factors such as gendered access to the labour market influences households' use of state educational services. In rural Mexico boys under the age of 15 can take low-skilled paid work in the local or US labour market, hence sending them to school represents a higher opportunity cost for their families than in the case of girls, whose work is less well-paid.

Descriptive data indicated that *Oportunidades* recipient families interact more often with health care services than non-recipients. This is mainly due to the requirement that family recipients attend periodicals medical check-ups and monthly health education workshops.

Chapter 5 also examined how rural households' perceptions and opinions of the quality of the education and health services determine their use of them. Most of the households interviewed considered the quality of education good as long their children could learn reading, writing and arithmetic. This is connected to the low-skilled employment available to children, with basic levels of literacy widely perceived by the mothers interviewed as qualification enough for their children to gain employment. In comparison, rural households' perceptions and opinions of state health care services were more evident and negative than those related to education services: they perceived state health care services as basic and of poor quality. Therefore, in the case of sickness, especially an emergency or serious illness, recipient and non-recipient families tend to use private medical services.

The interaction between state policy actors – teachers and doctors – and recipient families is shaped by moral discourses of compliance and discretion. The empirical accounts discussed in this thesis suggest that the levels of compliance and discretion are different in each case. While compliance is more persistent in teachers' interactions with poor recipient families at the local school, in the case of doctors and nurses working at the LHCS discretion to 'bend the rules' is more predominant.

The degrees of discretion exercised with recipients are gendered; mothers and their young children are required to comply with the requirements of the programme more than males and some other household members: men's migration or local work commitments, compassion for elderly people's difficulties, and ill-health. Thus the research corroborates Molyneux' (2006:438) findings:

Men are not incorporated in any serious way, and no effort is made to promote the principle that men and women might share responsibility for meeting project goals, let alone for taking an equal share in caring for their children.

Men's participation in the fulfilment of the programme's requirements is marginal. As discussed in Chapter 5, this is due to male migration to the US labour market and men's attendance at LHCS for medical check-ups has been adjusted by doctors and family recipients accordingly. While men are granted a degree of discretion regarding their fulfilment of this programme requirement, the same does not apply to women who work outside the home. In the research setting adult women tend to be mothers working at home, hence it may be possible that doctors and nurses working at the LHCS take it for granted that it is easy for women to fulfil the *Oportunidades* health and nutrition conditions and therefore the former find it difficult to identify specific situations in which to apply discretion in their everyday interaction with them.

RQ: How do other local actors (*Oportunidades* programme *enlace municipal* and *vocales*) affect the interface of programme implementation?

In Chapter 6 I examined the mechanism of intermediation developed by the *enlace municipal* (a member of local government) and *vocales* (who are also policy recipients) in their interactions with frontline operators and recipients, which affect everyday policy practices and programme outcomes. I used two different patterns of interaction between frontline programme operators and recipients to illustrate this discussion.

The first pattern of interaction takes place between the *enlace municipal* and state policy recipients, including the monthly meetings with the *vocales* and *el día de pago* (payday). Both activities are apparently routine actions and these local policy actors do not necessarily have a role in the operation of the programme: however, empirical data reveal that in everyday policy practices this pattern of interaction also constitutes a centre of power and negotiation between the policy actors and recipients, influencing the operation of the *Oportunidades* programme at the frontline.

The second pattern of interaction centred on everyday interfaces between the *vocales* and policy recipients which occur at the *faenas*, at *vocales'* household visits to ensure the fulfilment of the nutritional requirements included in the programme, and at the monthly meetings organised in the community in order to disseminate operational information about the programme.

The empirical analysis presented in the thesis illustrated how *vocales*, who are policy recipients in a brokering position, are seen by the recipients as efficient and therefore necessary in linking them with the state. I described how this perception was reinforced by the *vocales* through their 'impression management' in which they exaggerate their role to convince the policy recipients that they have the necessary access and connections to ensure that the bureaucracy works efficiently. 'Impression management' practices are an important aspect of the culture of the Mexican state. These everyday practices characterise the relationship between the people and the state bureaucracy, with the latter often surrounded by 'atmospheres of opacity [and] distrust' (Nuitjen, 2003:17) through which the idea of a strong and coherent state is continuously reconstructed. As Nuitjen (*ibid*) explains, local actors continuously propagate the idea that the state operates in a 'modern, technocratic, professional manner' and often portray themselves as providing effective and necessary brokerage between policy recipients and higher levels of bureaucracy.

The *vocales* accumulate operational information that puts them at an advantage over other recipients so that although their role is not relevant to the implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme they tend to use it for their own benefit. The thesis has shown that

these actors receive monthly ‘economic compensation’ (or tips) from recipients in exchange for their brokerage services, although this was originally intended as voluntary work. However, tipping is widely interwoven in the Mexican culture and is practiced in both urban and rural settings, and it is not restricted to shaping the interaction between the state and *Oportunidades* programme recipients. Therefore amongst both groups of policy actors tipping is treated as a social convention and is openly accepted and practiced by *vocales* and recipients.

8.2.2 Individuals in relation to households and communities

RQ How does the moral content of intra-community and intra-household relations mediate access to social protection?

RQ How have local social institutions changed in response to social protection programmes introduced in the last decade?

In Chapter 7 I discussed the gendered transformative character of the programme, examining the extent to which past gender roles and responsibilities have been challenged or reinforced in the decade of this programme’s implementation and the programme’s effect on women’s status in their communities and households. At the community level the empirical discussion centred on the distinction between women-only *faenas* organised around the *Oportunidades* programme and long-standing *faenas* organised in the community and attended mainly by men. The account illustrates how norms in the domestic domain intrude in other social domains and gendered roles are reproduced across these communitarian arrangements. These accounts suggest that the *faenas* organised by the programme have come to be widely perceived as a routine obligation of the programme rather than a contribution of labour to the community, which female recipients (mainly mothers) have to conform with.

In the long-standing *faenas* the men’s participation is oriented towards agricultural activity or improving the physical infrastructure of the community, whereas in women-only *faenas* the participants are allocated low-skilled responsibilities such as cleaning the roads and collecting rubbish. This difference denotes not just a gendered division of roles, with men and women called upon to perform different community activities; it also involves a class representation of poor women who are implicitly depicted as destitute and illiterate citizens.

The second level of empirical analysis in Chapter 7 directed attention to the moral character of gendered access to social protection in rural households, examining how household-level (conjugal and parent-child) relationships are adapted or reinforced in terms of gender roles and responsibilities and the effects of this on mothers’ and daughters’ status in the household. The main line of analysis considered the gendered division of roles and responsibilities in everyday household organisation and how the *Oportunidades* programme reinforces or

challenges this. The data presented compared *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient households from different angles: forms of household organisation; income-earning activities; arrangements of social space and reproductive health. The intra-household analysis presented in Chapter 7 also considered the modes of compliance developed by *Oportunidades* recipient families to fulfil the programme's requirements, and the gendered effects of the cash transfers on women's control of the use of the money they receive.

The comparative analysis of *Oportunidades* recipient and non-recipient households indicated that a gendered division of roles is still prevalent in both groups of households, with a male breadwinning family head and women mainly at home keeping house and fulfilling caring responsibilities. Women engaged in income-generating activities mainly do so as a coping strategy. In rural areas adult women are still expected to be married mothers who stay at home keeping house.

The gendered division of household members' roles is also reflected in the mode of compliance developed by *Oportunidades* recipient households to fulfil the requirements of the programme, in which daughters in the middle stage of their life cycle and other female family members – rather than husbands – play an active role in helping *Oportunidades* recipient mothers with their everyday household responsibilities when the latter attend activities organised by this programme.

The direct allocation of the cash transfer to the female recipients of the *Oportunidades* programme is another gendered aspect I examined. The data presented in this section added force to findings discussed by other authors (Adato et al., 2000; Maldonado et al., 2006; Molyneux, 2008) which suggest women's control over the cash transfer is necessary but is not sufficient to enhance their autonomy and status in the household.

This empirical discussion focused on the fact that even though the Mexican state deliberately allocates the *Oportunidades* cash transfers to the female heads of recipient households as affirmative action to redress traditional gender inequalities (SEDESOL, 2007a; 2009), the money is intended to pay for their children's education and food (*ibid*). So at least in discursive terms female recipients' room for negotiation on how to use the cash transfers is still very limited. The data presented in Chapter 7 showed that the constraining traditional view of women's participation in the intra-household distribution of economic resources is still evident amongst the female recipients of this programme. All of the recipients reported using the cash transfers for what they usually spend money they receive from their husbands on: food, clothes and shoes for their children.

The *Oportunidades* programme offers female policy recipients the opportunity to participate in different social spaces; therefore nowadays they are more visible in their social context

than female non-recipients. However, it is important to place emphasis on the idea that these spaces for socialisation have been given to, not gained by them through the implementation of this programme. The analysis compared the gendered social space for interaction of female *Oportunidades* recipients with those of female non-recipients, and the data showed that the programme has had no effect in this. Apart from participating in the activities organised by this programme, both groups of women present similar patterns of socialisation, in all of which they are engaged in housekeeping and caring activities.

The thesis also looked at the use of state reproductive health services via the *Oportunidades* programme to examine whether they challenge or reinforce traditional cultural beliefs about women's reproductive rights. After over a decade of implementation this programme has had a positive effect on women's access to family planning schemes and reproductive health services. However, the reproductive services provided through this programme are restricted to the prevention of female reproductive disease and are mostly oriented towards reinforcing the social representation of women as mothers. At the case study site, moral discourses around motherhood suggest that women are still unable to fully exercise their reproductive and sexual rights. Contraception is seen as the woman's responsibility and the use of condoms by men is still not widespread, with the attendant risk of sexually transmitted disease, particularly and a high risk in the migration context.

8.3 Main theoretical and empirical contributions of the thesis

For many years social policy has been perceived as a 'technical field based on scientific assessment of what works best' (Hall & Midgley, 2004:24). Nonetheless, the policy decision process has always been 'heavily influenced by values and ideological beliefs' (ibid). Amongst policy analysts, there is an ongoing debate (Giri & Quarles van Ufford, 2003; Grindle & Thomas, 1990; Juma & Clark, 1995; Long, 2001; Long, 1994; Sutton, 1999) on whether policy-making is a rational and linear process or a complex non-linear process, dominated by implicit moral discourses and practices and actor strategies. This thesis has demonstrated that the latter policy analysis approach better represents policy as process, and that planned intervention analysis should not be limited to development intentions and outcomes. The thesis offers an alternative state policy analysis to the top-down linear models widely applied by policy agencies, often characterised by presenting an objective, neutral and value-free analysis. In this sense the main theoretical contribution of this thesis lies in the combination of two general theoretical approaches: Long's (2001) actor-oriented social interface analysis and Fraser's (1989; 2003) feminist critical theory.

On the side of the actor oriented approach the thesis reveals a multi-level analysis of the implementation process of a CCT programme in rural Mexico. Fraser's critical perspective of

social welfare systems has contributed to this thesis at two different levels of the policy process. Her (1989) 'politics of need interpretation' frame the empirical discussions related to the moral discourse inscribed in the social policy design, for instance the socio-cultural construction of ideal policy recipients and the interpretation of their needs; and her (2003) 'two dimensional model of social justice' has provided a useful theoretical entry to understanding the gendered transformative character of social protection policy implemented in Mexico during the last decade.

Rather than perceive the policy process as linear in nature, which implies that once a policy decision is made, implementation of the decision happens automatically, the empirical analysis conducted in this research is framed by Long's (2001) actor oriented approach that understands state policy as a dynamic and intertwined design and implementation process. This thesis uses an interface perspective to explore "how discrepancies of social interest, cultural interpretation, [...] and power are mediated and perpetuated or transformed at critical points of confrontation and linkage" (Long, 1999:21) between policy actors. In this sense, the main empirical contribution of this thesis lies in its understanding about the divergence between the official plan for *Oportunidades* programme and how local implementers (doctors, teachers, *enlace municipal* and *vocales*) and policy recipients affect its implementation through deploying various moral discourses and practices, the tensions and contradictions that these introduce. This emphasises the idea that state planned interventions are constantly negotiated by all the actors involved in it, and at this frontline level policy comes to mean something different from its official intentions as originally designed at its national level office.

Applying Long's (2001) actor-oriented social interface analysis, this thesis offers new insights about the relationship between policy moral discourses (imbued with class, gender and age distinctions) and processes of construction and negotiation that take place at three different spaces of social interface (Long, 1988, 2001): dominant discourses in policy interfaces; interface analysis of policy actors' 'interlocking relationships and intentionalities'; and interface analysis of the dynamics of conflict, ambivalence and negotiation in emergent structure.

Dominant discourses in policy interfaces focused attention on the conceptual design of the *Oportunidades* programme, guided by three key elements: targeting criteria and mechanisms to select the recipients, the principle of co-responsibility, and the principle of conditionality. As mentioned, Fraser's (1989)'politics of need interpretation' has contributed to the analysis of moral discourse inscribed in the social policy design. The empirical analysis conducted in this research shows that in the *Oportunidades* programme the ideal policy deservers are selected in advance, and the targeting criteria and mechanisms only identify their location. In

this sense, the thesis corroborates the argument proposed by Escobar & González de la Rocha (2005; 2009) that, despite the fact that in Mexico the proportion of extended households has increased during the last two decades and nowadays this type of household constitute around 30% of the Mexican families (González de la Rocha, 2001), in this antipoverty programme nuclear families acquire a central site for the provision of state social protection benefits.

Regarding the authoritative discourse on the interpretation of the poor's needs, implicitly contained in antipoverty programme selection mechanisms, the empirical discussion conducted in this research adds evidence to the argument advanced by Molyneux (2006, 2007, 2008) about the top-down paternalistic assessment of the poor's needs, which are selective and gendered. Children are selected as the main recipients of *Oportunidades* programme's human capital benefits (including access to education, nutritional and health services) and mothers deliberately labelled as the direct recipients of the cash transfer, to secure this programme's goals (*ibid*).

This thesis asserts that the selective constructions of the poor's needs are also associated with moral proximities (e.g. social norms and conventions) about how *Oportunidades* families' recipients should behave. The elite policymakers' interpretative discourses around poor families' cultural habits were analysed through the lenses of the principle of *co-responsibility* and its operational element of *conditionality*. In relation to these two *Oportunidades* programme' conceptual elements, the thesis highlights the fact that the difference between co-responsibility and conditionality is imprecise, and the terms tend to overlap. The empirical discussion conducted by this research reveals that amongst elite policymakers both concepts, co-responsibility and conditionality, imply a negative concept of the poor's agency and both terms are associated with the application of sanctions.

The other two policy interface analyses – policy actors' interlocking relationships and intentionalities, and the dynamics of conflict, ambivalence and negotiation in emergent structures – constitute the main empirical focus of analysis of this thesis and place attention on the frontline operation of the *Oportunidades* programme.

Lipsky's (1980) modes of discretion offer a useful entry point for the analysis of actors' interlocking relationships and intentionalities. As this author (*ibid*) discusses in his study of street-level bureaucrats, the *Oportunidades* programme frontline operators play an essential role in the state policymaking process showing degrees of discretion and autonomy from official policy design. In this sense, an important part of the empirical analysis concerned the modes of discretion showed by state frontline officials, their roles as street level bureaucrats and the discretion they have in allocating benefits.

Likewise, the *Oportunidades* programme recipients bring into play their own values and interests, influencing the operation of this programme at the front line (Long, 2001). As a result, the empirical evidence presented in this thesis shows that moral notions of obligation and sanction embedded in the requirements of the programme have led poor families to organise themselves in a variety of ways when they have to interact with public health care institutions. These ways of household organisation have given rise to gendered patterns of interaction between the state and family recipients.

At this frontline level of analysis the thesis also focuses attention on the structures of power that emerge as unintended consequences of “top-down” planned interventions, where mechanisms of intermediation, such as local actors who play a role as brokers between state authorities and policy recipients, become relevant. In this policy interface the ‘image of effective brokerage’ and the ‘notion of necessary connection’ proposed by Nuitjen (2003:3) were useful contributions from which to explore these emergent structures of power. The ‘image of effective brokerage’ centred its attention on the interface between the *enlace municipal* and state policy recipients; the ‘notion of the necessary connection’ informed the analysis regarding the pattern of interface between *vocales* and recipients. Both concepts are associated with the idea of local policy actors situated in an intermediary position influencing the implementation of the policy at ground level.

Fraser’s (2003) two-dimensional social justice model also contributes to this research to understand the gendered transformative character of the social protection policy implemented in Mexico during the last decade. The gendered nature of the state policy was explored through community arrangements (*faenas*) and social relations (conjugal and parent-child relationships) currently operating in rural Mexico. The empirical analysis conducted at this community and household level of the implementations process examined to what extent antipoverty programmes like *Oportunidades* are sensitive to recognising and therefore enhancing women’s social status and economic autonomy.

Using Fraser’s (ibid) “two dimensional model of justice”, it is possible to say that while women’s control over money is necessary, in terms of economic distribution, it is not sufficient enough to socially recognise their autonomy and enhance their status in the household.

The gendered moral character informing community arrangements and household level relationships, and the possible transformation (or reinforcement) of sex divided patterns of everyday social interaction through state policy, also rely on the concept of empowerment proposed by Molyneux (2008). This concept of empowerment is oriented to understanding the multi-dimensional transformative process of gender relations. Molyneux’s (ibid) concept

of empowerment informs the empirical discussion at intra-household level of analysis where the gendered nature of *Oportunidades* programme effect were examined from different angles, including a comparative analysis of recipient and non-recipient households regarding the gender distribution of everyday household tasks and responsibilities, income-earning activities carried out by female recipients and non-recipients, arrangements of social space, and reproductive health. This analysis of *Oportunidades* programme recipient families considers the mode of compliance these households develop to fulfil the programme's requirements, and the gendered effects of the cash transfers on women's control of the money. The empirical data presented at this level of the policy analysis confirm Molynuex's (*ibid*) argument. The notion of empowerment has been partially addressed by CCTs through the direct allocation of material benefits such as cash transfers, education, health and nutrition benefits, but empowerment also depends on changes in gender relations.

8.4 Key policy issues

The main policy issues emerging from this research are the complexity of state policy processes and their unintended consequences. These unintended consequences reflect the longer-term effects of conditionality and the implementation of gender affirmative actions.

8.4.1 The complexity of the policy process

Contrary to what is assumed in “top-down” linear and rational state policy models, social policy processes becomes more flexible in everyday practices, and at the same time more complex. An important means of understanding this complexity is to look at social policy processes from an interface perspective. Confrontation and linkage are inevitable aspects of this process since frontline state officials (medical and educational personnel) must apply standard national policies locally; they require the cooperation, at least in a tacit manner, of local actors and policy recipients; and more than often both groups tend to present different and heterogeneous responses to policy goals set in advance.

Further, due to the central role that conditionality plays in CCT's design, a key policy issue in *Oportunidades* programme emerges from the nature of the interface between frontline policy implementers and their target population. This policy interface is an important element for the success of this programme, as well as its formal content, and improvements in this programme need to place attention on the policy process that takes place at its frontline level. For instance, the intended effect to secure the access of poor families to state social protection often depends not only on the provision of physical infrastructure, or the quality of the services offered by the state, but also importantly on the active engagement of local implementers and communities where the policy is implemented. It is in the nature of these relationships rather than in the formal content of the policies goals that shape the long term

effects of state interventions. Therefore this thesis has placed especial emphasis on discussing the unintended, relational and long-term effects of conditionality and argues that this is central to CCT's front line operation.

8.4.2 The long-term effect of the notion of conditionality

Conditionality tends to be effective in the short term. Its implementation tends to increase the use of public service amongst poor families; nonetheless it does not secure the quality in the education and health care services offered by this state at ground level. The poor quality of the state services constitutes a relevant policy issue to be addressed in CCT's programme. This research has shown (Chapter 5) that perceptions of rural households about the quality of state services affect their engagement with them. This indicates that in the long-term, conditionality, and the associated perceptions of households' about service quality, tends to reproduce other forms of social differentiation. This latter reflects the degree of discretion showed by the *Oportunidades* programme frontline operators, and the gendered patterns of interaction developed by recipient households to fulfil the programme requirements.

The gendered patterns of interaction developed by household recipients to fulfil with programme requirement are to some extent a reflection of their perceptions of quality of services. But more than this, degrees of discretion and patterns of interaction are mainly explained by the selective interpretation of the poor's needs within the CCT programme, where mothers and their young children have been labelled as the main policy deservers, and therefore they are perceived by both groups of policy actors (frontline operators and recipients) as the members of the family who have more obligation to fulfil programme conditionalties.

CCT's are likely to have divergent effects on different dimensions of human capital and their effects are connected to other structural factors. In the *Oportunidades* programme, the notion of conditionality does not overcome the serious deficits in the quality of state services at ground level, and its implementation also evidences the unequal access to state services amongst policy recipients living in different Mexican rural contexts. For instances, the preventive medical check-ups (such as height and weight measurements for children), may prevent child malnourishment in contexts of extreme poverty, but contexts where poverty is moderate, such as this case study setting, these preventive measures tend to be perceived as basic and poor quality. The same situation also applies in education services which are similarly lacking investment in infrastructure and are poor quality .

The positive of effects of conditioning poor families to send their children to the school in order to receive the cash transfer benefits have increased the level of school attendances but without attending to their learning outcomes and access to job opportunities. In this latter

case, the lack of integration of CCT of programmes with labour markets, might reinforce the culture of dependence amongst poor families and ‘further encourage [the notion of *asistencialismo*] in the distribution of cash transfer benefits and informalization of the labour market itself’ (Hall, 2008:118). Certainly CCT’s cannot solve this problem in an isolated manner and the development of the local labour markets demands more integrated state social protection policy schemes where the promotion of long-term and sustainable sources of income are determinants of improving the living condition of poor rural household.

Antipoverty programmes have received criticism due to the fact that conditionality may have a negative effect on the state’s policy priorities for investing in basic social infrastructure, especially in key social protection areas such as health and education service, with its corresponding long-term effect of reinforcing the ‘culture of dependence’ amongst poor family (Hall, 2008:814). Therefore, the provision of poor citizens with equality in access to health care and education services is an important policy goal; and a better design in CCTs would have to favor the investment in social infrastructure. The decent treatment by frontline operators (teachers, doctors and nurses), must also constitute a minimal requirement to make these programmes more effective in improving the life of poor families.

In the long-term of the *Oportunidades* programme’s implementation, along with formal state policy processes (fulfilment of requirements and sanctions), other ‘emergent structures’ have come into play as the result of unintended consequences of planned interventions over which the state has limited control. These structures emerge through the everyday practices and strategies pursued by different actors (frontline operators, local actors and recipients) in their everyday interfaces. For instance, the *enlace municipal* and *vocales* are local policy actors who conduct routine actions and in the long-term both actors have developed mechanisms of intermediation. Currently these constitute a centre of power and negotiation between themselves and programme recipients. These emergent structures of power affect the operation of this programme at its ground level of implementation and implicitly reinforce notions of dependency between policy recipients and the state. However these emergent structures of power are highly correlated to the moral discourses of obligation and sanction implicitly embedded in the notion of conditionality. It is difficult to foresee the specific circumstance where these structures of power may emerge; therefore it is complicated to design specific policy action to prevent them. As Long (2001) explains, the analysis of these ambivalent emergent structures of power cannot be taken for granted and they cannot be identified in advance. For instance, the emergent structures of power explored in this thesis came to light during the field research and it is difficult to assert that similar ‘power structures’ can be found in a other different research context.

8.4.3 Gendered affirmative actions

The gendered affirmative action implemented by CCT programmes is the direct allocation of cash stipends to the adult women (mostly mothers) responsible for looking after children. The design of *Oportunidades* also considers two other positive gendered actions: the reproductive health benefits provided to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and their children under five years old; and the provision of higher amounts of money for girls attending secondary and high school.

The implementation of gendered affirmative actions calls attention to two main policy considerations: contextual factors and their temporality. In the first case, contextual factors such as cultural values and beliefs tend to play a relevant role in the implementation of affirmative actions. For instance, in social-cultural contexts where there is a ‘sense of the constructedness and contingency of all classification and identifications’ (Fraser, 2003: 81), affirmative actions are more likely to promote transformation in terms of gender relations (roles and allocation of responsibilities). In contrast, in contexts such as rural Mexico, where sexual divisions of household labour are considered natural, these types of policy responses tend to reinforce moral discourses of reification of women as mothers and family care givers. The moral values and beliefs informing state officials working at different level of the policy process, but more importantly frontline operators, are relevant in reinforcing the above mentioned moral discourse and practices.

In terms of temporality, generally speaking affirmative actions tend to be effective short term policy responses: their implementation offers the possibility of getting a critical reflection on their implication and envisions concrete long-term policy strategies. This requires consideration of the implication of these policy measures in terms of economic distribution and social recognition. In the case of CCTs, policy designers often assume that the gendered affirmative action of allocating the cash transfer directly to the female head of the recipient households is a sufficient condition to overcome gender inequalities within the recipient households. This policy measure reveals positive short term effects of tackling poverty by increasing poor families’ income, but in terms of their social recognition there are some issues that still require policy responses, such as the implementation of some policy actions oriented to develop women’s capabilities, specifically those connected to long-term income-generating activities.

However, the development of policy actions oriented to promote women’s long term income-generating activities cannot be applied in an isolated manner. Women’s access to equal economic opportunities should be associated with their equal participation within their communities and household. The design of CCTs programmes should take into consideration household gendered dynamics and promote co-operative household everyday forms of

organisation where men tend to be included. Otherwise women are likely to be faced with a triple burden: household responsibilities, work commitments and *Oportunidades* programme requirements.

In terms of women's practical reproductive health benefits, as earlier noted, the *Oportunidades* programme has had a positive effect in offering women access to family planning and reproductive health services. However, the state's reproductive health policy is restricted to the prevention of female reproductive diseases and mostly oriented to reinforce notions of motherhood amongst the female recipients in this programme. The CCT reproductive health policy framework should direct attention to the whole reproductive process, functions and system throughout all stages of life and target men within their implementation. In the case of the *Oportunidades* programme, currently contraceptive methods rely on women's responsibility with the attendant risk of sexually transmitted disease, which has a higher risk in the migration context where this case study took place.

8.5 Further research

CCT programmes usually have two main goals: to alleviate poverty of the current generation through redistribution toward the poor, and to reduce the intergenerational transmission of poverty through human capital investment. This latter CCT goal calls for further research focussing attention on the longer term effects of the *Oportunidades* programme for children (boys and girls) that received the benefits of the programme in the past. Within this group of previous policy recipients some further questions could be asked to explore the long-term effects of current policy actions. For instance, in the case of the *Oportunidades* educational grants, the original policy intention to offer higher amounts of money for girls attending secondary and high school was to compensate gender inequalities in terms of access to education benefits. The empirical evidence presented in this research shows that currently there are more girls than boys attending the school; this suggests a long-term positive effect of this gendered affirmative action. However, as González de la Rocha (2010) suggests, this policy action calls for longitudinal research to explore whether former female grant holders are finding better job opportunities, or whether their access to the labour market still remains marked by past inequalities.

Similar further research could explore the long-term effects of the programme *conditionalities* (around education, health and nutrition), to explore whether people are now convinced that it is worthwhile investing in their children's – particularly girls' – education, and the positive effect that preventive health and nutrition measures have had on the whole family (expressly women and young children); or whether the programme has internalised, although in an unintended manner, a notion of inter-generational dependency, so that poor women and

children will need permanent government incentives to secure their access to social protection.

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Annexes

Annex I: Focus group guides (Translated from Spanish)

Annex I-A. Focus Group Guide: Women 25-45 years old

- 1. Explanation of the conversation dynamic**
 - 1.1. Why they are there
 - 1.2. How we will work
 - 1.3. Duration of the meeting
- 2. Paid work (past /present)**
 - 2.1. Women who work (what made them start work? At what age?)
 - 2.2. Which family members work?
 - 2.3. Negotiation in household regarding starting work
 - 2.4. Which family members have stopped working? Why?
 - 2.5. Opinion: Do you like women working or do you prefer them to just be engaged in household activities?
- 3. Domestic work (unpaid)**
 - 3.1. What obligations and responsibilities do you have at home?
 - 3.2. How are the household activities allocated?
- 4. Management of adverse situations**
 - 4.1. How does your family organize itself when there is a problem (economic or illness)?
 - 4.2. Do you ask for help when you have a problem? Who do you ask (people, organizations)? Why?
- 5. Socialization**
 - 5.1. Associations or sport clubs in the community. Which family members participate in these?
 - 5.2. Do you have friends?
 - 5.3. Where do you interact with them?
 - 5.4. Which community activities do you participate in?
- 6. Marriage/Children upbringing**
 - 6.1. At what age did you get married?
 - 6.2. At what age did you have your first child?
 - 6.3. Who decides how many children to have?
 - 6.4. Who feeds and sends the children to school?
- 7. *Oportunidades* programme**
 - 7.1. Who receives *Oportunidades*' benefits?
 - 7.2. What are the programme requirements?
 - 7.3. Which of the programme's requirements have to be fulfilled by each family member?
 - 7.4. Sanctions. Are they necessary?
 - 7.5. Economic benefits
 - 7.5.1. Who receives the money?
 - 7.5.2. How is the money used?
 - 7.6. Education and health services
 - 7.6.1. What would happen if your children (boys and girls) did not have the *Oportunidades*' scholarship?
 - 7.6.2. What is your opinion of the doctor and nurses at the health centre?
 - 7.7. *Oportunidades* programme: perceived changes at personal level
- 8. Changes in the community caused by:**
 - 8.1. Migration
 - 8.2. *Oportunidades* programme

Annex I-B. Focus Group Guide: Women 18-25 years old

- 1. Explanation of the conversation dynamic**
 - 1.1. Why they are there
 - 1.2. How we will work
 - 1.3. Duration of the meeting
- 2. Job/study (past /present)**
 - 2.1. Do you work or study? (Which event made women start to work / age?)
 - 2.2. What do you prefer: study or work?
 - 2.3. Do you think that it is difficult to study and work?
 - 2.4. Which family members work?
 - 2.5. Opinion: Do you like that women work or do you prefer that they are engaged just in household activities?
 - 2.6. Which obligations and responsibilities do you have at home?
- 3. Management of adverse situations**
 - 3.1. How does your family organize itself when there is a problem (economic or illness)?
 - 3.2. Do you ask for help when you have a problem? Who do you ask (people, organizations)? Why?
- 4. Socialization**
 - 4.1. Do you have friends?
 - 4.2. Where do you interact with them?
 - 4.3. In which community's activities do you participate?
- 5. Marriage**
 - 5.1. Are you married?
 - 5.2. Which is the best age for getting married?
 - 5.3. Do you have children? Which is the best age for having the first child?
 - 5.4. Who has to decide how many children to have?
- 6. *Oportunidades* programme**
 - 6.1. Who receives *Oportunidades*' benefits?
 - 6.2. What are the programme requirements?
 - 6.3. Which of the programme's requirements have to be fulfilled by each family member?
 - 6.4. Sanctions. Are they necessary?
 - 6.5. Economic benefits
 - 6.5.1. Who receives the money?
 - 6.5.2. How is the money used?
 - 6.6. Education and health services
 - 6.7. Do you have an *Oportunidades* scholarship?
 - 6.7.1. What would happen if your children (boys and girls) did not have the *Oportunidades*' scholarship?
 - 6.7.2. What is your opinion of the doctor and nurses at the health centre?
 - 6.8. Division between programme's recipients and non-recipients (Present/Past)
- 7. Perceived changes in your home caused by:**
 - 7.1. Migration
 - 7.1.1. Would you like to migrate to USA or other parts in Mexico (Why?)
 - 7.2. *Oportunidades* programme

Annex I-C. Focus Group Guide: Men: 25-45 years old

- 1. Explanation of the conversation dynamic**
 - 1.1. Why they are there
 - 1.2. How we will work
 - 1.3. Duration of the meeting
- 2. Organization of community**
 - 2.1. Differences between *ejidatarios* and non-*ejidatarios*
 - 2.2. Community activities
 - 2.2.1. Associations (political, sport)
 - 2.2.2. Types of *faenas*
 - 2.2.2.1. Family members participating
 - 2.2.2.2. Distribution of responsibilities (by gender and age)
 - 3. Main economic activities of community members (past/present)**
 - 3.1. Men's activities
 - 3.2. Migration: when did this start? (migrants' main destinations and economic activity)
 - 3.3. Women's jobs
 - 3.4. Advantages and disadvantages of women working
 - 4. Identification of risk at community level**
 - 4.1. Types of events (past five years)
 - 4.2. How have community members organized themselves when such events have happened?
 - 5. *Oportunidades* programme**
 - 5.1. Who receives *Oportunidades'* benefits?
 - 5.2. What are the programme requirements?
 - 5.3. Which programme requirements have to be fulfilled by which family member?
 - 5.4. Sanctions. Are they necessary?
 - 5.5. Economic Benefits
 - 5.5.1. Who receives the money?
 - 5.5.2. How is the money used?
 - 5.6. Education and health services
 - 5.6.1. What would happen if your children (boys and girls) did not have the *Oportunidades'* scholarship?
 - 5.6.2. Opinion of the doctor and nurses at the health centre
 - 5.7. Differences between programme recipients and non-recipients (present/past)
 - 6. Perceptions about changes in the community caused by:**
 - 6.1. Migration
 - 6.2. The *Oportunidades* programme

Annex II: Household Questionnaire
(Translated from Spanish)

The information collected in this questionnaire is CONFIDENTIAL

Household identification: 000	Questionnaire number: 0-000
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Date of interview:

Note: To be completed by the interviewer.
The questionnaire is answered:

Day	Month	Year

Completely	Partially	Not - answered

Note: Questions must be answered by the head of household or another person (over the age of 18) who is well informed about the household's activities.

A. INTERVIEWEE'S DETAILS

Q1. Name of respondent

Name (s)	Father's family name	Mother's family name

Q2. Sex (Note: respond by observation):

Q2 – Sex code:	
Male.....	1
Female.....	2

Q3. Relation to head of household (code):

Q3 – Relation code:			
Household head	1	Son in law	10
Husband	2	Daughter in law	11
Wife	3	Brother in law	12
Son	4	Sister in law	13
Daughter	5	Grandson	14
Father	6	Granddaughter	15
Mother	7	Other relative: specify _____	16
Brother	8	Other, non-relative: specify _____	17
Sister	9		

B. IDENTIFICATION OF THE SELECTED HOUSEHOLD

Q4. Address

Community:	
Street/Avenue, Route/Road	
Exterior number:	Interior number
Plot/Section	
Between streets:	

Q5. Number of people in the household:

C. HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Now I would like to ask you some questions about all the people who usually live in this household.

M e m b e r I D	Q6. Name(s) Definition of household members: all the people who currently live in this house full- or part-time. Household members also include people who eat the food cooked by the household and any immediate family who are away but remit money	Q7. Relation to household head (code)	Q8. Sex M=1 F=2	Q9. Age		Q10. Marital Status (code)	Q11. Last grade finished at school		Q12. Household members primary activity (code)	Q13. If secondary activity, please specify
				Years	Months ⁸²		Grade	Level (code)		
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										

⁸² For children less than 1 year old

Q7– Relation code:	
Household head	1
Husband	2
Wife	3
Son	4
Daughter	5
Father	6
Mother	7
Brother	8
Sister	9
Son-in-law	10
Daughter-in-law	11
Brother-in-law	12
Sister-in-law	13
Grandson	14
Granddaughter	15
Other relative	16
Specify _____	
Other non-relative	17
Specify _____	

Q10— Marital status code:	
Married	1
Cohabiting	2
Widow/widower	3
Separated	4
Divorced	5
Single	6

Q12 – Household members primary occupation:	
In school	1
Unpaid family worker	2
Worker who is unemployed	3
Farm activities	4
Other: specify	5

D. SOCIO-ECONOMIC INFORMATION

I would like to ask you some questions related to household goods.

Q14. Number of plots owned: (Note: If '0' go to Q17)

Q15. Size of each plot:

PLOT (ID)	(Hectares)	Q16. Type of Crop
A		
B		
C		
D		
F		

Q17. Do you own any animals?

YES = 1

NO = 2

(Note: If 'NO' go to Q19)

Q18. Please specify the number of each type of animal:

Type	Number

Q19. Do you own any vehicle or mode of transport?

YES = 1

NO = 2

(Note: If 'NO' go to Q21)

Q20. Please specify the types of vehicles owned:

Type	Number

Q21. Do you own this house?

YES = 1

NO = 2

Q22-Q31. Do have some of the following goods?

Goods	Yes = 1 No = 2	Number
Q22. Refrigerator		
Q23. Gas cooker		
Q24. Dining room furniture		
Q25. Sofa		
Q26. Bed		
Q27. Computer		
Q28. TV		
Q29. CD player		
Q30. Mobile phone		
Q31. Radio		

E. HOUSING CONDITIONS.

Note: Do not ask to the respondent, respond by observation

Q32 Kitchen (code)	Q33 Walls (code)	Q34 Roof (code)	Q35 Floor (code)	Q36 Windows (glass)
				Yes = 1 No = 2

Q32 Kitchen code:	
In a room dedicated only to cooking within the dwelling?	1
In a room used also for sleeping?	2
In the living or dining room?	3
In a room outside the dwelling?	4
On the patio - cook outside?	5

Q33 -Wall(s) code:	
Bricks	1
Block	2
Concrete	3
Adobe	4
Wood	5
Corrugated iron sheets	6
Wattle and daub	7
Cane or sticks	8
Other: specify _____	9

Q34 - Roof code:	
Concrete	1
Metal sheets	2
Cement asbestos	3
Tiles	4
Palm leaves or similar	5
Other: specify_____	6

Q35- Floor code:	
Cement or mud bricks	1
Formed Cement slabs	2
Wood	3
Granite/ceramic floor	4
Earth or sand	5
Other: specify_____	6

F. MIGRATION AND REMITTANCES

Q37. Have any household members moved to live outside the village?

YES = 1

NO = 2

Note: If the answer to Q37 is NO, go to Section 4 Q44.

MEMBER ID	Q38. When did s/he move out of the village (code)?	Q39. Where does s/he live? (Specify location)	Q40. Is s/he currently working? Yes = 1 No = 2	Q41. During the last 12 months, did s/he send you money Yes = 1 No = 2	Q42. Is this the first time s/he has left to work outside the village? Yes = 1 No = 2	Q43. How often does this/do these household member(s) return to the household (specify frequency)?

Note: For household Member ID take the same member ID in Q6. (Section C: Household composition)

Q38 - Left village code:	
Within the last 3 months	1
4-6 months ago	2
6-12 months ago	3
More than 12 months ago	4

G. ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your and any other household members' participation in local community organisations:

M e m b e r ID	Q44. How often do/does _____ attend church (or a religious group) (code)	Q45. Does any member of the household participate in a local political organisation? Yes = 1 No = 2	Q46. How regularly do/does _____ participate in this political organisation's activities? (code)	Q47. Type of activity carried out at the political organisation (Please specify)	Q48. Does any member of the household belong to a sports association? Yes = 1 No = 2	Q49. How often do/does _____ participate in a sporting activity? (code)	Q50. How often do you or another household member participate in organising local festivities? (code)	Q51. How often do you or other household members go drinking or socialising with other community members? (code)	Q52. Does any household member participate in sponsoring other community members' social events* Yes = 1 No = 2 Specify event (If NO, go to Section 5, Q53.)
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									

* Social events can be: baptism, first communion, girls 15th year celebration, wedding, school graduation and funerals

Q42- Church attendance code:	
Every week	1
Community/ family religious ceremonies	2
Never	3

Q46 – Political organisation attendance code:	
Always	1
Sometimes (specify situation)	2
Only when compulsory	3

Q49 – Sporting association attendance code:	
Every week	1
Sometimes (specify situation)	2
Never	3

Q50- Organising local festivities code:	
Always	1
Sometimes, specify situation	2
Never	3

Q51- Drinking or socialising code:	
Every week	1
Social events	2
Never	3

Q53. If you or other household members have sponsored other community members' social events, have they developed into *compadrazgo* relationships?

YES = 1

NO = 2

H. RELATIVE, FRIEND AND NEIGHBOURS SUPPORT

I would like to ask you some questions about how easy or difficult it is for you to get help when you need it, and where you go for help such as money for treatment, organising a social event (i.e. weddings, funerals), school fees, or money for food. **I would like you to give me a list of the people or organisations to whom you would go to for help.**

ID	Q54. Person/organisation who could help Specify the relationship (code)	Q55 For what event would you seek help from this person/organisation? (Specify event)	Q56 How much money do you think they would give you?	Q57 Would you have to pay the money or give object back? Yes = 1 No = 2	Q58 Why would you go to that person?
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Q54 Relationship code:	
Relative	1
Friend	2
<i>Compadre</i>	3
Neighbour	4
Micro-credit organisation	5
Money lender	6
Bank	7
Other, specify	8

Q59. Is there anybody else to whom you would have gone to for help?

YES = 1 NO = 2

Note: If the answer 'YES' add person to the table above and repeat questions Q54 to Q58.

Q60. If you were sick and needed someone to accompany you to the clinic, but none of your household members were here, **can you list for me all the people who you would feel comfortable asking to go with you?**

YES = 1 NO = 2

Note: If the answer 'NO' go to Q62.

ID	Q61. Relationship to person (s) who could ask (code)	Q61- Relationship to person who could ask code:	
		Relative	1
1		Friend	2
2		Neighbour	3
3		Fellow member of church group or community organisation	4
4		Other, specify	5
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Q62. When you are worried about something, **can you list for me all the people with whom you feel comfortable talking about your worries?**

YES = 1 NO = 2

Note: If the answer 'NO' go to the Section 6, Q64.

Q64. Is there anybody else to whom you could go?

YES = 1 NO = 2

ID	Q63. Relationship to person (s) who could ask (code)	Q63 - Relationship to person who could ask code:	
		Relative	1
1		Friend	2
2		Neighbour	3
3		Fellow member of church group or community organisation	4
4		Other, specify	5
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Note: If the answer 'YES' add person to the table above.

I. ENGAGEMENT WITH STATE SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES

Q65. Do you currently receive an *Oportunidades* grant?

YES = 1 NO = 2

Note: If the answer is NO go to Q67.

Q66. Which household members receive *Oportunidades* benefit (**specify Member id**)?

Member ID

Note: For household Member ID use the code given for Q6 (section A - Household composition).

Q67. If you or other adult household members get sick, do you visit the local health centre?

ID Adult household member	Always =2 Sometimes =1 Never = 0	Q68. Ask her/him to specify under which circumstances they would/ would not visit the local health centre?

Note: Use household adult member ID given for Q6 (section A - Household composition)

Q69. Do the household members who are studying attend a state school?

Member ID	Yes = 1 No = 2	Q70. If the answer is 'NO', ask why they do not attend a state school?

Q71. Does anyone in your household ho currently receive a pension?

YES = 1

NO =2

Q72. In the last 12 months have you or any other household member received any kind of assistance from a NGO programme?

YES = 1

NO =2

Note: If the answer is 'NO' to Q72, go to Section 7 Q74.

Q73. What kind of assistance did you/they receive? Specify_____

J. SHOCKS

Q74. In the last 12 months, has this household been affected by any difficulty (or adverse situation)⁸³?

YES = 1

NO =2

Note: If the answer 'NO' end the interview here.

⁸³ Examples of types of shocks: Illnesses or serious accident of working member of the household; death of any member of the household; criminal act; loss of harvest due to weather conditions; payment of fines; migration of any household member.

Q75. What was the difficulty (or adverse situation)?

Q76. How did you cope with this difficulty?

Q77. Did you need help?

YES = 1

NO = 2

Note: If the answer is 'NO' end the interview

Q78. From whom did you receive the help to cope with this situation?

Q79. Where do(es) this/these person(s) live (code)?

In the village	1
Other place in Michoacán	2
Other place in Mexico	3
United States	4

Q80. Why did you ask him/her/them for help?

End of the interview

Annex III: Interviews guides
(Translated from Spanish)

Annex III-A: Interview guide (*Vocales*)

Main objectives of the interview:

- To know the main *vocal*'s responsibilities.
- To learn about some of the issues regarding the operation and difficulties in the implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme at 'front line operation level'.

Period of time during which the *vocal* has been participating in the programme

Responsibilities as *vocal*

- Responsibilities as *vocal* on payday
- Verification of the fulfilment of the health and education components of the programme
- Monthly meetings

Difficulties in fulfilling the programme requirements

- Attendance at the health centre
- Education
- *Faena* in the community
- Monthly meetings

Perceptions of the health and education services (doctors, nurses, teachers)

Perceptions of changes (Before/after the programme)

- Community
- Households
- Individuals

Annex III-B: Interview guide (Director of Health Centre)

Main objectives of the interview:

- To learn about issues in the operation and difficulties in the implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme at the front line operation level in relation to the health and nutrition component.

Difficulties in the fulfilment of the programme requirements regarding health

- Attendance for family medical check-ups (mother, father, children, older people)
- Attendance at the *Oportunidades* educational health workshops

Perceptions of why women fulfil or do not fulfil the programme requirements regarding health

Perceptions of health services

Perceptions of the selection of families to be included in the programme

Reasons for sanctions and exclusion of families from the programme

Perceptions about changes in health and nutrition practices (Before/after the programme)

- Community
- Households
- Individuals

Annex III-C: Interview guide (School Teachers)

Main objectives of the interview:

- To learn about the operation and difficulties in the implementation of the *Oportunidades* programme at the 'front line operation level', regarding the education component
- To know some issues regarding the history of the community

Difficulties in fulfilling the education component of the programme requirements

Perceptions about the education services and system

Perceptions of change (Before/after the programme)

- Community
- Households
- Individuals

Perceptions of the impacts of migration on education

Information regarding the constitution and development of the *Ejido*

Annex IV: Interviews guides for Households Case Studies

(Translated from Spanish)

The interviews were conducted in five different rounds of semi-structured interviews covering different aspects related to the respondents' everyday life: i) key life events (childhood, adolescence and adulthood); ii) intra-household forms of organisation (roles and responsibilities) and gendered spaces for social interaction (i.e. female and male everyday situations and where they interact with other community members); iii) household risk events (mostly related to health difficulties) and their coping strategies (i.e. main actors or institutions usually involved in their risk responses); iv) patterns of interaction with state institutions (school and local health care services); and v) opinions and perceptions of the state services provided at ground level (the discussion was mostly oriented to the LHCS).

Key life events

1. Where were you born?
2. How many brothers and sisters you have?
3. Describe an ordinary day at school when you were a child (male and female friendships, teachers). When did you stop going to school? Why?
4. Describe an ordinary day at home when you were a child (parents, brothers and sisters, responsibilities)
5. Patterns of socialization within the community (where you used to go when you were single; activities you used to participate in).
6. Where did you meet your husband? How long were you in the relationship before you married? When did you decide to marry? How were the wedding preparations?

Organization of daily activities

1. Which family members work and which study?
2. Which are the obligations and responsibilities of each family member?

Decisions within household

1. Which family members can work?
2. Where does the family live?
3. Who makes the decisions regarding main expenses (e.g. buy a house) ?
4. Who makes the decisions regarding sons/daughters education?
5. Who makes the decisions about to scolding sons/daughters?
6. Who makes the decisions in difficult situations (e.g. illness of a son or daughter) ?
7. Who decides how many children to have?

Adverse situations (difficulties)

1. Please tell me about one situation which has been difficult for you or any of your family members
 - a. What was the situation?
 - b. Was the household income affected by this problem?
 - i. Was the household income problem solved?
 - ii. If not, how long do you think it will be until the problem is solved?
 - c. Did this problem affect the organization of daily household activities? If so, how?
 - d. How did you solve this difficulty?
 - e. Did you need help? If so, which type of help? From whom? Where does this person (or organization) live or operate? Why did you ask this person or organization for help?
2. How easy or difficult is for you to get help when you need it?
3. Where or whom do you ask for help when you need it? Why?
4. In which difficult situations do you feel that you must help to a neighbour or a member of the community?

Oportunidades programme

Recipients:

1. Which benefits you have received from the programme?
2. Which benefits have other family members have received from the programme?

3. Are there any differences between members of the community who participate in the programme and those who do not participate? What are they?
4. What are the recipients' responsibilities?
 - a. Women
 - b. Men
 - c. Children
 - d. Older people
5. Do you have any difficulties in fulfilling the programme requirements?
6. How has your household organized itself in order to fulfil the programme requirements?
7. Attendance at the doctor/monthly meetings (is this perceived as an obligation or a benefit?)
8. How do your children combine their responsibilities at home with their responsibilities at school?
9. Do you think that your health and education needs are met by the services offered by the *Oportunidades* programme? (explain)
10. Use of health services
 - a. When do you use the state health service?
 - b. When do you use private health service?
11. Opinions of the state health service
 - a. Waiting time
 - b. Quality of attention
 - c. Treatment received from doctors and nurses (put special emphasis on experience of the LHCS).
12. If someone gets sick, would you recommend the state health service to her/him?
13. Have you noticed any changes in the health service? What are they?
14. Do you think that the *Oportunidades* programme requirements are necessary? Why?
15. Have you noticed any changes in your household since receiving the benefits of the programme?
16. Do you think that *Oportunidades* is help from the government or your right, which the government has to protect? Is it temporary?
17. What type of sanction does the programme apply to recipients who do not fulfil their responsibilities?
18. Perceptions of these sanctions

Non-recipients:

1. Have you received *Oportunidades* in the past?
 - a. When did you stop of receiving them? (year)
 - b. Why?
2. Have you applied to be included in the programme?
 - a. If this was not accepted, why?
 - b. Do you think that you should be included in the programme? Why?
3. Are there any differences between members of community who participate in the programme and those who do not? What are they?

To *Oportunidades*' recipients and non-recipients:

4. Have you noticed changes in your community because of *Oportunidades*? What are they?
1. Have you noticed changes in family, friendship and community relationships?

Migration

1. Does anyone in your family live out of the community? Who? When did this person leave? Why?
2. Is it the first time that this person has migrated?
3. What led this person to make the decision to migrate?
4. Who helped him/her to pay to cross the border?
 - a. Why did he/she ask this person to help?
 - b. Why did you think that this person helped him/her?
5. During the first months of migration, before s/he received any money, how did he/she cover his/her household expenses?
6. **When the husband is the person who migrated:** Who takes the main household decisions when the husband is away?
7. How have you reorganized your household since that person migrated?
 - a. Type of family members' activities before and after migration
 - b. Type of responsibilities before and after migration

8. Would you like to migrate yourself? Why? Temporarily or permanently?

Other topics (Independence, hard work, feeling of responsibility, equality between men and women, tolerance and respect for others, austerity, saving money and assets, determination, perseverance, religious faith, generosity, obedience)

1. When sources of income are scarce, should men have more right to work than women? Why?
2. Generally speaking, if people had a choice do you think most people would try to take advantage of you or try to be fair?
3. Do you think that it is humiliating to receive money without working for it?
4. Do you think that people who do not work become lazy?
5. Do you agree or disagree with this sentence: Boys and girls need a home with both father and mother in order to grow up happily. Why?
6. What do you think about a woman who wants to have a child but does not want to get married or be in a stable relationship with a man (ie she wants to be a single mother)? Why?
7. Do you think that being a housewife is a job, like other, paid jobs ?

Community relationships/exclusion

1. If a neighbour finds him/herself in difficulties, for instance loses a crop or animals due to an epidemic, who helps him/her financially?
2. Are there any types of people that you would not like to have as neighbours? (e.g. drug addicts; people living with AIDS; homosexuals; people of different religion, alcoholics; couples in common-law union; people who speak other language, indigenous people)
3. What sort of situations could cause problems between members of this community? (e.g. problems between people with different education levels; between people who receive benefits from the government and those who do not, or who receive less; between people who have more material assets and those who have less; between poor people and rich people or less poor people; between people who have lived always here and Have you noticed who have arrived recently; between people of different political parties or different religions; between older people and young people).
4. How are problems between members of the community solved?
5. Who make the best political leaders: men or women?
6. Is university education more important for boys than for girls?
7. Who are the best income earners: men or women?
8. Who are the best managers of the household's economic resources: men or women?

Annex V: Chi Square Test of Independence

The results of X^2 statistical tests are described below.

H₀: Poor families' attendance at the LHCS is independent of their fulfilment of *Oportunidades* programme requirements

H₁: Poor families' attendance at the LHCS is related to the fulfilment of the *Oportunidades* programme requirements

Table I: Contingency (data observed) (f_o) (see also Table 5.3)

	Always (a)	Sometimes (b)	Never (c)	Total Household
<i>Oportunidades</i> (d)	53	17	0	70
<i>Non-Oportunidades</i> (g)	5	18	10	33
Sum	58	35	10	103

Table II: Data Expected (f_e) = $(a+b+c)(d+g)/N$

	(a)	(b)	(c)	Sum
(d)	39.4175	23.7864	6.7961	70.0000
(g)	18.5825	11.2136	3.2039	33.0000
				N=103.0000

Table III: Chi-Squared (X^2) = $(\chi^2) = \sum(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Sum
<i>Oportunidades</i>	4.6803	1.9362	6.7961	13.4126
<i>Non-Oportunidades</i>	9.9279	4.1071	14.4160	28.4510
				$X^2 = 41.8636$

Degrees of Freedom (δf) = (Columns - 1)*(Rows - 1) = 2(1) = 2

Table IV. Critical values of χ^2

α	90%	95%	99%	99.9%	
δf	(1- α)	0.10	0.05	0.01	0.001
1		2.7055	3.8415	6.6349	10.8276
2		4.6052	5.9915	9.2103	13.8155
3					
4		7.7794	9.4877	13.2767	18.4668
6		10.6446	12.5916	16.8119	22.4577
8		13.3616	15.5073	20.0902	26.1245
10		15.9872	18.3070	23.2093	29.5883

Since the $\chi^2 = 41.86$ (see Table III; above) exceeds the critical value $\chi^2 = 13.8155$ (see Table IV; above), the H_0 hypothesis is rejected with a 99.9 degree of confidence, and it is concluded that the use of LHCS by poor families is highly related to their fulfilment of the requirements of the *Oportunidades* programme.

Annex VI: Oportunidades Programme Household Recipients Interviewed (Household head, type of family, family composition, ages, and main economic activity)

Household ID	Household Head	Type of Family	No. Member	Family member	Age	Main Occupation
Expansion						
066	Male	Nuclear	5	Husband ¹	29	US labour market
				Tina	28	Working at home
				Daughter	7	Student (3 rd grade; primary school)
				Son	4	Kindergarten
				Daughter	NB	---
091	Male	Nuclear	3	Husband	30	Agriculture/ US labour market
				Delia	30	Working at home
				Daughter	3	---
Consolidation						
001	Female	Nuclear	3	Julia	47	Domestic helper; second hand cloth seller; home baking
				Daughter	16	Student (8 th grade; secondary school)
				Daughter	14	Student (7 th grade; secondary school)
013	Male	Nuclear	5	Husband	33	Bus driver
				Alicia	35	Working at home
				Daughter	15	Student (10 th grade; high school)
				Son	14	Student (8 th grade; secondary school)
				Daughter	4	Kindergarten
022	Male	Nuclear	6	Husband	34	Labour market
				Carolina	33	Working at home
				Daughter	11	Student (7th grade; secondary school)
				Son	9	Student (4th grade; primary school)
				Daughter	8	Student (3rd grade; primary school)
				Daughter	1	---
030	Male	Nuclear	4	Husband	37	Agriculture
				Gina	35	Working at home
				Son	9	Student (3 rd grade; primary school)
				Daughter	8	Student (1 st grade; primary school)

(...cont.)

Household ID	Household Head	Type of Family	No. Member	Family member	Age	Main Occupation
Consolidation						
051	Male headed	Nuclear	7	Husband	30	Wage earning market
				Marcia	30	Working at home
				Daughter	10	Student (6 th grade; primary school)
				Daughter	8	Student (3 rd grade; primary school)
				Daughter	7	Student (1 st grade; primary school)
				Son	3	----
				Daughter	2	---
085	Male	Nuclear	4	Husband ¹	49	Agriculture
				Gabriela	38	Working at home
				Daughter	17	Student (12 th grade; high school)
				Son	5	Student (1 st grade primary school)
002	Male-headed subfamily	Extended	5	Father in Law	58	Agriculture/civil servant local government
				Mother in Law²	54	Working at home
				Husband ¹	23	US labour market
				Olivia	23	Working at home
				Daughter	6	Student (1 st grade; primary school)
				Daughter	NB	---
005	Female-headed sub family	Extended	4	Father	77	Agriculture
				Mother ²	71	Shop keeper
				Josefina	58	Domestic helper
				Son	11	Student (6th grade; primary school)
021	Male	Extended	7	Husband	45	Agriculture
				Arcelia	44	Working at home
				Son ⁴	17	Agriculture
				Daughter in Law	18	Working at home
				Daughter	16	Working at home
				Daughter	13	Student (6 th grade; primary school)
				Daughter	8	Student (3 rd grade; primary school)
				Granddaughter	NB	----
023	Male	Extended	9	Husband	68	Agriculture
				Amelia	62	Working at home
				Son	42	Agriculture
				Daughter	40	Domestic helper
				Son	25	Agriculture
				Daughter	19	Domestic helper
				Daughter	18	Domestic helper
				Daughter	17	----
				Grandson	NB	---

(... cont.)

Household ID	Household Head	Type of Family	No. Member	Family member	Age	Main Occupation
Consolidation						
026	Male	Nuclear	6	Husband	39	Agriculture
				Susana ²	38	
				Son	17	Agriculture
				Son	10	Student (5 th grade; primary school)
038	Male	Nuclear	4	Husband	51	Agriculture
				Maribel ³	45	Working at home
				Daughter	14	Student (9 th grade; secondary school)
				Daughter	12	Student (6 th Grader; Primary)
050	Male	Nuclear	3	Husband	36	Agriculture/ US labour market
				Irasema ²	34	Working at home
				Daughter	14	Student (9 th grade; secondary school)
061	Male	Nuclear	3	Husband	47	Agriculture
				Griselda ²	46	Working at home
				Daughter	14	Student (9 th grade; secondary school)
071	Male	Extended	5	Husband	42	Agriculture
				Ana	43	Working at home
				Son	22	Agriculture
				Daughter	15	Working at home
				Mother in Law	83	Working at home
079	Male	Nuclear	6	Husband ¹	44	Agriculture
				Martha ²	41	Working at home
				Son	15	Student (8 th grade; secondary school)
				Son	12	Student (7 th grade; secondary school)
				Son	10	Student (4 th grade; primary school)
				Daughter	4	Kindergarten
087	Female-headed sub family	Extended	10	Father	72	Agriculture
				Mother	68	---
				Husband	49	---
				Socorro ²	34	Domestic helper
				Son ⁴	15	Agriculture wage earning
				Daughter in Law	13	Working at home
				Daughter	14	Student (6th grade; primary school)
				Daughter	10	Student (4th grade; primary school)
				Son	6	Student (2nd grade; primary school)
				Husband	56	Agriculture
094	Male	Nuclear	3	Patricia ²	42	Working at home
				Daughter	12	Student (6th grade; primary school)

(...conclusion)

Household ID	Household Head	Type of Family	No. Member	Family member	Age	Main Occupation
Dispersion						
004	Male	Nuclear	2	Husband	58	Agriculture/local convenient store
				Maria	54	Working at home/assisting the business shop
092	Male	Nuclear	2	Husband	85	---
				Elisa	78	Working at home

1: Husband working in the United States

2: At least one single son working in the United States

3: Daughter married (less than a year ago)

4: Son in the initial stages of a conjugal relationship; living at his parent's house.

NB: Newborn.