# IDEOLOGY AND NETWORKS
## The Politics of Social Policy Diffusion in Brazil*

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*Abstract: Brazil's constitution (1988) granted municipalities the responsibility of providing social services. Many observers anticipated that this newfound authority would produce policy diversity, as local governments would tailor programs to constituents' needs. Instead, many municipalities chose to replicate programs made famous elsewhere. What explains this diffusion of social policies across Brazil? In particular, what motivates policy makers to emulate "innovative" policies? This study compares three approaches that seek to explain political behavior: political self-interest, ideology, and socialized norms. It draws on two policies, Bolsa Escola, an education program, and Programa Saúde da Família, a family health program, in four exemplary cities, to uncover the mechanisms that led to diffusion. Surprisingly, political incentives, such as electoral competition, cannot explain diffusion. Rather, ideology and socialized norms, transmitted through social networks, drive policy emulation. Diffusion occurs when politicians are ideologically compelled to replicate these programs and when policy specialists seek to demonstrate that they follow professional norms.*

When the Brazilian Constituent Assembly promulgated the country's democratic constitution in 1988, it established new social rights and created mechanisms for greater civil society participation in public policy development. A central principle was the decentralization of social responsibilities to local governments, which would bring governance closer to constituents and allow for policies more reflective of local realities (Samuels 2000). As a result, during much of the 1990s, Brazil experienced a significant transformation in the ways in which public policies were designed and implemented.[1] Municipalities in particular, have been at the forefront of social policy experimentation and innovation. Many people believed that decentralization would usher in an era of policy diversity

   1. There is an extensive literature on social policy in Brazil. For recent analyses on education and health policy making, see Arretche (2000, 2004); Arretche and Marques (2002); Draibe (2004); Draibe et al. (1994); Fleury, Belmartino, and Baris (2001).

as thousands of local governments tailored their programs to meet constituents' demands. Yet in practice, decentralization has opened a door to another phenomenon, policy emulation, as some cities began copying programs enacted elsewhere. Policy diffusion in Brazil is especially surprising among cities facing substantially different conditions, problems, and political dynamics. What motivates local policy makers to emulate programs designed for other cities? The spread of social policies across Brazil remains one of the most significant developments in governance in the new democratic era, yet the factors that drive social sector reform remain largely unknown (Kaufman and Nelson 2004).

Policy diffusion has attracted increased attention from scholars of international politics who trace the spread of social welfare policies and democracy across countries, as well as from scholars of state politics in the United States (for recent examples, see Brinks and Coppedge 2006; Karch 2007; Mooney 2001; Orenstein 2003; Simmons and Elkins 2004). Yet most scholarship has not focused on the question of policy makers' motivations. Much of the diffusion literature has underspecified the motivations that drive individuals by assuming that actors respond rationally to external inducements. An examination of the emulation of innovative social policies across Brazilian municipalities offers a valuable opportunity to clarify the theory of policy diffusion by analyzing what compels political actors to emulate an external model. This article seeks to uncover the factors that motivate actors to replicate social policies. It compares three approaches that claim to account for individuals' behavior and that stress political self-interest, ideological beliefs, and socialized norms, respectively.

The article's first section will address the puzzle of social policy diffusion in Brazil and briefly discusses two of the most noteworthy social policies that spread throughout Brazil in the past decade. The second section presents the conventional approaches to the study of diffusion and their limitations. The third section outlines an alternative framework for understanding policy diffusion, which focuses on individuals' motivations. The last section draws on evidence from four case studies to underscore the motivational factors that drive actors to replicate innovative policies.

THE PUZZLE OF POLICY DIFFUSION IN BRAZIL

In theory, Brazil's decentralized form of governance should allow local governments to tailor social policies to the diverse needs of their constituents. After all, Brazil is home to nearly 5,500 municipalities that lie between the southern plains and the northern Amazon. In principle, as municipal governments claimed their authority and developed social policy, they would design policies according to local realities. Many states

and municipalities did take advantage of their newfound flexibilities and operated as policy laboratories, experimenting with new administrative and social policies (Abers 2000; Baiocchi 2003; Paulics 2000; Tendler 1997; Wampler and Avritzer 2004). While subnational governments brought a diversity of social programs to fruition, city governments across Brazil also chose to replicate policies made famous elsewhere. The extent of the replication is surprising because city governments face dramatically different social needs, levels of poverty, political cultures, and different types of available resources.

Two programs illustrate the trend toward policy diffusion: Bolsa Escola/Renda Mínima and Programa Saúde da Família (PSF). Bolsa Escola started in 1995 as a municipal school-grant program, providing cash assistance to low-income mothers on the condition that their children regularly attend school (Aguiar and Araújo 2002; Jacobo Waiselfisz, Abramovay, and Andrade 1998). The goal of the program is to improve the educational performance of poor children, whose progress is often hindered by infrequent school attendance and grade repetition because of the opportunity costs of attending school. The program Renda Mínima shares a similar policy design and is viewed as politically interchangeable among Brazilian policy makers (Buarque 2004; Suplicy 2003). The policies quickly caught on, and within two years approximately eighty-eight cities had adopted the programs (Araújo and de Souza 1998). That same year, the federal government created a small matching grant for cities with below-average per capita revenues to spur the adoption of Bolsa Escola (Lavinas and Barbosa 2000). By 2001, more than two hundred municipalities and seven states had adopted this innovation (Villatoro 2004). The federal government, on the eve of presidential elections, created its own Bolsa Escola program in 2001. The federal version spread rapidly throughout the country, providing cash transfers directly to beneficiaries and bypassing municipal governments altogether. This article focuses exclusively on the diffusion of municipal programs that required municipal budgetary allocations and administrative responsibilities.

Like Bolsa Escola, Programa Saúde da Família was inspired by local health-care initiatives, such as a family doctor program from Niterói (Rio de Janeiro) and several other community-based health programs in small, rural northeastern cities (Viana and Poz 1998). The goal of the program is to improve the access and quality of primary health care for the poor. To accomplish these ends, cities reorganize health services by targeting neighborhoods, mapping communities, and identifying families' health-care needs by making home visits. Communities with PSF have their own designated health-care teams, which comprise a doctor, nurse, nurse's aid, and several community health agents. The program started in 1994, primarily in small rural cities in the Northeast and with support from the

Ministry of Health. By the late 1990s, PSF had gained broader credibility and visibility, both within and outside of the ministry, spreading from 55 municipalities in the first year to 4,944 by 2003.

The relationship between federal support for social policy enactment and municipal decision making opens up questions that have both empirical and theoretical relevance for this project. On the one hand, the country's strong tradition of intergovernmental cooperation (Samuels 2000) suggests that the spread of these programs may simply reflect top-down directives from the federal government. Research on policy diffusion in other federal, decentralized countries suggests that fiscal transfers can be influential in creating incentives for local governments to participate in new social programs (Derthick 1970; Mossberger 1999; Rose 1973). On the other hand, Brazilian fiscal and political federalism allows for municipal policy-making independence; thus, diffusion decisions may reflect horizontal peer emulation rather than vertical pressures. Researchers often privilege either vertical or horizontal explanations when accounting for diffusion (for discussion on vertical versus horizontal diffusion, see Elkins and Simmons 2005; Levi-Faur 2005; Weyland 2005). For Brazilian social policy making, the relationship between federal inducements for policy adoption and local policy making is far from clear. In the case of Bolsa Escola, the federal government had only a short-lived effort to support selected municipal Bolsa Escola programs.[2] Thus, most local governments that enacted municipal educational cash-transfer programs did so with their own budgetary and administrative resources. By the late 1990s, the federal Ministry of Health did provide local governments funding to offset the costs of PSF.[3] Although fiscal incentives certainly enabled municipal governments to finance the policy, emulation decisions were far from automatic, and policy makers engaged in their own decision-making processes to access the program. This study does not assume that the diffusion of social policies across Brazilian municipalities is a simple function of either horizontal or vertical processes; rather, it considers the possibility that replication can be a function of both. In this way, federal financing represents a control factor with a focus on uncovering actors' motivations for emulating programs made famous elsewhere.

2. In 1997, the federal government introduced the short-lived program Programa de Renda Mínima Vinculada à Educação (Lei 9.553, December 10, 1997), which supported municipal efforts for Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima by providing a matching grant to the communities that instituted their own programs. The program was limited in scope and prioritized the poorest cities. The program lasted about a year.

3. Fiscal transfers for PSF were calculated on a sliding scale and depended on the overall percentage of the population covered under the program and the number of health teams in place. The formula favored cities that adopted the program with expansive coverage of the population.

CONVENTIONAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF DIFFUSION

The concept of diffusion, often broadly defined to include not only policy adoption but also the spread of ideas, is popular within political science and other social science disciplines.[4] Researchers have invoked contagion effects to examine a vast array of issues, including the spread of hybrid corn, social welfare systems in Europe, and women's bureaucracies, just to name a few (Orenstein 2003; Rogers 2003; True and Mintrom 2001). To the extent that there is a common framework, many scholars have explained the spread of policies as a function of external influences versus internal prerequisites (Collier and Messick 1975; Walker 1969). In the process, the diffusion literature has produced a potpourri of explanations for the causes of diffusion, including the substance of the policies itself, a government's degree of innovativeness, partisan makeup, geographic location, jurisdictional and economic competition, learning, linkages to policy entrepreneurs, networks, and socialized norms (Balla 2001; Berry and Berry 1990, 1992; Finnemore 1993; Gray 1973; Mintrom 1997; Simmons and Elkins 2004; Walker 1969).

The existing literature offers a valuable starting point for an examination of potential factors that explain diffusion in Brazil. Yet at the same time, there is a need to clarify the mechanisms that drive policy diffusion. Research has often underspecified the role of individuals; some scholars make no assumptions about what motivates them while others treat motivations as varying randomly (Horne 2001, 22). As a result, assumptions about individual behavior tend to reflect researchers' disciplinary approaches or their fields' dominant paradigms. Political scientists who study diffusion often ground their explanations in notions of rationality and competition, whereas sociologists tend to examine learning in terms of the strength and type of relational ties as well as organizational networks (see, e.g., Berry and Berry 1992; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Granovetter 1973; McAdam and Rucht 1993). Underlying suppositions about behavior and the mechanisms that facilitate diffusion can be obscured by scholars' methodological approach. The introduction of statistical techniques such as event history analysis, a discrete time logit model, allows for studies of diffusion that capture both internal and external pressures (Berry and Berry 1992; Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). However, as Meseguer and Gilardi (2005) note, the reliance on this statistical method can contribute to an under-accounting of causal complexity and difficulties in interpretation between indicators and concepts. One solution is to elaborate on the causal mechanisms for diffusion by addressing the policy process and incorporating process tracing. Careful qualitative analysis of

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4. For a useful analysis on the various definitional and theoretical trends in the diffusion of social science literature, see Elkins and Simmons (2005).

the policy diffusion process can clarify the motivations that drive individuals to replicate policies developed elsewhere. To do so, scholars need to interview key actors involved in the policy process.[5]

## TOWARD A THEORY OF SOCIAL POLICY DIFFUSION

This article seeks to uncover the motivating factors that led actors to adopt programs designed for other cities. For this purpose, it assesses the potential contributions of three broad approaches to political analysis, all of which highlight different motivations. Do individuals make decisions on the basis of rational self-interested calculations? Or do they make choices on the basis of their ideological values and beliefs, even when faced with the prospect of political costs? Alternatively, do policy makers act because they are socialized into a community that defines and transmits shared norms? These three questions relate to fundamental issues of whether policy makers act in a purely self-regarding way; in a principled way, regardless of self or others; or in an other-regarding, community-oriented way. By framing the motivations that drive political action into three distinct categories—individual political self-interest, abstract ideology, and legitimation before social network—I intend to clarify how individual behavior drives diffusion.

Rational choice approaches suggest that in an electorally competitive environment, policy makers respond to self-interest or political incentives as they seek to increase their political power. In this view, purely self-regarding instrumental rationality plays a fundamental role in regulating behavior as individuals seek to realize their goals (Riker and Ordeshook 1973). Politicians make choices to maximize their own benefit, typically because they desire to win reelection, win a more competitive office in the next election, or simply retain their partisan appointments. Thus, the expectation is that politicians behave strategically and choose policies after having assessed the political costs and benefits of various alternatives (Carmines and Stimson 1993). In this vein, Walker (1969) argues that when stiff party competition exists, there is an increased propensity for parties to initiate change and propose new programs to distinguish themselves. Following this logic, new programs are more likely to be instituted in the beginning of a new administration (Lowi 1963). Thus, frequent turnover provides opportunities for the adoption of new policy, including emulation of external policy models.

Another altogether different explanation for diffusion is that policy makers are driven by their ideology and make emulation decisions irrespective of political incentives. Douglass North (1981, 46–47; 1990) argues

5. For a particularly notable example of research that incorporates process tracing to analyze the policy process, see Kingdon (1995).

that it is important to consider the role of ideology in accounting for the allocation of resources, because not all individual behavior can be explained in the context of neoclassical behavioral assumptions.[6] In other words, decision makers may choose seemingly irrational positions because of their strong ideological commitments, even when confronted with the high political costs of doing so.

Ideology can be understood as "a pattern of thoughts and beliefs explaining each person's attitude toward life and their existence in society, and advocating a conduct and action pattern that is responsive to such thoughts and beliefs" (Lowenstein 1953, quoted in Gerring 1997, 958). The key for a study of policy making is that ideology can compel individuals into action by providing both exigency and grounds for political activity. As Mullins (1972, 508) argues, one of the key components of ideology is its action orientation in policy making: "Political ideology has particular relevance to the area of political agency because, in addition to providing a relatively structured and consistent conception of the causal forces operating in the social world, it also incorporates evaluation of what is conceived." Because social policies are often value laden in politics, there is a need to consider the role of ideology and to investigate whether individuals behave in ways that diverge from assumptions about rational self-interest.

Sociological approaches, alternatively, suggest that change occurs as a function of social context and relationships to others. The premise is that human behavior is embedded in a matrix of organizational and informal relationships that provide fundamental filters through which preferences are formed (Kaufman 1999, 367–368). Networks, in particular, can play a crucial role in linking individuals with others, in structuring meaning, and in defining individual perceptions and preferences (Friedkin 1993; Kilduff and Tsai 2003; Passy 2003). Associational networks can define the scope of legitimate action and structure values for "modern" administrative practices. In this way, associations shape professional norms that are internalized by individuals, who follow these norms because they want to (Horne 2001, 4).

Both formal and informal social networks can play influential roles in emulation decisions. Formal organizations, such as professional associations, link individuals with structurally equivalent roles who reside in different organizations but nevertheless pressure one another to behave in similar ways (Friedkin 1988, 69–70, quoted in Kilduff and Tsai 2003, 58). Informal networks can also exist among individuals or across geographi-

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6. North's assertion is particularly remarkable as he is widely known for his application of neoclassical economic principles to a theory of the state and institution building; he shares a Nobel Prize with Robert W. Fogel for their work in the field of new economic history.

cal space as "neighborhood effects," where social learning and information exchange travel spatially (Collier and Messick 1975, 1983; Mooney and Lee 1995; Walker 1969).[7] For example, newspapers can have regional circulation, or neighboring city administrators can periodically meet to discuss common problems. The more actors are connected through informal and professional associations, the more likely it is they share similar values, norms, and discourse. Thus, we could expect that professional norms conveyed by social networks spur policy diffusion.

A social network approach offers important contrasts to both political incentives and ideological frameworks. Social networks and the ways they structure preferences need not contribute to rational decision making (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Policy makers may simply desire to keep up with the Joneses, even when doing what the Joneses do may not be functionally beneficial for them (Weyland 2004). For instance, Finnemore (1993) argues that the worldwide diffusion of science bureaucracies occurred even though many countries lacked a domestic demand for such institutions and had few resources to invest for scientific advances. In a similar vein, there was limited evidence to indicate that Bolsa Escola and PSF were appropriate policies for all Brazilian municipalities, given the different social conditions of those municipalities. In addition, social networks need not comprise individuals who share the same ideological beliefs. This is particularly true for membership in professional associations, where individuals share professional norms but may diverge in terms of personal ideology.

Each of the three approaches for understanding the motivations that drive political behavior—in this case, the decisions to emulate programs such as Bolsa Escola and PSF—can be tested empirically. If a political incentives approach explains diffusion, we would expect decision makers to use these policies to gain political and economic power by including them in their campaigns for office and responding quickly to federal incentives. In contrast, if ideology drives policy emulation, then politicians would frame adoption of these programs in terms of their ideological commitments and beliefs. They would stand by their choices even if political self-interest pointed in a different direction. Alternatively, actors who are drawn to these programs because of knowledge learned through professional networks would express their decisions in terms of the professional norms and trends in their field. In doing so, they would relate their emulation decision to others, participate in the same networks, and seek to demonstrate how their policies reflect new conventions.

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7. Although Keck and Sikkink do not specifically address diffusion, their work on transnational advocacy networks offers valuable insights on how cross-border networks link actors with shared norms (1998).

*Table 1  Case Studies of Policy Diffusion*

|  | Executive in Office & Party ID[a] | BE/RM | PSF |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Brasília (DF)[b]** | | | |
| 1990–1994 | Joaquim Roriz (PTR) | — | No |
| 1994–1998 | Cristovam Buarque (PT) | *Innovator*[c] | Yes |
| 1998–2002 | Joaquim Roriz (PMDB) | No/Yes[d] | No/Yes[d] |
| **Belo Horizonte (MG)** | | | |
| 1992–1996 | Patrus Ananias (PT) | No | No |
| 1996–2000 | Célio de Castro (PSB) | Yes | No |
| 2000–2004 | Célio de Castro (PSB) Fernando Damata Pimentel (PT)[e] | Yes | Yes |
| **Salvador (BA)** | | | |
| 1992–1996 | Lídice da Mata (PSDB) | Yes | No |
| 1996–2000 | Antônio José Imbassahy (PFL) | No | No |
| 2000–2004 | Antônio José Imbassahy (PFL) | No | Yes |
| **São Paulo (SP)** | | | |
| 1992–1996 | Paulo Maluf (PDS) | No | No |
| 1996–2000 | Celso Pitta (PPB) | No | No |
| 2000–2004 | Marta Suplicy (PT) | Yes | Yes |

[a]  Mayor's partisan affiliation at the time he or she ran for office.
[b]  Brasília, the Federal District, operates under the gubernatorial electoral calendar.
[c]  As the originating city for Bolsa Escola, its adoption in 1995 does not constitute a case of diffusion.
[d]  The program was suspended or discontinued and then reintroduced under new names.
[e]  Fernando Damata Pimentel (PT) assumed office in November 2001, after Célio de Castro suffered a stroke.

## Methodology

To ascertain policy makers' motivations for emulating policy models, I identify the mechanisms by which diffusion occurs through process tracing. I rely extensively on case study analysis and compare the adoption of Bolsa Escola/Renda Mínima and PSF in four Brazilian municipalities over the course of three municipal administrations, for a total of twelve cases.[8] The research sites for this study included Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais), Brasília (Distrito Federal), Salvador (Bahia), and São Paulo (São Paulo). Data gathering occurred between 2003 and 2004, and included in-

8.  In selecting policies that have diffused at different rates, this study follows the advice of Meseguer and Gilardi (2005) and Rogers (2003), who argue scholars should allow for variation in the diffusion process and avoid the selection bias that comes from studying only policies that have diffused rapidly.

terviews with numerous Brazilian policy makers in all four cities, especially elected officials, technocrats, community activists, and leaders of nongovernmental organizations.

Several criteria guided the selection of the research sites. First, this study does not privilege diffusion processes as reflecting either horizontal (e.g., cross-city influence) or vertical (e.g., federal imposition) pressures. For this reason, it is necessary to examine emulation decisions, when they occur, for municipalities that are able to resist federal inducements. The research sites selected for this study are large and have the administrative and political ability to demonstrate autonomous decision making. Second, these cities share characteristics that make comparison possible; all are state capitals and face similar institutional tensions between municipality- and state-level policy making (the only exception is Brasília, which is the federal district). Third, as Table 1 indicates, the twelve case studies also display important variations. Both Bolsa Escola and PSF are adopted at different points in time and, in a few instances, even experienced policy reversal. The variation in the dependent variable, program adoption over time, is important because there would otherwise be a potential for selection bias (Geddes 1990). In addition, the cases differ on levels of socioeconomic development, geographic location, and political culture. Importantly, mayors from these cities represent a wide ideological spectrum from rightists to leftists: no single party dominates and all major political parties are represented.

## SOCIAL POLICY DIFFUSION IN FOUR CITIES

### Political Incentives

A political incentives approach offers an intuitively appealing explanation for the spread of social policies in Brazil. Policy advocates for Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima suggest that these programs spread because they are politically attractive (Buarque 2004; Suplicy 2003). This rationale speaks directly to rational choice assumptions about actors' determination to pursue their political self-interest and to gain electoral power; it thus represents both the theoretical and the instinctive conventional wisdom. Within political science, the assumption of rationality is among the principal ways that researchers have sought the regularity necessary for generalization (Riker and Ordeshook 1973, 11). However, these assumptions need to be tested. Does political competition drive local politicians' day-to-day decision making? Do political leaders decide to adopt these programs to win elections?

Certainly, the pressure to win elections and to distinguish oneself from competitors is crucially important in the Brazilian municipal arena. Although personalism still rules in many electoral contests, candidates often

do cite the policy preferences or specify programs they would enact once in office. Campaigning on the provision of these social programs can offer a clear opportunity to gain votes. Mayors Cristovam Buarque, Marta Suplicy, and Célio Castro all campaigned on their intentions to implement either Bolsa Escola or PSF. Because Brazil has compulsory voting and these cities have a sizable poor population,[9] there is real potential for the electorate to reward politicians who enact progressive social policies. Both Bolsa Escola and PSF are highly visible programs. The cash grant can represent a substantial injection of income for poor families, and the health program brings the state into homes by offering direct services. Mayors who adopt PSF can also influence voters by deciding which neighborhoods the program will serve. Some executives indeed take on these electioneering strategies. For instance, under the administration of Mayor Antônio Imbassahy in Salvador, the political leadership determined which neighborhoods would be included in the health program. Often, the favored neighborhoods were not those that the technocrats favored (Nossa 2004).

For some mayors, these programs are politically appealing not because they offer opportunities for policy-based electoral competition but because they can perpetuate politics as usual through patronage and corruption. Because the health program includes the hiring of new personnel, the power behind job creation offers the opportunity for significant political payoffs. In PSF, the community health agent job is an especially coveted position among lower classes because it requires relatively little healthcare education or background; often, the only requirements are residency in the neighborhood served and demonstration of leadership skills. Although most administrators are reluctant to admit that their agencies hire people because of their political connections, they are quick to point out that their predecessors did so (Meneses 2004). One high-ranking health administrator in Brasília reported that patronage was such a pervasive and engrained part of the local political culture that, upon announcing the resumption of the PSF program, he received more than a thousand personal requests from politically connected individuals for jobs associated with the program (Meneses 2004). The administration of Joaquim Roriz in Brasília was especially notorious for irregularities related to the PSF, as investigations into widespread corruption and the misuse of funds were unveiled (Bisol 2004).

Despite some of the electoral benefits that Bolsa Escola or PSF entail, there is far greater evidence to suggest that mayors and their staffs did not seek to replicate these programs because of self-interested calculi for

9. Poverty rates in 2000 were 14.17 percent in Belo Horizonte; 16.07 percent, Brasília; 30.70 percent, Salvador; and 12.06 percent, São Paulo. The poverty line is defined as half a monthly minimum salary per capita; in August 2000 that was R$75.50 or US$41.53 (Ipeadata Web site).

electoral gains. For instance, politicians in this study never considered the programs' responses to citizen demand. Although Bolsa Escola received widespread media coverage, none of the cities had citizen groups that demanded that candidates or incumbent mayors adopt Bolsa Escola. In addition, citizen delegates who served on local health councils rarely advocated for the introduction of PSF; if anything, they were resistant to the program and wary it would not result in improved services. The poor and most vulnerable populations served by PSF were unfamiliar with the program, and they still viewed clinics and hospitals—not PSF health teams—as appropriate places to go to for health-care needs. City officials who would adopt PSF often had to persuade citizens and local health councils that the program would be an improvement. Thus, the adoption of Bolsa Escola and PSF often took place in the absence of electoral demand.

In fact, mayors' decisions to adopt the social policies often entailed political risk that made electoral payoffs far from ensured, even when technocrats were confident in the benefits flowing from these programs. The uncertainties were especially high for administrations that decided to replicate the programs soon after the innovations garnered attention. For example, Bolsa Escola may increase school attendance, but because it incorporated previously marginalized and failing students into the system, other performance indicators could have declined. The complications were even greater for those administrations that adopted PSF; doing so required a reorganization of health services, updating of facilities, new trainings, and the formulation of new relationships with patients (Ministry of Health 1997). For many cities, adoption of PSF also involved assuming responsibility for services that were previously in the hands of state governments. Even after several years, technocrats would often report that they had not yet reached their operational goals because of difficulties related to recruiting, training, and retaining personnel (Turci 2004). Despite the risks of policy failure, both Célio Castro in Belo Horizonte and Lídice da Mata in Salvador signed on to Bolsa Escola very early on; in São Paulo, Suplicy also committed to PSF, even though few other cities with a comparable health network had chosen to do so.

In summary, a political incentives approach provides a deficient explanation for understanding social policy diffusion. These cities had competitive municipal elections with hotly contested campaigns, but political competition did not drive the selection of the public policies and the speed at which policy replication occurred. Mayors adopted these policies when there was little demand, even knowing that there was a chance the policies could fail to provide positive results by the next election.

Because the political incentives approach cannot convincingly explain diffusion, we need to turn to other motivational explanations. If conventional rational-choice explanations cannot account for the diffusion of social programs, what role, if any, does ideology play in motivating indi-

viduals into action? Did policy innovations spread across cities governed by mayors on both the left and the right? Or do only individuals with certain ideological commitments feel compelled to adopt programs such as Bolsa Escola and PSF? Do political actors make decisions to implement programs because they are strongly motivated by their ideological beliefs, even when these choices appear politically inexpedient or irrational?

## Ideology

Leading observers of Brazilian politics argue that its political parties tend to fall along a left-to-right ideological continuum (Coppedge 1996; Mainwaring 1999). The qualitative evidence from the case studies suggests that mayors exhibit strong ideological tendencies, are bound by their ideological beliefs, and select policies that are in line with their convictions. In many instances, political actors' decision making is driven by their worldview and determination to address social ills. Bolsa Escola, Renda Mínima, and PSF are rarely, if ever, treated as ideologically neutral policies; actors' commitments thus shaped their decisions on whether to import these policies.

Traditional ideological divides between the left and the right had a particularly strong impact on the adoption of the Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima programs. Politicians to the left of center—the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT), the Brazilian Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Brasileiro, PSB), and the Party of Brazilian Social Democracy (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira, PSBD)—tended to emphasize social programs in their campaigns and policy making. Elected officials revealed a dramatically consistent framing of ideological objectives and values when prioritizing issues and selecting public policies. Nearly every politician and technocrat from the PT, for instance, discussed his or her policy choices in terms of promoting social rights, governmental responsibilities, and the need to invert spending to prioritize the poorest sectors of the population.

For many actors ideologically to the left, Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima represented a profound transformation in the relationship between the state and citizens. In their analysis, public assistance programs had historically reflected traditional clientelist approaches to social assistance. These programs were often administered by the wives of mayors, who took them on as part of their charitable first-lady obligations, regardless of whether they had professional credentials in the field. Thus, critics on the left argued that municipal-run programs that offered handouts, such as electronic appliances or baby clothes, were more often than not vehicles for vote buying. Moreover, they also failed to address the causes of poverty. In contrast, advocates of Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima argued that their program would give children a chance to get out of poverty and

empower mothers to decide how to spend the grant. Bolsa Escola program coordinators displayed a remarkable convergence of ideological discourse around these general themes (Leitão 2004; Pacheco 2004; Paixão 2003). They also expressed a desire to address social exclusion and a belief that education was an important component of citizenship. When politicians discussed why they had chosen to adopt a school grant program, they all cited problems like social inequality and the need to address the social deficit (Buarque 2004; Mata 2004).

Cities governed by rightist executives, on the other hand, took a very different approach and mostly ignored Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima proposals. In general, right-of-center mayors emphasized policies that encouraged business interests or market competition and enacted policies that were framed along these conservative rationales. Unlike their left-of-center opponents, conservatives' political campaigns often highlighted and prioritized their progress in non-social policy arenas. For these reasons, Mayor Antônio Imbassahy's senior staff acknowledged that social policy was not a political or budgetary priority of his administration (Araújo 2004). In campaigns for reelection, for instance, Imbassahy in Salvador emphasized his administration's accomplishments in infrastructure projects, while Governor Joaquim Roriz in Brasília highlighted the construction of an award-winning bridge.

The different discourse of actors on the left and right could be easily dismissed as a rhetorical device, were it not for the fact that left-of-center politicians were consistent in their follow-through and implementation of social programs. In the four case studies, Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima were adopted by left and left-of-center politicians: Brasília under Buarque (PT), Belo Horizonte under Célio Castro (PSB), São Paulo under Marta Suplicy (PT), and Salvador under Lídice da Mata (PSDB). When these left-leaning mayors lost their bids for reelection, several successors on the right and center-right dismantled the programs. For instance, in Salvador, Mayor Imbassahy (PFL) simply dissolved Renda Mínima, and in Brasília, Roriz (PMDB) suspended new enrollment in Bolsa Escola and declared the program a policy failure.

Some politicians were so committed to the ideals behind Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima that they implemented and defended the programs in ways that perplexed even their own allies. Longtime advisers to Governor Cristovam Buarque and Mayor Lídice da Mata admitted that they could not logically explain the actions taken by their candidates. For instance, Da Mata implemented Renda Mínima in her last year of office, even though it was clear she would lose her bid for reelection and understood that her successor would most likely dismantle the program once his term began. Da Mata also faced criticism from her supporters and inner circle of confidants, who argued that Renda Mínima was feasible only for cities flush with resources. They argued that Salvador faced too many deficits

for this type of specialized effort (Bandeira 2004). Even so, Da Mata went ahead out of principle because she was personally committed to the goals of the program (Mata 2004). Buarque also deviated from instrumental political rationality in a way that could only be understood as grounded in his ideological commitments. During his campaign for reelection in 1998, he consistently told his audiences that the social programs enacted during his administration were part of the state's obligations and constituted their social rights. Accordingly, he told beneficiaries of programs like Bolsa Escola that they did not owe him their votes and should feel free to vote for whomever they wished (Aguiar 2003; Buarque 2004). The Buarque campaign staff admitted that his ideological speeches confused voters and contributed to his electoral defeat (Aguiar 2003). These examples of seemingly irrational decision making by Da Mata and Buarque confirm the hypotheses that some politicians are indeed driven by their own deeply held values and will make decisions that go against their own political self-interest.

Unlike Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima, which achieved early and consistent acceptance among left-leaning officials, PSF required a longer period of debate for political leaders to assess whether the program was consistent with their ideological commitments. Initially, PSF encountered resistance from health policy specialists who were ideologically on the far left and self-identified as part of the decades-old Movimento Sanitário (Public Health Movement). *Sanitaristas* had long advocated for a unified health system (Sistema Único de Saúde) that would provide universal rights to health care (Escorel 1999). Their first reaction to PSF was that it was a "poor policy for the poor," representing selective primary care rather than universal primary care for all.[10] In this vein, some advocates believed that PSF was a neoliberal policy (Junkeira 2003). However, over time, many staunch leftist policy makers were won over by demonstrations of PSF from cities in the Northeast and became convinced that the program was compatible with their ideological commitments to provide broad social citizenship (Andrade 2004; Sousa 2003). Many left and center-left mayors also found that PSF's goals, including working directly with patients in the community and expanding access to primary health care, were consistent with their socially progressive agenda for social inclusion. In three of the four cities, PSF was introduced during left-of-center administrations, including those of Buarque (PT) in Brasília, Castro (PSB) in Belo Horizonte, and Suplicy (PT) in São Paulo. As with Bolsa Escola, left-leaning politicians and staff members who implemented PSF shared similar beliefs and values around citizenship, an emphasis on the need for progressive social policies, and a desire to address social inequality.

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10. For more on historic public health debates over universal primary health versus selective primary health, see Cueto (2004).

Ideology is crucial for explaining the pattern of social policy diffusion. Decision making on Bolsa Escola and PSF clearly reflected politicians' ideological tendencies.[11] Mayors affiliated with left-of-center parties were much more likely to adopt these policies. In fact, no politician to the right of center adopted Bolsa Escola or Renda Mínima, and most of the mayors who instituted PSF also hailed from the left-wing parties. Interestingly, these decisions occurred in the absence of partisan directives, as political parties rarely, if ever, pressured politicians to implement the programs.

Although ideology helps explain a great deal about what motivates politicians to adopt programs such as Bolsa Escola and PSF, this line of reasoning alone leaves some important issues unanswered. Initially, some leftist policy makers disliked PSF, yet it eventually convinced them. How is it that people interpret PSF differently over time? Most important, ideology cannot tell us how the ideologically predisposed politicians came to learn about the new models. To address these issues, I now turn to the role of socialized learning through social networks.

## Social Networks

How do informal or professional networks influence individuals and thus affect the likelihood that policies such as Bolsa Escola and PSF will diffuse? In what ways do social networks structure meaning and define human behavior, if at all? Brazil is home to a rich and dense set of civil society organizations and social networks (Costa and Visconti 2001; Encarnación 2003). According to the Ministry of Justice's (2005) Web site, there are nearly two thousand public interest organizations (*organizações da sociedade civil de interesse público*). The federal constitution guarantees civil society participation in the formulation of public policies related to education and health; not surprisingly, there are numerous nongovernmental organizations that seek to shape policy debates by producing their own policy analysis or by working directly with citizens who participate in local councils.

The health arena has seen particularly robust civil society activity, which dates back to the mobilization efforts of the Movimento Sanitário during the 1970s and 1980s. The movement to expand health coverage and promote community health care has had effects that are still felt today. The sanitaristas promoted the development of university public health programs across Brazil, sent doctors into the country's interior, published public health journals, promoted universal health-care rights, and advocated for wider civic participation in policy making through decentralization (Cohn 1989; Escorel 1999; Mello 1977). Although the movement has

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11. This behavior confirms Mullins's (1972, 508) thesis that ideology plays an important role in policy makers' evaluation of policies and programs.

dissipated as a single entity, its legacy remains in the numerous health-care organizations and professional associations it helped establish. Given the vast civic and associational life in the health arena, it is not surprising that the introduction of PSF would garner considerable attention and spark serious debate. Two associations created by the Movimento Sanitário, Associação Brasileira de Pós-Graduação em Saúde Coletiva (ABRASCO) and Centro Brasileiro de Estudos de Saúde (CEBES),[12] have been at the forefront of the debate regarding the program's quality.

Health professionals in Brazilian municipalities had numerous and ongoing opportunities to assess PSF because of the sector's many organizations and professional associations. Policy professionals had access to official publications from the Ministry of Health, but more often they turned to other sources for the latest information in their field. For example, PSF administrators consistently identified ABRASCO and Conselho Nacional de Secretários Municipais de Saúde (CONASEMS) as important associations and cited the journal *Saúde em Debate,* published by CEBES, as a key reference.[13] The CEBES publication served as a forum for debate on the programs, and included critiques and case studies from the Northeast in which authors detailed the merits of PSF. CONASEMS's annual meetings also became an important meeting ground for local health officials. When PSF was first introduced in the mid-1990s, most members were skeptical of the program. Yet within ten years, most of the participants reported that they had adopted PSF. ABRASCO conferences had a similar effect in academic circles.

What brought about the turnaround of opinion about PSF? First, the organizations effectively brought together individuals from across the country and provided a forum for PSF enthusiasts to advocate for the program. The regional diversity of professionals was crucial because so many proponents were from the Northeast and might have otherwise been shut out of policy debates, professionals from the Southeast typically dominated (Andrade 2004). Second, the health sector and its professional associations united specialists from different partisan affiliations, many of whom were willing to work across partisan lines. A notable example of such collaboration applies to two leading figures in the medical profession, former minister Adib Jatene and David Capistrano Jr.; both men worked for administrations with different ideological profiles, yet they

12. ABRASCO is a membership organization for postgraduates in public health that includes academics and government officials. CEBES is a public health organization with roots in the Movimento Sanitário. Its membership includes health-care professionals both within and outside of government (Fleury, Bahia, and Amarante 2007).

13. CONASEMS is a national association of municipal health secretaries; the association publishes research and organizes national and regional meetings.

partnered to promote a pilot PSF program in São Paulo.[14] This partnership was highly influential, as Jatene drew on his extensive network in the specialized medical field and Capistrano tapped his network of leftist public health officials. Last, several high-profile administrators began to show that PSF need not be "a poor program for the poor." Several cities in the Northeast began showcasing how PSF could be an all-encompassing strategy for basic health services. In these ways, professional associations connected individuals, filtered information to their members, and shaped those members' views and professional norms.

Given the rich and overlapping networks associated with health policy, it is not surprising that administrators offered sophisticated and consistent analyses for why they wanted to adopt PSF. Technocrats frequently invoked similar explanations for the benefits of the program, including a belief that Brazil should focus on preventive medicine, a determination to engage directly with communities, and the conviction that preventive medicine should move away from doctor-centric models. Although a few policy makers expressed skepticism about the program's applicability to their cities and even discussed the ways they tried to block the program, they acknowledged that in ten years the PSF model had become the professional norm in their field (Franco 2004; Santos 2004). This helps explain why cities like Salvador and Belo Horizonte eventually adopted PSF. In Salvador, city health administrators acknowledged with some discomfort that they were relatively late in adopting PSF and that several nearby cities were ahead of them in implementing model programs. The sheer density of health-care associations and their ability to shape professional norms help to explain the phenomenal spread of PSF across the country.

Unlike the health policy arena, the education sector in Brazil has a sparser set of nongovernmental organizations, and none of the established educational organizations specifically advocated for Bolsa Escola.[15] This was in part because traditional corporatist interests, through teachers' unions, have dominated the sector. Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima were most heavily promoted by generalist policy organizations. The program in Brasília was an early recipient of a good governance award from the Programa Gestão Pública e Cidadania (Public Management and Citizenship Program) created by the prestigious Fundação Getúlio Vargas, which

14. Adib Jatene, a prominent cardiologist, has worked in various administrative public health positions, first serving as state secretary of health under Governor Paulo Maluf during the military regime. Later he accepted the position of minister of health under Presidents Fernando Collor do Mello (PRN) and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (PSDB). David Capistrano Jr. was firmly entrenched in the leftist Movimento Sanitário and served as mayor of Santos (PT).

15. Rather than work with an existing educational association, Buarque established the organization Missão Criança to promote Bolsa Escola in Brazil and worldwide.

provided broad coverage on Bolsa Escola and distributed information on the program's benefits. The Brazil field office of the international organization UNESCO also produced evaluations and was an early enthusiast of the program. By funding the first evaluation of Bolsa Escola, UNESCO introduced the program to policy professionals in the national and international arenas (Jacobo Waiselfisz, Abramovay, and Andrade 1998). A few other domestic and international organizations followed suit and produced policy papers on Bolsa Escola (Bava et al. 1999; Lavinas, Barbosa, and Tourinho 2001; Lobato and Urani 1998; Vawda n.d.).

Despite early enthusiasm among economists and policy researchers, Bolsa Escola never achieved broad consensus among education specialists as a standard model for improving access to primary and secondary education (Cunha 2004; Souza 2004). Thus, policy makers who learned about Bolsa Escola or Renda Mínima did so in more accidental ways, ranging from conferences to media reports. They rarely claimed that they were members of the same professional associations or that they had learned from the same sources, and high-level administrators acknowledged that they had little previous knowledge of the program before they were charged with its implementation. The absence of education networks that would socialize sector specialists also explains the slower pace of municipal Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima diffusion across Brazil than that of PSF.

Although formal networks and their relative densities tell us a great deal about professional socialization, it is also important to acknowledge the ways in which informal networks provided individual policy makers with wide-ranging connections and convinced them to initiate change. Oftentimes the informal networks developed in highly personal or capricious ways. For instance, when technical staff at the Ministry of Health wanted to promote PSF, they strategically identified influential staff members in different cities and invited them to visit a model city or sister city with the program. It was their belief that once visitors saw how effective the program was, they would be motivated to adopt the program in their own hometowns and would advocate for it with their supervisors (Sousa 2003). This type of firsthand experience was certainly crucial for São Paulo's Secretary of Health Eduardo Jorge Martins Alves, who credits his enthusiasm for the program on having seen PSF firsthand in the Northeast as a member of Congress (Martins Alves 2004). Mayor da Mata decided to implement a Renda Mínima program after hearing the mayor of Campinas, a friend of hers, describe his city's program at a conference (Mata 2004). Belo Horizonte's city councillor Rogério Correia proposed a Bolsa Escola program in 1996, when he learned about the program, and invited Brasília's governor to testify about it before the city council (Correia 2004). In all cases, either elected officials or staff who proposed the adoption of Bolsa Escola or PSF said that they learned about the programs from colleagues

and believed that they reflected new developments in their fields. Given that Bolsa Escola did not penetrate formal education networks, it was the informal networks that especially mattered in the socialization of actors.

In summary, social and professional networks, both formal and informal, play an important role in transmitting ideas and shaping new norms. When individuals are socialized to believe that a particular policy represents the model in their field, they are especially eager to adopt a similar approach, lest they fall behind their peers. This dynamic was particularly true for the family health program, which the densely organized health networks embraced. The relatively slow pace of municipal Bolsa Escola diffusion and its susceptibility to policy reversal can be explained in part by the weaker socialization process through professional networks. Interviews with Brazilian policy makers in all four cities revealed that social and professional networks prompted individuals to influence the policy agenda by proposing new programs. Networks thus are a necessary condition for policy diffusion to occur.

### Ideology and Social Networks as Mutually Reinforcing

The case studies show that both ideology and social networks play important roles in the diffusion of social policies across Brazil. When policies conflicted with individuals' deeply held ideological beliefs, those individuals resisted pressures or other inducements to adopt innovative policies. Policy makers who disagreed with either Bolsa Escola or PSF for ideological reasons ignored the programs, rejected them, or reversed their predecessors' programs. Conversely, when individuals were deeply committed to enacting programs that reflected their ideological beliefs, they went out of their way to implement them, even when it did not appear politically rational for them to do so. In a similar vein, the evidence showed that socialized norms through professional associations could stimulate diffusion, as people sought to demonstrate to their peers that they were following the latest trends. The form that social networks take on is crucially important. Socialization through informal network contacts can still spur diffusion. However, as the example of PSF shows, the denser and more sophisticated the network is, the more likely it is that individuals will be convinced and motivated to replicate programs from elsewhere. Both social networks and ideology were relevant for understanding social policy diffusion because together they affected numerous political actors who decided whether to replicate innovative policies. Some actors were swayed by their ideological commitments, whereas others were motivated to enact policies from elsewhere because of their desires to demonstrate that they kept up with the field's professional norms.

In rare instances, the two motivational factors overlapped and influenced each other; the case of PSF best illustrates this point. Many leftists

in the health sector who were committed to universal health care were initially skeptical of PSF and resisted it on ideological grounds. Their early opposition to the program would have been sufficient to retard the spread of PSF. However, the dense professional networks created avenues for debate, and many skeptics were effectively swayed by demonstrations that PSF could be adopted universally. Thus, their objection to PSF as a "poor program for the poor" was alleviated (Andrade 2004; Machado 2003). It is not that ideology ceased to be important for these actors. Rather, their understanding and interpretation of the program changed through their socialization in professional networks. This type of overlapping effect is absent in the case of Bolsa Escola because the education sector had a comparatively weak professional network that did not socialize individuals with different ideological persuasions.

CONCLUSION

When the Brazilian government decentralized and transferred social policy-making authority to local governments, it ushered in a new era of political decision making. Brazil, like other federal countries with decentralized systems, was to experience significant policy diffusion. Some of the unique features of Brazil's diffusion are that it has taken place across thousands of municipal governments and that the trends for program replication have occurred in a country marked more by its contrasts than by its similarities. That a megacity such as São Paulo with elaborate health networks would adopt a health-care model that owes its origin to poor, small cities in the rural Northeast is indeed remarkable. Similarly, it is surprising that a city like Salvador, with high poverty rates and poor educational infrastructure, would implement a school-grant program developed for wealthy cities with some of the highest rates of human development (Martins and Libânio 2005). The spread of the same policy models across such diverse settings is indeed puzzling and worthy of explanation.

Although the existing literature on diffusion provides a valuable starting point for understanding recent developments in Brazil, most research has under-specified the motivational factors that drive politicians to emulate innovative policies. This article's main contribution is that it integrates previous understandings of diffusion with a new conceptual framework that focuses on individuals' motivations to replicate policy models developed in other settings. Through qualitative research and process tracing, it is possible to identify how political incentives, ideology, and social networks affect the decision-making process. By exploring contrasting motivations for political action, this article has assessed three theoretical approaches that are often examined in isolation from one another.

Among the most surprising findings is that the conventional political incentives approach, which assumes rationality and emphasizes individ-

uals' pursuit of their political or economic self-interest, fails to explain social policy diffusion in Brazil. Fiscal incentives did not explain the pattern of adoption; politicians instituted Bolsa Escola even without resources from the federal government and rejected PSF even when there were federal inducements to replicate it. Nor did the quest for political gains drive politicians' choices. Many early adopters of the models embraced the programs even though their results were far from clear.

The central theoretical finding of this study is that ideology and socialized norms drove individuals' decision making and desires to replicate new policy models in Brazil. Local elected executives often made choices based on their own ideological commitments and deeply held beliefs. Politicians to the left of center were much more likely to adopt Bolsa Escola and PSF because they viewed the programs as addressing a social deficit and as providing constituents with their full citizenship rights. In many cases, politicians were so driven by their own ideological beliefs and commitments that their choices even defied their own political self-interests. Technocrats and politicians with strong professional ties, on the other hand, consistently cited their profession's norms and their commitment to following the latest trends and models. The speed and extent of policy diffusion are tied to the density of professional networks. The PSF model spread quickly because the health sector has dense networks of formal professional associations, which helped shape experts' desire to keep up with new professional norms. In a few cases, networks also helped actors reconcile perceived differences between ideological convictions and new professional norms. The education sector, in contrast, has fewer formal organizations, which explains the relatively slow pace of Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima diffusion. Although informal networks played a role, their effects were more idiosyncratic and weaker than those produced through formal professionalizing channels.

The findings presented in this article draw on in-depth interviews and process tracing to identify the causal mechanisms that led to social policy diffusion. A companion piece statistically tests the impact of political competition, ideology, and networks on social policy emulation; an event history analysis includes more than two hundred cities over an eight-year period. Although the analysis entails a larger number of cases and relies on a different type of methodology, the relationships identified here hold across the board (Sugiyama 2008). That both standard statistical methods and qualitative methods identify the same motivational factors for emulation decisions suggests that the account here is generalizable.

This study also has important implications for those concerned with the practice of social policy development in Brazil's local governments. Having compared two policy arenas of central concern to local governments, we see that the motivations that drive policy emulation can result in different outcomes. Not only did policies diffuse at different rates, but

the likelihood that a policy experienced longevity differed as well. When ideology was the predominant motivation for policy makers, as was the case with Bolsa Escola and Renda Mínima, the programs were much more vulnerable to policy reversal once there was a turnover in government. This contrasts significantly with programs that are defined as the new professional standard, which diffused more rapidly and were much more likely to remain in place once implemented. If we consider good governance practices to be those that encompass some measure of policy regularity across administrations, then there is reason to believe that the existence of a professional society really does matter. By investing in social networks that can cross ideological divides and socialize individuals into shared professional norms, advocates of social policy innovation can go far to promote diffusion.

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