

the rooibos fields, Ives attempts to convince the reader that Coloured workers possess their own potent form of kinship with the plant. But Ives's contention is not in harmony with the voices of many Coloured workers who resist a nature-bound logic of belonging in favour of a neoliberal form of citizenship. At times, Ives risks imposing a fetishised indigenism on Coloured people, who resist association with the Khoisan out of fear of being locked in a primitive past. Ives's challenge, to be sure, is a feature of what she acknowledges to be the "culturally and politically fraught" (34) nature of Coloured identity in South Africa.

Still, *Steeped in Heritage* is a resounding, engaging and successful ethnography of difference in the time of steepened climate change and uncertain racial futures across Africa.

## References

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**Cookson, Tara Patricia**, *Unjust Conditions: Women's Work and the Hidden Cost of Cash Transfer Programs*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2018, 204 pages.

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Tara Patricia Cookson's institutional ethnography of a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program in Peru called *Juntos* (Together) is a nuanced analysis of a widely implemented and evaluated approach to poverty reduction. Like similar CCT programs operating in 67 countries in 2017, *Juntos* gives poor households small cash incentives to use targeted government services. Such programs generally select mothers as recipients, because they are seen as primary caregivers who are more likely than men to invest cash in the household.

The book draws on fieldwork from 2012 to 2013, first with urban bureaucrats in Lima and later in the highland areas of rural Cajamarca, located in northern Peru. This is one of the country's five poorest regions, with a large population of indigenous descendants who self-define as *campesinos* (peasant farmers) and with profound inequities in health care and education. *Juntos* emerged in the wake of trailblazing CCT programs developed in Mexico and Brazil in the 1990s. CCT programs are supported by international development agencies like the World Bank, where they are seen to improve health outcomes and socio-economic indicators at the household scale. Cookson draws attention to what is not considered in CCT program evaluations: the quality of services provided and the demands made of recipients.

While mainstream quantitative research finds conditional cash transfers both effective and efficient for increasing household consumption of health and education services, Cookson emphasises the blind spots in this literature. She asks many questions. Should efficacy be attributed to conditionality, or might other elements of program design (such as increased household income or complementary health and nutrition

training) be more important? Can positive economic impacts in one country be expected to be produced in another? What do we know about sustained impacts and long-term outcomes? It is not enough to measure quantitative changes by themselves, she argues. It is important to also consider the program's negative impacts and unexpected consequences.

The book develops two arguments: first, that CCT programs frame poverty as a result of the irresponsible behaviour of individuals, which excludes political-economic drivers beyond the household; second, that the coercive power of incentives in conditional aid produces hidden costs borne by poor recipients who experience unjust outcomes. Unintended effects go unacknowledged in program evaluations, as few researchers look for them.

The conceptual tools of care and power ground the analysis. Women fill in the gaps left by inadequate public services with unpaid household and community care work. Development programs that depend on the unpaid work of women to be efficient reinforce rather than ameliorate the gendered face of poverty. The regulation (or disciplining) of behaviour by the state is achieved through monitoring rural mothers to ensure conditions are met, and dispensing sanctions when they are not. This creates power-laden relationships between poor mothers and the local managers who enforce the program conditions set by urban bureaucrats.

How Lima-based development experts understand *Juntos* is the focus of Chapter 2. These bureaucrats frame *Juntos* in terms of state obligation to provide basic services for the poorest populations, even as the quality and availability of those services are the responsibility of other government agencies. Access, rather than health and education outcomes, is the key metric of success for *Juntos*. Conditionality is used to manage public anxieties about dependency and deservingness and to make redistribution more acceptable to taxpayers and voters. By targeting the household and casting poverty as the result of individual deficiencies (for example, the failure of poor parents to feed, educate and invest in the health of their children), *Juntos* relieves the state of responsibility to address political-economic conditions that make and keep people poor.

Moving from Lima to the highlands, Chapter 3 turns to the realities of low-quality rural service provision and institutionalised discrimination. Schools contend with chronic staff shortages and inadequate infrastructure and instruction. Health clinics are often closed due to staff absenteeism and turnover compounded by low wages, challenging working conditions and insufficient medical supplies. Moreover, rural women who access these services face considerable raced, classed and gendered discrimination, alongside mundane abuses of power.

"A little bit of help" is how women refer to the cash provided by *Juntos*, recognising that although the money neither covers basic needs nor replaces employment and government services, it has a positive impact on household economies. Recipients are not uncritical; they are active agents aware of the inadequacy of services and ironies of program implementation. Despite stereotypes that poor women fail to use services because of lack of motivation or responsibility, mothers are determined to improve their children's lives. High rates of compliance show that desperately poor families need every little bit of help they can get.

Peru is challenged by uneven development across formidable landscapes, and Chapter 4 shows how women are

incentivised to walk and then wait to access services, a routine that reminds recipients of their lowly social status. Women must also invest their time and labour in “managing up.” They attend meetings convened by the local manager and verify their own files, which record the fulfillment of conditions that render them eligible for cash transfers. Juntos may be effective in increasing rates of health clinic visitation and school attendance, but the program appears efficient only by devaluing recipients’ time and labour.

Chapter 5 addresses additional factors that make Juntos appear efficient: the under- and unpaid labour of front-line managers and Mother Leaders. Each manager oversees about a thousand households, each with a mother and an average of three children. Often having advanced from rural backgrounds to Peru’s new middle class through post-secondary education, managers carry out low-paid contract work that takes them away from their families for weeks on end and forces them to navigate limited transportation and communication networks. Local managers visit clinics and schools to verify that mothers have met conditions, gather and enter handwritten records into centralised computer systems, coordinate with social service staff to ensure that babies have health certificates and children are enrolled in school, implement affiliations and suspensions, advise women when payday and other meetings will take place, and distribute cash delivered by armoured trucks every three months.

Mother Leaders are recruited by local managers to help fill gaps between policy expectations and resource allocation. They identify pregnant mothers, promote public health insurance registration and regular health checkups, ensure that children are enrolled in and regularly attend school, and guide women on meeting their co-responsibilities. In effect, Mother Leaders are asked to monitor their neighbours’ behaviour, often just to the benefit of the local manager, who would otherwise find it impossible to implement Juntos.

Shadow conditions – the tasks Juntos recipients are expected to perform above and beyond officially required program conditions – are the topic of Chapter 6. Local managers use their influence and threats of suspension to compel mothers to tidy their houses, grow gardens, attend meetings, cook school lunches, paint Juntos flags, use smokeless stoves, walk in political parades, attend literacy workshops, participate in cooking fairs, attend hygiene training workshops, organise toothbrushes and soap, build latrines, give birth in health clinics, send children as young as six months to the subsidised national day-care program, and do anything else in an ever-expanding range of arbitrary conditions.

Local managers ultimately determine if a mother receives a cash payment. Without clear information of what the state requires, and lacking an accessible way to file a complaint, women are forced to comply with both official and shadow conditions. These shadow conditions illustrate the coercive power of incentives embedded in CCT programs.

While Cookson shows that Juntos policy-makers and front-line staff work hard to improve health and education outcomes, she also offers sharp criticism. The existence of cash transfers reliant on conditions and the concomitant necessity to monitor this compliance are central features of a program created by a state that simultaneously fails to adequately invest in social and health services and does not want to be seen to hand out money to the poor, unless these unfortunate people have shown

themselves to be hardworking, responsible and deserving of that “little bit of help.” Through Juntos, the Peruvian state shifts responsibility for overcoming poverty onto the poor themselves.

In the end, cash transfers alleviate only some costs of caring for family members. More substantive state investment is needed to improve basic living conditions, and attention must be redirected from individual behaviour to “the persistent inequities that shape people’s broader life conditions” (151). An alternative is unconditional cash transfer programs and a meaningful social safety net. This requires a new distributive politics, one not based on an exchange for labour or good conduct, or an unreciprocated gift, but instead “a rightful allocation due to a rightful owner” (Ferguson 2015 in Cookson 2018, p. 157).

*Unjust Conditions* is a must-read for those interested in the political-economic drivers of poverty, as well as researchers, students and practitioners of development, gender and labour, and governance and social policy who wish to understand CCT from a critical perspective.

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**Millar, Kathleen, *Reclaiming the Discarded: Life and Labor on Rio’s Largest Garbage Dump*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018, 248 pages.**

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Kathleen Millar’s *Reclaiming the Discarded* is an eloquent ethnography about the entanglements of work and life on what was Rio’s largest garbage dump, Jardim Gramacho, told through the life trajectories and labour practices of *catadores*, or garbage sorters, as they artfully wade through layers of discard under the hot Brazilian sun.

This book is an excellent example of what anthropologists do best. Methodologically, it is an ethnography that stands on its own. Millar draws on fieldwork completed between 2005 and 2012 – primarily in 2008 and 2009 – when she worked as a *novato catador*, or novice garbage sorter, on the dump and living in a neighbourhood closest to it. Textually, the book is a beautiful read from start to finish: clear, concise and full of colour and life. Beyond the prose, the narrative itself shines, as Millar clearly formed deep and meaningful relationships with *catadores* and the people living around Jardim Gramacho.

Chapter 1 launches the reader into one of the important theoretical contributions of the book. Millar walks the reader through what she refers to as her “first day-as-catador” (which was not her first day sorting garbage). Her battle with emotional and physical exhaustion, and her frustration with the materials, an injury and then a rain shower, provide cause for her fellow *catadores* to laugh and welcome her to the trade. Only when nearing the point of quitting does she begin to see labour as an ontological experience (53) where work, life and death are ever-present in the daily rhythms of labouring bodies. The narrative serves as an excellent hook, capturing the audience with its portrayal of life on the dump. Particularly impressive is the way Millar escapes a victimising narrative so commonly