

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*Changes, Continuities, and Gender Norms:  
Exploring the Household Division of Labour in Medellín, Colombia*

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## Declaration

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## Abstract

The thesis explores how gender norms change in the context of Medellín, Colombia. It focuses on why men's participation in unpaid household responsibilities appears resistant to change despite women's increasing involvement in paid work. Based on 16 months of fieldwork, it critically examines the World Values Survey (WVS), commonly used to measure social norms by aggregating individual gender attitudes. The thesis argues that the design of the WVS, influenced by theories assuming linear development towards gender equality, oversimplifies the complexities of gender norm change.

Using a multilevel feminist institutionalist framework, the research reveals that gender transformations have resulted in the co-existence of normative models, with more varied alternatives in Medellín's society in flux, rather than straightforward and rapid shifts from old to new norms. A nested mixed-methods approach follows WVS variables across three levels of analysis (micro, meso, and macro), combining locally driven household surveys, qualitative interviews with survey respondents, and participant observation, to uncover the varied interpretations and responses to gender norms among socially situated actors. This approach challenges the presumed consensus reflected in survey data, revealing ambiguities and multiple meanings in how gender norms are understood and negotiated.

Through its core focus, the thesis emphasises the potential of individuals and marginalised groups to transform gender norms, while also recognising the constraints these norms impose on their actions and strategies for change. This creates a tension in what forms of change are possible, highlighting both the agency and the limits of those working to shift deep-seated gender norms. The thesis further investigates men's changing roles and the contextual factors, such as violence and informality, that shape trajectories of stability and change. It offers an intergenerational perspective that moves beyond traditional intra-household bargaining frameworks, providing a nuanced understanding of how gender norms are reproduced and contested in everyday life amidst rapid urbanisation and economic liberalisation.

By linking micro-level interactions and negotiations within the family and community to meso-level changing institutions and gender norms at the macro-level, the thesis reconsiders gender norm change as a dynamic process filled with ambiguity and diversity. It underscores the need for context-specific interpretations of research tools like the WVS, informed by local realities and perspectives. It raises caution about carrying out cross-national comparisons based on these tools. These findings contribute to debates on rising female labour force participation in Latin America and the malleability of gender norms, attitudes, and social expectations at critical junctures.

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## List of Abbreviations

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| DANE   | National Administrative Department of Statistics       |
| KEI    | Knowledge Exchange and Impact                          |
| OECD   | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| SIGI   | Social Institutions & Gender Index                     |
| UN     | United Nations   |
| UNDP   | The United Nations Development Programme               |
| UTRASD | The union of Afro-Colombian domestic workers           |
| WVS    | World Values Survey                                    |

## Translations

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Alcahuete; alcahuetería</i>              | Being too lenient; leniency   |
| <i>Aguapanela</i>                           | Sugar cane juice  |
| <i>Ama de casa</i>                          | Housewife   |
| <i>Antioquia</i>                            | The department where Medellín is located, in the central northwest zone of Colombia.  |
| <i>Arepa</i>                                | A flatbread made of ground maize dough or cooked flour prominent in the cuisine of Colombia and Venezuela.                                    |
| <i>Barrio</i>                               | Neighbourhood   |
| <i>Comuna</i>                               | Urban district  |
| <i>Contratos de prestación de servicios</i> | Service provision contracts   |
| <i>Despachar al marido</i>                  | ‘Sending off’ the husband for his workday with breakfast, coffee and lunch  |
| <i>Doce de Octubre</i>                      | Twelve of October, name of the district where the study is located  |
| <i>Encerrada</i>                            | ‘Locked up’, refers to women who are or were confined to the home   |
| <i>Estrato</i>                              | Socio-economic stratum, from 1 to 6, according to the Colombian SISBEN system   |
| <i>Hacienda</i>                             | Large, landed estate  |
| <i>La casa/calle</i>                        | The house/the street  |
| <i>Madres comunitarias</i>                  | Community mothers: daycare workers  |
| <i>Matrona</i>                              | Woman in charge of the household  |
| <i>Mestizo</i>                              | People of mixed ancestry, usually white European and indigenous background  |
| <i>Minifundios</i>                          | Agricultural smallholdings  |
| <i>Paisa</i>                                | People from Antioquia, where Medellín is located.   |
| <i>Popular</i>                              | Designates working-class and lower-income sectors of the city’s periphery, which also corresponds to the city’s and country’s social majority |
| <i>Rebusque</i>                             | Casual informal worker, the daily scramble to make a living   |
| <i>Sancocho</i>                             | Traditional stew of meat, vegetables potatoes, plantains, and yuca, and broth, typical in Antioquia   |
| <i>Trabajo diario</i>                       | Day-to-day informal work to make a living   |
| <i>Vacunas</i>                              | Literally ‘vaccine’, refers to extortionate payments made to criminal actors.   |
| <i>La Violencia</i>                         | The Violence period of Colombian history 1948-1958  |

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The main objective of this dissertation is to explore changes and continuities in the gender norms that govern the household division of labour between paid economic activity and unpaid domestic and care work. More specifically, it focuses on changes in the gender division of labour in urban Colombia as more women have joined the labour force, and the apparent resistance to change in the gender division of unpaid work at home, where male involvement remains largely unchanged, and women continue to take on a disproportionate share of the work.

A second objective is to assess what different methodologies can tell us about changes and continuities in gender norms. The dissertation examines the assumptions that underpin the World Values Survey (WVS), the main source of data for studies on gender norms at international levels, and what it suggests about these norms in the Colombian context. It then draws on primary quantitative and qualitative data collected in low-income neighborhoods in Medellín, Colombia's second city, to offer a more grounded empirical analysis of how men and women from different generations explain why the rise in female labor force participation was not accompanied by significant changes in the gender division of unpaid domestic work.

To address these overarching objectives central to understanding gender norms transformation and measurement, the PhD thesis aims to answer two main research questions. First, it asks *how gender norms change happens*, focusing on gender norms governing the household division of paid and unpaid labour in urban Colombia since the mid-twentieth century. Secondly, it examines *how to study this change*, by assessing what different methodologies reveal about gender norms at different levels of analysis. In this chapter, I spell out the rationale that gave rise to these research objectives and provide a road map to the rest of the analysis.

### 1.1 Research questions and aims

To illustrate the uneven character of change in urban Colombia, I turn to the words of Gina,<sup>1</sup> a 28-year-old single mother from Medellín:

*Well, I think that a lot has changed, the world in general, in part we owe a lot to the issue of feminism, to all of women's demands that have allowed us many more things and also all the individual struggles that we have every day... so of course a lot has changed, my life cannot*

---

<sup>1</sup> All names have been anonymised.

*be compared in any way with that of my grandmother. However, I feel that we have lost some things but have acquired others. With my partner, we never agreed that he had to provide for me or protect me. We are both providers, that has changed a lot, but sometimes I feel that it also works against us because often caregiving continues to be ours. So we have also been given the burden to be providers but without losing the responsibility of being caregivers.*

Gina's astute reflection encapsulates some of the themes covered in this thesis related to the ways gender norms are rethought in society and the intimate sphere of the household, the role of individual and collective agency in shaping family practices, questions about intergenerational continuity and change, how power is reconfigured, and how normative boundaries are revised in the context of contemporary urban development challenges shaped by inequality, violence, and insecurity.

This PhD thesis investigates an aspect of gender relations that appears resistant to change, namely men's limited involvement in unpaid family responsibilities in the context of rising female employment. This asymmetry is widespread worldwide. Despite variations in women's economic participation across countries, the division of unpaid work appears remarkably persistent: most of it continues to be performed by women - whether for their own families, relatives, or as paid domestic workers. The gender division of paid work seems to have allowed for more flexibility in gender norms, whereas gender norms around men's unpaid responsibilities appear more resistant to change. In this project, I investigate these changes and continuities to understand better how gender norms change happens. This requires specifying what change consists of and what research tools permit to study it.

Gender and development scholars have long identified the role of unequal social norms in contributing to gender inequalities in households and societies. More recently, since the 2010s, transforming unjust gender norms to achieve gender justice has emerged as a prime concern for policymaking and development practice. International development institutions, including the World Bank, UN Women or the OECD, are developing approaches to address gender norms in their strategic planning and are designing indices for globally comparable databases on discriminatory norms.

However, our understanding of what gender norms are, how they change, and why some might be more resistant to change needs improvement. Current research and theories are not able to account for the differential pace of change in gender norms related to paid and unpaid work. This is partly because social norms are difficult to identify, measure, and quantify. In this thesis, alongside exploring how norms change happens, I interrogate what methods lend themselves to understanding normative continuity, change, and resistance; with the aim of advancing the methodological and conceptual tools to understand normative change.

## 1.2 Critique of the World Values Survey

The dissertation critically reflects on recent methodological approaches to researching gender norms and underpinning theories of change, focusing on the assumptions and meanings embedded within these research tools and their use. With growing interest in studying gender norms to redress gender inequalities, researchers and development practitioners have frequently turned to the WVS (Campaña et al., 2021; Seguino, 2007; UNDP, 2020). They often interpret egalitarian gender attitudes reported in the WVS as evidence for egalitarian gender norms, aggregating individual gender attitudes to estimate collective norms and associating these to macro-economic and gender outcomes. These and comparable survey items assessing individual agreement/disagreement with abstract generalised statements about gender roles are the most widely used measures of gender norms in the absence of direct, cross-national measures of social expectations. Although there is recognition that survey items about individual attitudes with agree/disagree response options are imperfect measures for social norms (Cookson et al., 2024; Perezniето, 2015), they continue to be used to produce indicators. Global indices that aim to capture norms, such as the Social Institutions & Gender Index (SIGI) or UNDP's gender social norms index (2020) also draw on WVS questions.

Survey data from the WVS and comparable datasets are commonly used to develop theories about gender norm change and to assess countries' progress towards gender equality. Aggregated individual attitudes are compared to macro-level indicators for a country or geographical region to show how gender attitudes map onto gender outcomes. Statistics from the WVS, such as the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statements, are used to assess evolving trends in gender norms in the past decades, for example a shift towards a transitional state (Ashwin & Isupova, 2018), or evidence of a lack of progress in gender relations (Bussolo et al., 2023; UNDP, 2020). Studies using the WVS have examined, for example, how women's inclusion in economic and political development follows or precedes gender norms change (Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Seguino, 2007) and how more egalitarian gender norms are associated with more egalitarian gender outcomes, such as the gender division of total time worked (Berniell et al., 2023; Campaña et al., 2021).

To address the two research questions, the thesis investigates how gender norms change and what can large-scale survey data such as the WVS tell us about their dynamics of change. It critically reflects on the WVS measures beyond statistical or technical issues, looking more closely at what the data is measuring in relation to gender norms and evaluating the

underlying assumptions in the design of survey questionnaires and the interpretations of the results. The aims are twofold: to study how norms change actually happens, focusing on an urban Latin American context, and to demonstrate how it is more complex than assumed by theories about gender and development that informed the design and intended use of the WVS. These theories assume that economic and political development result in predictable changes in gender norms that support gender equality, based on the experience of advanced industrialised societies.

The analysis highlights several limitations in using the WVS as a research tool to understand gender norms change. These studies rely on individual-level data about gender attitudes, aggregated at the regional or country-level, to infer gender norms change as part of a uniform trajectory of change where individual measures are assumed to reflect higher-level changes. This leaves out the ways gender norms are embedded in institutional contexts and are reproduced or change through social interactions and wider social processes structured by power relations. The high levels of aggregation make it difficult to tease out the pathways by which political and economic development is associated with gender norms change. These theories link individual beliefs and attitudes at the cognitive level and structural change at the macro-level. However, the thesis will argue that there is a need to bridge the gap between these two levels.

Survey data says little about the processes involved. It is also assumed in cross-national comparisons that the WVS statements have the same meanings and implications for gender equality in all contexts and for all groups. Relying on decontextualised and standardised questions, these studies do not pay sufficient attention to how socio-economic realities shaped by history and contextual features may alter how survey respondents interpret the statement. Furthermore, by focusing on attitudes towards women's roles, the WVS only considers change in certain aspects of gender relations, providing an incomplete picture of the asymmetry in changing men's and women's roles.

### 1.3 A multi-level framework

The thesis aims to advance our understanding of gender norms change by theorising and analysing the context and processes through which gender norms are contested or enforced at different levels, rather than relying solely on aggregate indicators of individual gender attitudes. The main idea is that complex processes of gender norms change take place at multiple levels. Complex refers to it being impossible to break down the gender system or

gender norms into their constituent parts to study linear and mechanistic relations between them (Ang, 2023). Like political systems, trees, natural ecosystems, or the human body, something is missed when we look at individual parts of the system without a holistic view of how they operate together. Gender norms, as abstract macro-level structures, do not exist independently of the beliefs and social practices they influence in concrete organisational settings such as households, corporations, or government offices. They depend for their existence on their on-the-ground manifestations (reifications) in social actors' perceptions of what is appropriate and their social practices that follow or defy them. In one direction, social norms influence actions, and social actors may be inclined or feel forced to comply with social norms; in the other direction, social norms emerge through the repetition of social actions over time, and social actions can shift and transform existing norms.

How do we explain enduring feminised care norms (Badgett & Folbre, 1999) or the resilience of female altruism (Brickell & Chant, 2010) despite changing conditions and meanings across time and place? Gender norms, the practices and gender outcomes they give rise to, interact with each other in co-constitutive ways, via positive and negative feedback loops. Whether rising female labour force participation causes a change in gender norms, or whether gender norms must change before increases in female labour force participation, of which one comes first, are misplaced. Change occurs in both directions. This thesis explores the central idea that *change at higher levels of abstraction (i.e., in gender norms) depends on change at lower levels (i.e., in organisations, practices, attitudes, and beliefs), but change in the latter does not necessarily produce a change at the higher level*. In other words, shifts in practices, attitudes and beliefs, and their effects on gendered institutions, do not always lead to shifts in gender norms. Hence, the question for developing effective change strategies becomes: under what conditions does change in attitudes, practices, or social expectations engender change in gender norms?

Recent theorising about social norms in international development has focused on social expectations – individuals' perceptions of their social reality – to explain the persistence of practices shaped by gender norms. This approach overlooks crucial dimensions of power, and the structural constraints imposed by the broader political economy. Reducing gender norms to cognitive constructs fails to account for why these norms persist despite changing practices and discourses. This thesis argues for a more comprehensive approach that considers the interplay of constructs at multiple levels of analysis and their interactions with the external environment, which need to be studied together.

To do so, the thesis lays out a multi-level framework for understanding gender norms change and their relation to economic and political development. It considers three levels of analysis: the abstract institutional “rules of the game” at the macro-level, concrete organisations at the meso-level, and social actors and their beliefs and attitudes at the micro-level. It conceptualises gender norms as part of a dynamic system “made up of interconnected elements that adapt to one another and the environment, for example a tree” (Ang, 2023, p. 7). It builds on and expands insights from historical and feminist institutionalism on gradual institutional change (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009; Waylen, 2014). However, it departs from these in researching multi-level change in gender norms in the family rather than in political institutions. Gender norms and gender practices in the family, unlike markets or states, are more difficult to identify and operationalise because these processes take place in private spaces. Less statistical data exists, and quality statistical data is hard to obtain (Benería et al., 2015).

This dissertation argues for a more contextual and historical understanding of gender norms and how these are maintained or adapted over time in changing contexts. I examine gender norms change and persistence by looking at intergenerational and present-day dimensions to track how gender norms are applied and contested in Medellín’s ‘modernising’ society. Feminist scholarship has highlighted the resiliency of gender systems’ core principles associating care responsibilities to women despite disruptive historical junctures and varied economic outcomes. As these foundational theories advocate, we need a richer vocabulary to talk about change and persistence, and more appropriate research tools. How, then, can we study these gender norms?

#### 1.4 The study location: Medellín, Colombia

Focusing the study on Latin America offers several empirical insights, in part because of the higher rates of female labour force participation than other regions where recent norm studies have taken place, including in India (Bernhardt et al., 2018; Deshpande & Kabeer, 2024), Saudi Arabia (Bursztyn et al., 2020), or Jordan (Gauri et al., 2019). Colombia has seen one of the steepest increases in female labour force participation in the past decades, from the 1980s to 2020, while men’s participation in unpaid work has been slow to change. Despite recent gains in women’s rights, access to labour markets, and political representation, survey data and ethnographic research suggest that the country continues to exhibit similar ideologies around the male breadwinner and women’s place in caregiving as countries with



lower levels of female labour force participation. Women have historically had greater freedom of movement and ability to contribute to household economic production than countries where norms restricting women to the confines of the home are prevalent, drawing possibilities for comparison with a region such as West Africa (Boserup, 1970; Kandiyoti, 1988). Since Spanish colonisation, Latin American women have customarily held authority and autonomy over household decisions, but this has also meant that they are often overburdened and ‘time poor’, especially when they enter the labour market (Antonopoulos et al., 2012; Folbre, 1994; Martinez-Restrepo et al., 2017). With around 80 percent of the region’s population living in cities, Latin America is also the most urbanised region of the world (Ortiz, 2024), making it an interesting setting to assess urbanisation’s effects on gender norms change as a distinct aspect of “modernisation” and development.

Colombia also differs from high-income industrialised countries in Europe, North America, or Australia, which are the focus of many household division of labour studies. Compared to Nordic countries, where household allocations are studied in the context of a norm of gender equality (Nyman et al., 2018), everyday gender practices and ideologies in Latin America need to be understood against the backdrop of *machismo* culture<sup>2</sup> (Gutmann, 1996; Melhuus & Stolen, 1996; Viveros Vigoya, 2002). Because of colonisation and historic migration patterns, Colombia presents characteristics comparable to those of European countries such as Spain or Italy (Kvande & Brandth, 2017; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). However, the Colombian context is distinct from other countries in the OECD due to the high levels of labour informality, entailing important differences in economic opportunities and the potential impact and reach of public policies.

The thesis focuses on households from Medellín’s low-income neighbourhoods to analyse gender norms at the “urban margins” (Aceska et al., 2019; Auyero et al., 2014; Hiernaux et al., 2004). It builds on contributions from feminist economists who have documented persisting inequalities in labour markets and total work in several Latin American countries (Amarante & Rossel, 2017; Arora et al., 2023), but centres the study on lower-income populations residing in peripheral neighbourhoods. Medellín’s case of urban transformation, with its successes and persisting challenges, is perplexing to mainstream political economists, urbanists, and development scholars. It challenges ideas that economic development should lead automatically to shifting gender norms supporting gender equality.

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<sup>2</sup> This *machismo* culture, however, is not uniform or fixed; it adapts to times and circumstances and allows for nuances and diverse manifestations (e.g., Gutmann 1996).

Urban Colombia thus presents itself as a compelling case study to explore asymmetric change. It does not present a clear case of transformation in the ways presupposed by universalising narratives about development trajectories from pre-capitalist to industrial and post-industrial societies, that include gender norms change as part of the process of modernisation. The Colombian case forces a more nuanced conceptualisation of gender change, away from the idea of change implicit in the design of the WVS questionnaire. Even though these research tools account for *degrees* of agreement, they nevertheless conceive attitudes as part of a binary conception of change, between traditional/conservative and modern/egalitarian cultures. The WVS trends allow for observing “transition” states, but this is regarded as a residual or deficient category, one or the other, or in the process of becoming the other. This framing and analytical lens limits our ability to think about gender norms change. We need tools to study ‘change in process’, for better understanding and better policies. Increasing female labour force participation rates have occurred in conjunction with changes in societal attitudes towards women’s role in society. Have social norms changed as the WVS data suggests? If so, which norms, and how?

### 1.5 How normative change happens

This is a study of how norms change happens in the context of high levels of female labour force participation and ‘good’ performance on specific gender indicators (e.g., the SIGI index), grounded in an analysis of Medellín’s urban transformation and what this has meant for communities in peripheral neighbourhoods. The research reveals that gender transformations have resulted in the co-existence of normative models, with more varied alternatives in Medellín’s society in flux, rather than straightforward and rapid shifts from old to new norms. I analyse how the incorporation of women into the labour force has partly destabilised the balance of power in households, leading to some aspects of institutional change, while at the same time preserving other aspects core to the household division of labour. Gender norms inherited from the past are modified in the present to adjust to changing conditions, creating more room for negotiation. Incremental change may create possibilities for future change. The research underscores that gender norms, social practices, and individual beliefs are deeply intertwined, influencing each other and the external environment in interdependent and mutually constitutive processes. This interaction results in both progress and resistance, illustrating that gender norm change is not a smooth or uniform process but follows uneven, context-specific trajectories. The dissertation also challenges the

assumed linear relationship between economic development and egalitarian gender norms, highlighting non-linear and multi-directional pathways, where new norms can revert to old ones.

The thesis offers a more nuanced understanding of how gender norms evolve in complex environments like urban Colombia. This makes it possible to examine how gender norms are embedded in informal and formal institutions at the meso-level and manifested in social actors' subjectivities, beliefs and decision-making at the individual and interpersonal level, without confusing gender norms with their effects and causes. The conceptual framework enables researchers to examine *what* is changing in Medellín, *how* this change has occurred, and *what accelerates or prevents* greater change.

In line with this theoretical perspective, I used nested mixed-methods where I traced the same variables across three levels of analysis, looking at secondary survey data in the WVS and exploring the WVS variables in primary household surveys, qualitative interviews, and intergenerational discussions in more interactive ways than when studied through static survey measures. This enables a critical reflection of conventional methodologies for studying social norms and a comparison between the story of change that comes out of the WVS, which is underpinned by assumptions of a universalising theory about what progress consists of and how it comes about, and one grounded in 16 months of fieldwork in urban neighbourhoods in Medellín, which finds more ambiguity, non-linearities, and ambivalences in change processes.

This comparative mixed-methods approach enables the examination of the following guiding sub-questions, which contribute to the two primary research questions introduced earlier in this chapter:

- 1) *How have different gender norms evolved, changed, or persisted in the past decades in urban Colombia?* This question empirically investigates trajectories of continuity and change in gender norms in Colombia. It asks what evidence and conceptual tools can help trace gender norms over time, particularly when pre-existing baseline data is limited. It further explores what picture of change and/or persistence emerges when different social research methods are employed and from the diverse accounts of social actors in urban neighbourhoods.
- 2) *How are WVS questions understood by city-dwellers in Medellín? How are the concepts in the WVS enacted in this urban context?* This question seeks to uncover the meanings, reasons, and beliefs behind the attitudes expressed in WVS responses. It highlights potential assumptions embedded in survey tools and differences in socio-

economic realities by critically examining divergences between respondents' understandings of the questions and researchers' interpretations. Qualitative insights into different explanations for survey answers offer a window into local normative stances and help to situate these norms and attitudes within individuals' life histories, personal accounts of their experiences and the barriers they face. This question ultimately contributes to a deeper understanding of how norms operate in everyday practices.

- 3) *What are the strategies and processes through which women and men have negotiated, contested, or resisted change in these gender norms?* This question seeks to understand the dynamic nature of social norms as both constraints on individual and collective action and as factors that can themselves be challenged, negotiated and transformed over time. It examines the everyday practices, narratives, and forms of resistance or strategising – both subtle and overt – through which men and women navigate and adapt to evolving conditions in the face of socio-economic change, to reveal how gender norm change is actively shaped from within.

The thesis finds that changing circumstances related to Medellín's urban transformation have had mixed effects on gender norms changes. Through an inter-generational perspective, I map conditions and changes at different periods and across generations, where statistical data is difficult to obtain. This exercise provides a more accurate picture of what has changed, and at what level, but also of the processes underpinning that change, illustrating the diverse ways gender norms are negotiated in Medellín amidst rapid urbanisation and economic liberalisation.

The project exposes the possibilities and limitations of standardised, context-independent and cross-national surveys by carefully analysing what the research tools mean on the ground. The analysis shows that what lies behind the WVS responses is more nuanced and diverse than assumed. The findings reveal confusions and a multiplicity of meanings embodied in what is assumed to be a dominant consensus in survey attitudinal data challenging the idea that the WVS statements' have the same meaning for different groups and across time. It uncovers important contextual factors and socio-economic realities related to violence, insecurity and informality, which influence survey responses and gender norms' trajectories of change more broadly.

Uncovering the dynamics behind survey responses also tells us how social norms are applied, engaged with, and challenged. The findings highlight the dynamic nature of normative change that requires contestation over meanings, justifications, and outcomes,

rather than reaching a tipping point leading to norm cascades as depicted in a punctuated equilibrium view. The thesis uncovers important aspects of the division of labour that are not visible in the WVS time series data trends. These include paying attention to men's changing roles to avoid common approaches that assess progress based on the extent to which women conform to traditionally 'male' norms. Highlighting a gap between reports of support for gender equality and persisting gender inequalities in practice, the analysis reveals ambiguities, conditionalities, and tactical uses of discourses of equality, which illustrates the malleability and contested nature of abstract egalitarian attitudes reported in surveys.

Through its core focus, the thesis emphasises the potential of individuals and marginalised groups to transform gender norms, while recognising the constraints these norms impose on their actions and potential strategies for change. This exposes a tension in what forms of change are possible, highlighting both the agency and the limits of those working to shift deep-seated gender norms. It offers an intergenerational perspective that moves beyond traditional intra-household bargaining frameworks, providing a nuanced understanding of how gender norms are contested in everyday life. It emphasises the role of individual and family histories in these negotiations, showing how structural change intersects with personal decisions to break from past patterns. It argues that negotiations and pressures over social norms occur within the extended family and in the choice of partners in the context of heterogeneous family forms and high marital instability.

To summarise, the thesis examines what the WVS can tell us about gender norms, adding to recent discussions about how to research gendered informal institutions and social norms. It unpacks processes of gender norms change at lower levels of analysis, using a pluralistic mixed-methods approach, starting with the WVS and critically analysing standard variables in a grounded way to challenge theories that assume linear shifts to new norms. This approach provides insights into how gendered actors, through their negotiations, decisions and family-making practices, have influenced the evolution of gender norms in Medellín's society. The argument is that gender norms change not by reaching a threshold and evenly cascading to a new equilibrium but through ongoing social contestations and reinterpretations.

While much of the existing research on gender norms changes has focused on a punctuated equilibrium approach, positing shifts following a critical mass of women joining the labour force and reaching socially valued public roles, this thesis advances a more dynamic and comprehensive approach to gender norms and their relation to social practice, embedded within a feminist institutionalist approach and grounded in local realities and

perspectives. Although lower-level changes in practices and discourses may not have radically transformed gender norms at higher levels of abstraction, they have created opportunities for contestation, potentially laying the groundwork for further change. The thesis underscores the need for context-specific interpretations of research tools like the WVS. These findings contribute to debates on rising female labour force participation in Latin America and the malleability of gender norms, attitudes, and social expectations at critical junctures.

## 1.6 Roadmap

Having introduced the research questions and aims in this chapter, Chapter 2 presents the feminist institutionalist framework that underpins this thesis, defining key concepts and their interactions to explain gender norms persistence and change. The multi-level framework conceptualises gender norms as macro-level social structures that shape organisations and are reproduced, internalised, and contested by social actors at the meso- and micro-levels. The chapter reviews models of norm change that will be assessed in the empirical analysis.

Chapter 3 provides the contextual and historical background to the study. It explores historical legacies and economic, political, and social changes in Colombia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries that have led to both achievements and persisting challenges with respect to gender equality and inclusive development. This background informs the analysis of global comparative trends from the WVS, which marks the starting point of the empirical investigation, and it helps situate the subsequent case study in one Colombian city, Medellín.

Chapter 4 details the research design and pluralistic methodological approach, asking how to research gender norms during historical moments of upheaval and disruptions. It examines the challenges in tracking gender norms, “hidden” informal institutions, their power dynamics in private spaces, and how the nested mixed methods enable a more grounded investigation of how socially situated actors understand research questions about social norms. The chapter describes how these conventional tools were combined in novel and interactive ways and notes practical and ethical challenges to their implementation and how I addressed them.

Chapter 5 presents results from four waves of the WVS conducted between 1995 and 2022, comparing trends across world regions and for Colombia. The chapter reviews the history and origins of the WVS, shedding light on the theory of change that informed its design and use. It provides a conceptual and methodological critique of the WVS research

tools, which paves the way for the analysis of the locally driven mixed-method data in the following chapters. I discuss what the WVS data reveals about gender norms and its limitations, raising issues of interpretation, comparability, biases, and omissions. This methodological discussion and the interpretation of the trends serve as a point of focus for studying gender norms at lower levels of analysis and for examining the complexities and nuances introduced by the qualitative research.

The thesis then turns to an account of how gender norms have changed in Medellín using methods other than secondary time-series survey data. Building on the broader country development patterns outlined in Chapter 3, Chapter 6 provides a detailed description of the city, focusing specifically on the low-income and peripheral neighbourhoods under study. It paints a picture of the landscape of change based on secondary literature and primary data. It discusses the evolution of household composition and family forms, the local economy, and violence and insecurity dynamics that shape gender norms in these neighbourhoods, highlighting the great diversity that characterises this urban context. This background sets the stage for asking what the statements in the WVS mean at a grassroots level for men and women living in Medellín's periphery.

The remainder of the empirical analysis explores how urban heterogeneity and generational differences may shape life decisions, social expectations, and family negotiations in ways that contribute to normative continuity or change.

Chapter 7 critically examines the questions that are included in the WVS about women's roles as housewives and in public organisations such as businesses, politics or universities. It considers what men and women say about the work they do and what this reveals about prevailing gender norms. Considering the diversity of livelihood strategies in contexts of informality, I ask to what extent different forms of engagement in productive work reflect departures or continuities with women's roles as housewives and the male breadwinner family model of the past. I find that support for gender equality around paid employment in the abstract conceals variations in practice and multiple interpretations and justifications behind normative beliefs around women's right to a job, the rightful provider, and women's decision to work or to be a housewife. This highlights the entanglement between *what is* the case and *what ought to be*, the complex interrelations between lived experiences, observed realities, and normative understandings. The chapter highlights that the relationship between changing practices and gender norms partly depends on how the change in practice is explained and its consequences understood, which were revealed through the qualitative and ethnographic findings.

Chapter 8 turns to what is omitted in the WVS, yet is essential for gender equality, related to changing beliefs and practices around men's roles in the domestic sphere. Once again, misalignment between discourses of equality and gender gaps in practice points to a more variegated picture of gender attitudes and normative stances than assumed in survey data. Documenting variations in men's participation in urban households, I map levels of male involvement in unpaid work –from complete absence to exceptional cases where men take on primary domestic and caregiving responsibilities– and explore how men and women explain men's participation or non-participation. The chapter underscores how progressive change towards gender-equitable roles can be accompanied by a great deal of ambiguity.

Chapter 9 zooms in on norm change through family negotiations and intergenerational dynamics. It takes on the endogeneity of social norms, tracing tactics to adapt norms towards a more egalitarian division of household labour and identifying interactional constraints that impede change, including deflective actions and material, symbolic, and emotional reliance on the “united family”. These processes occur across multiple sites of change beyond the highly researched domain of intra-household bargaining between couples. I discuss how these findings advance a distinct account of change from the one from the WVS and extend conceptual tools from feminist institutionalism.

The final chapter concludes by summarising the main themes, returning to the methodological critique, and comparing stories of change to draw theoretical, empirical, methodological, and policy implications.

Studying gender norms' dynamics of change in ways that capture their complexities and contextual specificities is vital as the topic of gender norms has emerged on the international development agenda. This field of research has the potential to elucidate questions about exacerbating gender inequalities, unintended consequences of development interventions, and gendered responses to emerging crises from global pandemics, conflict, and climate breakdown. However, how gender norms have been integrated into development thinking and practice risks replicating narrow and problematic approaches to development (Fine et al. 2015, Piedalue et al. 2020., Wazir 2022). This thesis attempts to rethink research on social norms in ways that can support broader transformative agendas.



## Chapter 2: A multi-level analytical framework

### 2.1 Introduction

The central questions of the thesis pertain to how gender norms change happens, why and under what conditions norms change, and others prove to be more resilient, particularly in contexts of rising female labour force participation and uneven progress towards gender equality (Evans, 2017; Klugman et al., 2014; Ridgeway, 2011). This chapter explains the multi-level framework, allowing for an institutional analysis of norms that will guide the investigation in the subsequent chapters. I contrast this perspective with the “social norms approach” (Wazir, 2022, p.2), which has influenced development practice and is based mainly on Bicchieri’s work in behavioural economics, focusing on how changing individuals’ mindsets will lead to changes in behaviours and social norms. However, as the power of norms resides not only inside people’s heads and minds, but social norms are also reinforced and buttressed by external factors, there is a need to consider wider societal structures and organisations within which individuals operate to understand how gender norms persist and change.

In this dissertation, gender norms are conceptualised as macro-level structures, referring to deep-seated ideals of masculinity and femininity connected to core gender identities and socially shared logics, morals and values that become embedded in organisations and shape social practices. The three levels considered here are gender norms at the macro-level as abstract “rules of the game”, the meso-level made of concrete organisations such as the parliament, universities, or households, and at the micro-level, the social actors who internalise, questions, comply with, or challenge these gender norms. Social norms interact with individual-level cognitive constructs such as beliefs, social expectations, and gender attitudes, but these are distinct concepts. The changes discussed in this thesis emerge in the interactions between social norms and these lower levels. This perspective allows us to consider gradual, endogenous changes while accounting for the agency and contestation of social actors, contrasting with dominant ideas of wholesale shifts in self-reinforcing beliefs that result from exogenous shocks or interventions.

This chapter starts with a brief review of the asymmetric pace of change in the household division of labour globally and how it has motivated research into gender norms. In the next section, I introduce conceptions of gender norms from behavioural economics that have influenced development thinking and practice, along with emerging critiques of this

approach, to clarify the point from which this thesis departs. In section 4 of this chapter, I discuss the multi-level framework, calling attention to formal and informal elements of institutions. This section addresses the interactions between gender norms, organisations, and individual-level cognitive constructs. In the final section before the conclusion, I address norm continuity and change, exploring what makes gender norms resilient and theories of exogenous and endogenous change.

## 2.2 The global context

From the 1970s to the 2000s, an increasing number of women joined the workforce worldwide in the context of transformations in the global division of labour and export-oriented approaches to development (Benería et al., 2015). Studies on the implications of this “feminization of the labour force” (Standing, 1999) revealed the diversity of women workers’ experiences and the multiple, positive and negative, consequences for women’s empowerment (Domínguez et al., 2010; Elson & Pearson, 1981; Kabeer, 2008; Lim, 1990). This upward trend has stagnated globally and even decreased in certain countries (Klasen et al., 2020). More recently, the COVID-19 crisis led to greater employment losses for women than for men and worsening working conditions that have increased gender gaps in labour force participation (Dang & Nguyen, 2021).

Despite these changes and variations in women’s economic roles, feminist scholars have documented the persistence and recomposition of gender inequalities in labour markets and households (Anker, 1997; Perrons, 2015). Women’s work in many parts of the world remains concentrated in vulnerable, part-time, or home-based forms of employment (Barrientos & Perrons, 1999; Dedeoğlu, 2010). Furthermore, despite the “rise of the female breadwinner” (Kabeer, 2014), the division of unpaid labour has remained remarkably persistent (Barker et al., 2021; Folbre, 2018; Friedman, 2015). Rather than a considerable increase in men’s participation in domestic activities, transformations in labour markets and family structures have been accompanied by increasing obligations for women (Ansell et al., 2015; Chant, 2008), unpaid work being taken up by other women such as a younger family member or grandparents (Chant, 2007; Sung, 2003), or the commodification of care services stimulating international female migration (Araujo & González-Fernández, 2014; Carrasco & Domínguez, 2011).

Although some men have taken up housework and parenting responsibilities, this is often not commensurate with increases in women’s paid work (Doucet, 2004; El Feki et al., 2017;

van der Gaag et al., 2019). As such, women's total work hours are more likely to be higher than men's (Gálvez-Muñoz et al., 2011; Pearson, 2000). When the family cannot afford paid domestic services, care and housework needs can often remain unmet, with damaging social consequences. Economic development can also lead to a decrease in men's involvement in families, with a decline in men's contribution to childcare or household income, while women take on more economic provision responsibilities for their households (Chant, 2008; Mayoux, 2001, p. 439). Expansion of women's roles has thus not led to a significant redistribution of unpaid responsibilities within the home.

This observed asymmetry has led feminist scholars to ask whether changes in gender relations have "hit a limit" or "stalled" because of the slow pace of change in the distribution of unpaid work (England, 2010; Friedemann-Sánchez, 2012; Sullivan et al., 2018). Gender norms and related concepts such as gender ideology, attitudes and gendered social expectations are identified as important factors contributing to the 'stalling' of domestic equality despite women's greater involvement in paid work. This invites the question of how to explain the persistence of care norms under changing economic conditions and social meanings. How do gender norms and practices change or persist at the family level, and how does this happen in the urban Colombian context?

## 2.3 Gender norm theory: a behavioural economics perspective

### 2.3.1 Behavioural approaches to gender norms

With growing recognition in development thinking that gender norms support unjust structures of production and social reproduction, interventions have been developed to transform gender norms (Boudet et al., 2012; Goetz, 1995; Jütting et al., 2007; Stefanik & Hwang, 2017). Nevertheless, a lack of consensus regarding definitions and measurement tools complicates our understanding of social norms and how they influence gender and development outcomes. Efforts have been undertaken to systematise research across disciplines and develop a common language and methodologies (Chung & Rimal, 2016; Legros & Cislighi, 2020; Mackie, Moneti, & Shakya, 2015; Morris et al., 2015). Development interventions from large donor agencies have followed behavioural economics approaches inspired by Bicchieri's framework to diagnose, measure, and intervene to socially engineer new norms (Bicchieri, 2006, 2017).

Bicchieri defines norms as “a rule of behavior such that individuals prefer to conform to it on condition that they believe that (a) most people in their reference network conform to it (empirical expectation), and (b) that most people in their reference network believe they ought to conform to it (normative expectation).” (Bicchieri 2006 and 2017, p.35). This follows conceptions in economics of norms as sets of self-fulfilling expectations (Schelling, 1960). Bicchieri argues that norm compliance is driven by a conditional preference for conformity (2017, 3), conditional on holding these social expectations. Social norms change interventions that follow from this conception assume that by changing social expectations, individuals will no longer have a conditional preference for conformity and social norms will change (Miller & Prentice, 2016; Tankard & Paluck, 2016).

Much of this work was developed to study behavioural change in the Global North, such as alcohol consumption on college campuses, pro-social behaviour in schools, water usage, littering and recycling, or eating behaviours (Dempsey et al., 2018; Derricks et al., 2023; Kallgren et al., 2000). These studies are predominantly based on psychological laboratory experiments, often with university students. This approach has now been applied to address social issues in the Global South, such as child marriage, female genital cutting, poor sanitation, or gender-based violence (UNICEF, 2010; Vaitla et al., 2017). As Piedalue et al. describe this transition: “we have “psychological and economic rationalist conceptualisations of ‘social norms’ as ‘things’ that exist, independently from the social, in the psychology of individuals” that have influenced “development policy and interventions that understand social norms as discrete phenomena that can be measured and acted upon to create social change” (2020, p.125).

### 2.3.2 Critiques of the behavioural approach

These conceptions of gender norms operating through individuals’ beliefs and attitudes deviate from feminist understandings of gender norms. In the search for operationalising and ‘diagnosing’ social norms, there is a tendency to treat norms in isolation: norms of recycling, of female genital cutting, of women working outside the home. However, the extent to which norms are interconnected will likely affect their resistance to change. Efforts toward conceptual clarity distinguishing between legal rules, social norms, and personal attitudes have masked important interactions between these concepts. Although the social norms literature recognises that norms can be suboptimal or even harmful, it scarcely explores how social norms interact with the gender order and other discriminatory structures. Yet, it is

possible that different forces maintain harmful norms in place than those upholding socially beneficial ones, and thereby entail different processes to change.

The thesis aligns with recent critiques of this social norms literature derived from the Global North which have pointed to the reductionist theoretical assumptions that fail to give appropriate attention to the local context, political economy and power dynamics, and thin evidence-base upon which development interventions are based (Piedalue et al., 2020; Wazir, 2023). The thesis emphasises that aspects crucial to understanding gender norms' dynamics of change have been under-researched, such as the role of power relations and gender identities. There is room for more investigation into how social actors engage, conceive, and negotiate gender norms, how this affects their decisions, and how informal norms change in conjunction with formal political rules and economic structures (Folbre, 1994, p. 251).

Critiques of the social norms literature pointing to these limitations are usually paired with the acknowledgement that mixed methods can provide more rigour, but lack a cohesive theoretical framework to analyse the historical and contextual nature of gender norms, their relation to power hierarchies, and the complex interdependencies between norms, formal institutions, organisations, and the social practices carried out by gendered actors. The thesis aims to reinstate a more integrated understanding of gender norms and generate context-specific empirical data on the nuanced processes of their change and reproduction.

## 2.4 A multi-level framework for an institutional analysis

This section introduces a feminist institutionalist perspective that provides the theoretical framework to study discriminatory systems of gender norms, moving beyond individual beliefs and attitudes (Mackay et al., 2010). As Pearse and Connell (2016) note, social norms do not only exist in people's minds; they are also embedded in social life and organisations. Studying social norms requires studying these organisations and understanding processes of institutional change and maintenance, and how these are gendered.

Governance scholars and political feminist institutionalists have articulated how informal institutional change takes place through rapid and gradual processes where contestation, strategic actions by actors and non-compliance may drive change (Béland & Powell, 2016; Mahoney & Thelen, 2009; Waylen, 2014). They have incorporated power dimensions in gender analyses, recognising how institutional continuity and reform are shaped by political struggles (Folbre, 1994; Waylen, 2017). A key insight from this work is how the "hidden" interactions between informal and formal institutions can help explain why

legal reform may not lead to gender equality and why institutional change can produce unexpected and contradictory effects (Chappell & Waylen, 2013; Lowndes, 2020).

Institutionalist perspectives in feminist economics and political science have highlighted how gender norms interact with, are influenced by, and shape labour markets or political processes (Elson, 1999; Waylen, 2017), and intra-household allocation decisions (Agarwal, 1997), or how norms evolve in international politics (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

However, these analyses tend to study gendered institutions in political spaces, which are influenced by and reinforce gender norms in the family. They often point to the resilience of gender norms of women as primary caregivers and men as family providers, for instance, and how they are reproduced in institutional and behavioural rules. They tend to focus on gendered rules in formal public spaces, often taking the deeper, value-laden norms we are interested in here as a given. Therefore, much of what feminist institutionalists and governance scholars have studied takes place in the public domains of politics, parliament, and work organisations at the meso-level, rather than deeper normative ideals at the structural level. Missing in this body of work are the dynamics of gender norms that shape core gender roles and identities in the family. In my project, I look at these inherently gendered norms shaping practices and decisions within and beyond the home.

This thesis thus contributes to the literature by looking at the family as a site of change, taking these deep-seated normative ideals as the main object of analysis. This responds to Agarwal's call (1997) to understand how gender norms are negotiated within the home. Few empirical studies have focused on the processes through which these gender norms change; most focus on the role of social norms as determinants of bargaining power and intra-household allocation decisions (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2006). The thesis considers norms as the deeper and more entrenched ideals and value-laden standards that are tied to social and gender identities, not just behavioural heuristics. It shares discursive institutionalists' recognition that ideas and morals matter and influence actions and individual perceptions (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016; Evans, 2018b; Schmidt, 2008), with the view that norms are interconnected with broader ideologies and shared philosophies, but these interactions are not the focus of the thesis. Instead, the thesis is concerned with the ways gender norms are embodied and practised in everyday life, which can lead to greater diversity than what may be assumed from ideologies and discourses (Holmelin, 2019). Looking at these lower-level dynamics to understand how gender norms change is critical to the thesis's argument. In this way, the study aims to bridge the macro and cognitive levels, looking at the

articulations between institutions and organisational settings and the role of power in social interactions.

In this section, I outline the multi-level analytical framework for understanding gender norms change, considering macro-level abstract structures, the organisations that norms become embedded in at the meso-level, and the social actors, their thoughts and actions, at the micro-level. This allows for better explanations of how gender norms shaping gender practices in the family are enacted, influence social actors and societies, and ultimately how they change. The framework emphasises that social norms are part of a gender system, a web of mutually reinforcing beliefs, practices, and institutions (Sen, 2007), interacting with broader historical and cultural contexts and economic structures, specific “patriarchal bargains” (Kandiyoti, 1988) which entail different gender ideologies and practices, and different possibilities for challenging or negotiating unequal gender relations. This framework also considers the cognitive and material dimensions of asymmetric institutions, the norms they generate, how these influence social actors’ thinking and decision-making, and the distinct sites where formal and informal forms of institutions operate.

Various strands of feminist and institutionalist literatures refer to different levels of analysis when they speak about institutions, creating much confusion in the terms used. In what follows, I clarify how distinct terms such as gender norms, institutions, organisations, and social expectations are used in this dissertation, separating the level of abstract institutional structures of constraints, concrete organisational settings, and the social actors who inhabit them.

#### 2.4.1 Norms as abstract macro-level structures

New institutionalist Douglass North defines institutions as the “rules of the game” in society that constrain or enable specific actions and practices, as “the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction” (North, 1990, p. 3). This definition is often a point of departure for conceptualising gender norms and institutions; however, feminist institutionalists have further theorised how these are gendered and how this might affect their trajectories of continuity and change (Mackay et al., 2010). In this thesis’ perspective, social norms operate as macro-level structures that define ideals and standards of masculinity and femininity, producing gender difference and power hierarchies (Chappell & Waylen, 2013, p. 601), such as the norm of the breadwinner and subordinate housewife, ideas of a “good” and

self-sacrificing mother, or the heterosexual nuclear family. For example, normative assumptions of the patriarchal “united family” in Medellín, Colombia, with a male breadwinner and household head and a subordinate housewife but with authority over children and running the household have been pervasive throughout discourses, social policies, and family practices over time.

Nancy Folbre (1994) brings in a distinction between the formal “rules” and informal “norms” that act as structures of constraints which determine social actors’ positions in society and set limits to their choices. Rules include the laws, policies, constitutions and mandates that have statutory recognition and are enforced by official entities, policemen, judges, one’s boss and organisational management. Informal norms are the unwritten, socially understood, explicit or tacit, ways of being and doing in society, applicable to all institutional settings, including politics, the market, the community, and the family. They are a “decentralised form of social authority” (Folbre, 1994, p. 41), relying on shared understandings. They are enforced through social sanctions, including social approval or disapproval, violence, mocking, or internalised feelings of shame and guilt.

Development and institutional studies have explored how interactions between formal and informal institutions affect economic development (North, 1990, 2003; Platteau, 2000, 2009). Formal rules can be gender-blind or integrate gender in more explicit ways that can promote the inclusion of women such as the case of gender quotas, they may build on gender divides, setting for example differential paternity benefits and leaves for mothers and fathers, or be inherently exclusionary, such as when women were not allowed to vote (Lowndes, 2020). Feminist institutionalists have clarified how formal laws and informal norms interact, particularly in the political sphere, showing that “seemingly neutral rules about the conduct of political business or policy making may have gendered effects because of the way in which they interact with informal rules derived from wider gender norms.” (Lowndes, 2014, p. 687). Colombia’s experience illustrates that a disjunction between formal institutions, normative ideals, and social practices can exist. The SIGI 2019 index rated the country as having “very low” levels of discrimination against women (OECD, 2019), yet gender inequality persists in several domains, as the following chapters will show.

Unequal gender norms can become formally codified, such as in unequal inheritance laws and land rights (Agarwal, 1994). As scholarship in Latin America has analysed, many family policies and social programmes continue to be based on traditional models and myths around the family that no longer reflect the realities of a growing heterogeneity in family forms (Arriagada, 2007; García, 2011). Feminist assessments of conditional cash transfer



programmes popularised in Latin America as a poverty reduction mechanism have shown how they are founded on “normative assumptions concerning ‘women’s roles’” (Molyneux, 2006, p. 438). By centring on mothers’ ‘traditional’ roles in addressing children’s needs, they risk reproducing and intensifying women’s caregiving responsibilities (Chant, 2008; Cookson, 2016; Quijano, 2009).

This theoretical framework recognises gender norms as fundamental features of gender orders. Considering gender as a system or structure, gender norms not only operate at an individual level but set an order for organisations and social practices (Pearse et al., 2016; Risman, 2004). They set the boundaries of what is possible. They are part of the underlying “gender logics” (Ortner, 1989, p. 41), where “This logic prescribes (as well as proscribes) ‘acceptable’ masculine and feminine forms of behaviour, rules, and values for men and women.” (Chappell & Waylen, 2013, p. 601).

Gendered norms create asymmetric standards and outcomes, which result in patriarchal systems. These high-order gender assumptions, one of the most fundamental being the separation between production and reproduction and who carries out activities in each of these spheres, perpetuate gender inequalities. As Acker (1992, 567) points out, “the divide between reproduction and production constitutes the gendered understructure of society’s institutions.” Prevalent gender norms guide and motivate action by expressing what is acceptable, desirable, prohibited, appropriate, or obligatory. For example, gender norms stipulating men as providers and women as caregivers will likely reinforce practices that encourage men to work and women to stay home. Norms specify how people should behave, what activities they can pursue, and what decisions they should take and how, e.g. in a cooperative, collaborative, or authoritative manner.

Unequal gender norms confer power to specific groups by legitimising their access and control over resources and limiting other groups’ freedoms and possibilities to acquire different forms of assets, opportunities, or have a say in political and social processes. Bias and inequalities emerge from these accepted gendered notions, which include socially constructed ideas of men’s and women’s natural abilities and qualities. Discriminatory norms undervalue certain groups and carry implicit judgments about their value, skills, needs, and social contributions. Traits coded as ‘masculine’, such as logic, rationality, competitiveness, strength, or risk-taking are regarded as most suited for positions of power, in politics or business; traits associated with the ‘feminine’, including collaboration, caregiving, sensibility, submissiveness are often undervalued, influencing gendered occupational segregation for instance.

#### 2.4.2 At the level of organisations

North distinguishes between institutions and organisations, defined as “the groups of individuals bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives” (North, 1990, p. 4-5). Higher-level ‘rules of the game’ apply to more abstract institutional domains – such as the state, the market, family kinship systems, the community – and become established in concrete lower-level organisations social actors live in – the parliament or workplace, households, schools, and universities. According to North, “Organizations include political bodies (political parties, the Senate, a city council, a regulatory agency), economic bodies (firms, trade unions, family farms, cooperatives), social bodies (churches, clubs, athletic associations), and educational bodies (schools, universities, vocational training centers)” (1990, p.5). Organisations and abstract institutional rules interact, but the processes by which rules and norms evolve and structure social interactions differ from how social actors apply and use these rules in specific organisational settings. The focus here is on the interaction between institutions and organisations, where the ‘rules of the game’ determine which organisations emerge, how they are structured and how they evolve. Notwithstanding, the organisations and social actors within them can be drivers of broader institutional change.

Feminist scholars emphasise how gender norms become embedded in organisations in society, structuring social, economic and political life, and governing how groups and individuals interact in a particular setting:

“When we speak of the gender norms embedded in an [organization],<sup>3</sup> such as a school or a corporation, we are fundamentally speaking about how this [organization’s] gender arrangements are projected through time, in the practices of the people and groups who compose it.” (Connell and Pearse, 2016).

Connell and Pearse provide numerous examples of the ways gender norms are materialised in organisations, such as how “teamwork arrangements fostered a “motherist” work culture, which allowed arrangements to accommodate women with childcare responsibilities” in Plankey-Videla’s (2012) ethnography of a Mexican factory where “workers made use of local gender norms to create a better employment situation for women.” (2016, p.39). Unequal gender norms may be reinforced or challenged through organisational practices: in Italian corporations, Connell and Pearse (2016, p.38-39) note based on Gherardi and Poggio’s study (2001) that the “normative gender order was reconstituted through organization rituals, where people acknowledge their membership of

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<sup>3</sup> Connell and Pearse use “institution” for what we mean by “organisation”.

the gender order” but they also note that “normative change followed from sustained organizing for women’s participation within the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra” in Deere’s work about agricultural land tenure systems (2003).

Agarwal (1997) notes that gender norms embody accepted ideas and gender definitions about access to and ownership of property, gender-based divisions of labour, participation in political institutions, kinship relationships, resources and economic assets, uses of violence, etc. In the view espoused here, norms get applied at the level of organisations and communities where they govern how groups interact in a particular setting, e.g., in parliament for the institutional domain of the state or in households for the institutional domain of the family. Hence, “children belong to the mother”, a common saying in Colombia, dictates who remains responsible for childcare after marital dissolution as well as who is to blame when young people engage in criminal activities or get pregnant.

Joan Acker refers to gender norms and how they become established in market organisations, how there is a set of rules that contain unspoken norms about who can get a job or get promoted. Acker identifies dynamic processes through which gender divisions are created, reinforced and reshaped within organisations. Cultural understandings that support a gendered division of labour are generated and disseminated through organisational culture, symbols and daily practices. Embodied beings occupy jobs defined by seemingly objective criteria. Norms and expectations about women and men are enacted and cemented through interactions with colleagues and supervisors; women might act submissively towards their male boss; male colleagues make sexist jokes amongst themselves as part of “locker room talk” (Acker, 1990).

All these examples of organisations belong to different abstract institutional domains, the market or the state, for instance; we see evidence of these gender norms playing out in all of them. Feminist scholars have made explicit the role of power relations in maintaining asymmetric social norms and how these have been recognised but largely under-theorised in mainstream economic and political development theories (Folbre, 1994; Kenny, 2007; Van Staveren & Odebode, 2007). By becoming embedded in organisations, through routine institutional functioning and as guides or requisites for action, unequal gender norms create advantages for men relative to women, and for men and women of different races, ethnicities, class, and ages, leading to the unequal distribution of resources and power that become entrenched and resilient over time (Lowndes, 2014, p. 687). Gender norms, through organisations, operate “nominally” to exclude women from defined spaces and positions of power and “substantively” to enforce dominant notions of masculinity and femininity and

gender difference (Chappell and Waylen 2013, 600-601). Deep-seated gender norms shape organisational codes of conduct which may impose or encourage “adversarial styles of debate” such as in the UK parliament (Lovenduski, 2005, p. 147), or the hostile nature of economic seminars, especially towards women (Dupas et al., 2021), and normative assumptions about who is responsible for childcare outside of the workplace shape the ‘ideal worker’ archetype and become codified in hiring criteria and performance evaluations (Acker, 1990, pp. 149–150).

In the institutional domain of the family, which is the focus of this study, there are also formal and informal rules governing household relations and the division of labour, such as laws against child labour, and many informal codes about who can share their opinion, who can raise their voice against family members, who exerts authority, how families share food, or who cooks family meals. Sevilla-Sanz et al. (2010) expose the role of gender norms in shaping the household division of labour in Spain, and particularly women’s share of housework and childcare, suggesting that norms of masculinity and femininity influence “how men feel that housework undermines their status” and women may have an “internalized sense of self-worth related to childcare.” (Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010, p. 165).

Gender norms define distinct opportunities, rights, and entitlements for men and women and hence contribute to greater inequality. Gender norms may stipulate different behaviours for men and women in distinct organisational settings: the expectations for a father playing with his son differ from those for a male investment banker socialising with his colleagues at a bar (Hogg & Abrams, 1998, p. 212), or in a Colombian neighbourhood context, for a drug leader in his interactions with his mother or children and his actions outside his home (Baird, 2015, p. 13). Gender norms assigning care responsibilities to women condition who takes on caring labour in academic departments and companies, or interactions between male and female friends, such as who cooks and washes the dishes during a group of friends’ reunion or camping trip. As such, gender norms act as mechanisms creating and maintaining gender hierarchies and power relations in distinct organisational arrangements. Discriminatory gender norms place unequal restrictions on men and women’s access to and use of private and public spaces, they demarcate differential roles and responsibilities and condone and reward certain actions or appearances. For example, by stipulating that a respectable woman’s appropriate place is the home, gender norms restrict women’s mobility and economic activities.

Gender norms also reinforce power asymmetries in organisations when norm violations are more costly and severe for marginalised groups, under more scrutiny and

stringent expectations: “more power means fewer, weaker, less binding constraints.” (Folbre, 1994, p.54). In the case of 20th-century Colombia, single mothers were subject to harsher social disapproval and could be ostracised from their families or communities, whereas divorced and separated fathers more rapidly moved in with another partner, often disregarding caregiving or economic obligations towards their children. Separated fathers’ economic conditions were also less affected by a separation; with women having fewer income-generating opportunities compared to men, they also suffered greater economic costs from union dissolution and divorce. Over time, by cementing and maintaining gender privileges and differences, creating separate spheres for men and women of different ages, ethnicities, and classes, these gender norms and the power structures they produce come to be seen as “natural” and become taken-for-granted. Thus, gender norms translate to concrete material realities and symbolic differences.

Political feminist institutionalists mainly focus on instances of institutional change in political organisations (Lowndes, 2020; Mackay et al., 2010). Negotiations and change in gendered institutions in the political sphere may differ from those governing the household division of labour and families. As Ridgeway and Correll (2004, p. 512) note, “gender goes home with you.” This points to a need to look at the intimate ways power is expressed in the home, which differs from social interactions in political and labour markets, even if the latter are influenced by the former (Elson, 1999). The thesis centres on informal norms in the family and private spaces (as well as in the neighbourhood community), which regulate gendered relations between father and daughter, husband and wife, etc., and how people express affection, intimacy, and support. This requires a more focused investigation into the interactions between gendered actors and norms, analysing the two-way relation between how gender norms structure household arrangements and how gender norms are reinforced or undermined by social practices in the household and the family.

#### 2.4.3 Social actors

At the micro-level, gender norms influence what social actors think and do. Individuals and groups are products of these larger structures. Institutionalists emphasise that social institutions can be constitutive of people’s identities (Chang, 2002, p. 556; Van Staveren & Odebode, 2007). Folbre’s theory (1994) states that multiple “structures of constraint” determine social positions in organisational arrangements and intersecting gender, class, and racial identities. These include distributions of assets, laws, norms and personal

preferences, leading to distinctive collective identities and allegiances that are drawn on to reinforce patriarchal power or challenge it. Gender norms have important cognitive dimensions which influence social actors' thinking about their social context and impinge on their decision-making.

Studies on social norms frequently examine attitudes and beliefs: individual-level cognitive constructs. Attitudes refer to personal evaluations and feelings regarding the roles, abilities, and appropriate behaviours of gendered actors, and whether there is and should be any gender difference. These are about what the individual thinks *should be*, independent of the norms in place, although gender norms may influence personal attitudes as individuals internalise social norms or observe behaviours that conform or deviate from social norms and their effects in society. Individuals also hold beliefs and norm perceptions about what others think is desirable and what is typical; these also include expectations about the social consequences of deviating from norms. Normative beliefs are about the perceived social pressures to engage in specific behaviours or hold certain roles or responsibilities. They are both about what is the case, what is typical (or “normal”), and what is perceived as the shared understandings about what *should be*.

Gender norms and personal attitudes may or may not be aligned (Pereznieto, 2015). Social norms shape behaviour through various mechanisms, which is a reason why they endure over time. Instead of a categorical distinction between attitudes as internalised norms and social expectations as perceived norms, I suggest viewing these as a continuum of motivations which reflect social positions and power relations. Some may have internalised norms that become their values, becoming part of the taken-for-granted ‘doxa’, the unquestioned in society (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 167–170). People can conform to norms because they align with their identity, express their personal values or what they believe is appropriate (Bell & Cox, 2015; Etzioni, 2000). Through their repeated everyday enactment and transmission over generations, gender norms construct gender identities and acquire legitimacy, social value, and a naturalised character (Butler, 1990; Gutmann, 1996; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender identities also impact aspirations by affecting perceptions of the alternatives available and making certain options appear impossible: “The possibility of pursuing a career does not arise. Motherhood becomes the centrepiece of women’s identity, their education improving the quality of child-rearing and the management of a new, status-oriented lifestyle,” Rao contends (2012, p. 31).

Social actors may also become aware of the informal social norms that govern their lives and develop attitudes and values that go against existing norms, creating the potential

for cognitive dissonance. Some may report agreement with gender norms in surveys or interviews because of constraining power relations that limit how much norms can be negotiated, where open contestation and defiance might not be possible, rather than reflecting their “true” attitudes (Agarwal, 1997, p. 25). Others may start to question gender norms and deviate from them in their actions. Finally, gender norms might be openly contested and challenged. The passage along the continuum from internalised norms to more external forms of motivation to conform or deviate from norms might be key to gender transformations, when one can consider alternative possibilities, moving from conformity to choice (Charles & Harris, 2007; Collier, 1997).

Personal attitudes may thus conflict with gender norms in society. These divergences can be a motor of change. When attitudes and gender norms diverge, this could indicate that a norm is being contested, rather than disappearing. The thesis will argue that we cannot directly infer a change in gender norms from observing a change in attitudes. Gender norms influence individuals’ motivations, perceived needs and beliefs, but individuals can also think independently about the social rules that govern them, reinterpreting, contesting, and adapting them. Social actors can act strategically, automatically, intuitively, and innovatively to reinterpret or re-enact norms and rules in subtly different ways. Likewise, when people follow gendered rules and norms, they reinforce beliefs that these behaviours are natural or appropriate, further strengthening organisational arrangements and the underlying gender norms structuring them. Because of this reciprocal relationship, it is important to consider social structures (i.e. gender norms) and individuals’ beliefs and motivations as separate. To study gender norms, it is important to pay attention to how individuals relate to gender norms, and how their actions may represent adherence, strategic compliance, or overt and covert defiance with gender norms.

The question about the extent to which norms are fixed in people’s minds or operate as a constraint speaks to broader debates about choice, and conceptions that allow for multiple meanings, conflicting interests and a more nuanced view of agency that includes not only rational calculation but negotiation, silent consent, everyday resistance, and strategic conformity. This suggests the important role of individual consciousness in continuity and change. In Latin America, the cultural system of “*machismo*” incorporates inherent ambiguities in local discourses and practices that create a rich arena for multiple myths and representations (Gutmann, 1996, pp. 221–242; Melhuus & Stolen, 1996, pp. 230–259), but continues to reconfigure unequal gendered relations. In Hochschild’s study of dual-earner families in the United States (1989), she finds that what a person reports or believes about

gender is not always consistent with how they divide the unpaid “second shift” that remains after completing their paid workday. She finds that many couples develop “family myths” to conceal tensions arising from the lived-out contradictions between what her interlocutors thought, felt and did when it came to their commitment to gender equality.

Individuals’ beliefs about gender norms can thus be inconsistent and contradictory, and emotions and intentions may diverge. A sole focus on individuals’ social beliefs about others and their conditional preferences to follow a norm because others endorse it, as found in the evaluation literature for development programmes, misses out on the myriad of emotions attached to norms and ways gender norms are felt and expressed in the body and the complex gendered feelings and identities that are involved in norm conformity. The narrow analytical definition of social norms as social beliefs does not explain the gender-based violence that can follow gender norms transgressions (Sommer et al., 2018), compared, for example, to scornful looks or verbal reprimand for someone speaking too loudly in public. In other words, gender norms are expressed not only in the “minds” but also in individuals’ “hearts”, and in the broader social structures they inhabit.

This multi-level framework emphasises why they stay in place because of an inherent bias in structural theories towards reproduction (Deutsch, 2007; McLeod, 2005). However, the framework and the interactions between these levels can also lay the foundation for looking at the types of change we are interested in for this research project. Pathways of change will likely depend on the culturally specific ways gender norms are expressed as institutionalised norms, collective ideals and individuals’ beliefs and convictions. Examining how individuals engage with and negotiate norms in social interactions shaped by gendered institutions is an important aspect of gender norms reproduction and change (Ashwin & Isupova, 2018; Deutsch, 2007; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

This provides a middle-ground perspective (Kabeer, 1994, pp. 40–68) which understands social action as taking place within structures of opportunities and constraints, carried out by embodied individuals who also reinforce or challenge normative ideals and institutional hierarchies by “doing” or “undoing gender” in their everyday actions (Giddens, 1979; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1987). It is precisely the varied expressions of the relationship between gender norms of, for example, the male breadwinner, the altruistic mother, and the subservient housewife that exist ‘out there’ in society, sometimes formalised in official rules and social policies, and individuals’ own beliefs about these social norms, and how they relate to them in their practices, that is the theoretical focus of this thesis.



## 2.5 Gender norms resilience and change

By conceptualising gender norms within this multi-level framework, we can better understand how they operate at various levels of analysis and how they endure over time despite changing circumstances without confusing gender norms with how they become materialised in organisations and individual consciousness. Theories about social norms tend to either focus on norms as individuals' social beliefs or as constraining structures. Separating these three levels can allow for a more accurate analysis of what is changing. This section explains how an interactional and institutional approach to analysing change and resistance exposes the power dynamics involved and suggests that gender norm change is not solely the function of belief change.

### 2.5.1 Resilience

This multi-level perspective recognises that gender norms are entrenched in long-standing social practices, institutions, and legal frameworks; they cause and emerge from complex processes and interactions. The framework underscores the fractal nature of gender norms: similar patterns and divides are reinforced and sustained in multiple settings at different scales across society in iterative ways (Kranton, 2016, p. 405). Gender norms prove to be resilient. They discourage dissent through social sanctions and enforcement mechanisms that punish norm transgressors and become inscribed in formal laws and policies. They become taken-for-granted as part of the natural and unquestioned features of society. Social meanings can be adapted to accommodate changing practices so that they don't destabilise normative assumptions: in India, women and men jointly contribute to positioning women as housewives and men as providers, despite women engaging in farming activities in the context of male out-migration, by reframing these activities as domestic work (Rao, 2012, p.1025). Gender norms gain legitimacy from being perceived as long-standing practices and are buttressed by symbols and religious doctrines, and often stay in place because they benefit powerful actors, which undermine attempts to change them.

Gender norms also resist change because they allow for varied empirical realisations. As historical and feminist institutionalists point out, gender norms are "overdetermined" (Lowndes, 2020, p. 552; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p. 512) in that they can be instantiated in multiple ways. Gender norms are "relatively enduring" (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 14), as can be observed with the persistence of care norms under changing economic conditions and social

meanings (Badgett & Folbre, 1999). Progress in women's labour force participation can occur together with an entrenchment of women's domestic roles: men resist change individually and collectively to protect their privileges (Alméras, 2000; Viveros Vigoya, 2016), women 'compensate' their husbands for their work outside the home (Bittman et al., 2003), or they might opt for home-based forms of paid work to confirm their role as a mother and appease their husband's insecurities (Whitson, 2010).

The idea here is that norms at the macro level can persist despite changes in the external environment and adaptations at the meso- and individual levels. The idea that men should discuss household expenses with their wives might not dislodge the idea that they should remain the primary breadwinners. As explored in this thesis, increasing acceptance of men who cook and clean might not deter the idea that women are responsible for housework. The question then that needs more empirical scrutiny, which is precisely the aim of this thesis, is to explore under what conditions social norms do change rather than being reproduced in "new but unfamiliar ways" (McLeod, 2005, p. 12), i.e. adapted in ways that continue to produce gender difference and make women responsible for the larger share of unpaid household work. The following subsection reviews how various literatures have theorised normative change.

### 2.5.2 Exogenous and endogenous change

Building on our multi-level understanding of gender norms, I explore how scholars have theorised how norms change. These models disagree about whether gender norms and institutions are "slow-moving" or "fast-moving" (Roland, 2004, p. 116), whether change is located in individuals' minds or society, and whether they are driven by external shocks, internal processes, or a combination of both.

#### *Exogenous change and punctuated equilibria*

One theory of change sees gender norms changing through sudden, all-encompassing, and linear trajectories. As discussed in Chapter 5, the WVS was informed by theories that gender norms change as part of modernisation processes, resulting in the replacement of 'traditional' norms with 'modern' ones. This perspective proposes that societies transition from "traditional" attitudes in pre-industrial agrarian societies – where women are confined to roles as housewives and excluded from employment, education, and politics, with

discriminatory norms and beliefs supporting this division of gender roles – to industrial and post-industrial “modern” societies, with attitudes supporting gender equality in the home and the workplace. The main idea is that these processes of modernisation, from agrarian to industrial to post-modern urban economies with a large service sector result in improvements in women’s position in society, as they occupy higher status roles as professionals and political leaders. Family structures are also thought to follow this transition from extended families to nuclear ones to more diverse “non-traditional” households and declining fertility rates. This follows a Women-in-Development logic adopted in the 1970s, influenced by liberal feminist rationales that integrating women in the economy would improve their social status (Razavi & Miller, 1995).

Another theory of change espoused by new institutionalists economists and behavioural scientists regards norm change as characterised by tipping points, “norm cascades”, and equilibrium shifts after long periods of persistence (Bicchieri, 2017; Sunstein, 1996). In this conception, social norms are upheld by self-reinforcing expectations: people expect that a behaviour or rule is a norm and therefore conform to the norm. A norm might emerge out of chance or because of specific historical circumstances. However, once an equilibrium is in place, it is difficult to change because no one has an incentive to deviate from the norm on their own and collective action is hard to bring about, the thinking goes. These theories predict that norm change happens suddenly and rapidly. Norms persist, even after their initial usefulness has disappeared or despite changes in external conditions, but also change quickly and suddenly once they do (Giuliano, 2017). This leads to the “punctuated equilibrium” phenomenon, with sustained periods of norm persistence interrupted by short and sudden outbursts of norm change, shifting to a new equilibrium (Young, 2015, p. 363). The mechanisms of change involved include reaching a threshold or critical mass of people deviating from old norms, leading to positive feedback between observing new ways of doing and being, reinforcing expectations that a new norm is in place, encouraging others to take up these new practices.

The rapid abandonment of footbinding in China in one generation is often proposed as a case study confirming this model of change. Mackie (1996) argues that such a shift occurred during China’s rapid abandonment of footbinding. He argued that the practice was maintained by tacit agreements and expectations that men only marry foot-bound women and that footbinding expresses a girl’s marriageability and faithfulness, thereby ensuring paternity. Campaigning strategies and visible changes in parents pledging not to bind daughters and for sons not to marry foot-bound girls led to a tipping point where the previous

equilibrium shifted naturally as people changed their beliefs about what others typically do.

These dynamics have also been used to explain women's entry into the labour force where a critical mass of women engaging in public spaces in garment factories in South Asia, *maquiladoras* in Mexico or flower farms in Colombia, or of women holding socially valued jobs in administration roles, call centres, as doctors or lawyers can create positive feedback loops, eroding past ideas that women should be confined to the domestic space and reinforcing the ideas that women are competent and engage in paid work: visible changes in women's roles lead to a change in social expectations, giving rise to norm cascades (A. Evans, 2019).

Equilibrium shifts are often attributed to external shocks and historical conditions (Giuliano, 2017; Nunn, 2009). Empirical studies have explored the historical roots of gender norms, investigating how past practices and institutions have shaped current attitudes towards women's roles. These studies focus on path-dependence, examining how gender norms persist over time and are transmitted across generations, even after the original conditions have changed (Alesina et al., 2013). They have traced contemporary attitudes towards women's roles to factors like agricultural practices, geography, technological changes, and economic reforms, showing that historical conditions that supported women's labour participation have lasting effects on gender norms today (Carranza, 2014; Fernandez & Fogli, 2009; Ferrera, 1996; Qian, 2008; Xue, 2014). Some have also identified more recent exogenous shocks' effects on gendered norms, such as disasters and wars (Chafe, 1974; Fernández et al., 2004), or externally imposed policies and reforms in socialist regimes (Campa & Serafinelli, 2019) and during colonisation (Evans, 2015; Grosjean & Khattar, 2019).

These explanations differ widely in the historical moments and factors identified but converge in the idea that certain "critical junctures" (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007) resulted in radical shifts in gender norms, leading to a new equilibrium. While these studies provide credence to the idea that initial conditions matter, they often don't explain why one set of historical events had a persisting effect and not others. Additionally, many of these studies rely on the WVS for parts of their analysis and primarily focus on women's roles in labour force participation, saying very little about differences or factors affecting men's involvement in domestic production, an issue addressed in this thesis.

The thesis engages with historical legacies and more recent economic and political shifts in Colombia, asking what effect these have had on gender norms dynamics of change. Callen, Weigel and Yuchtman argue that studies should investigate moments of "deep

uncertainty about future institutions” (2023) to better understand processes of institutional change. However, my analysis departs from a punctuated equilibrium approach, which depicts change as a product of exogenous shocks, where gender norms and institutions are relatively static until a destabilising moment creates external conditions for them to change. It takes up the idea of path-dependence at the level of family and intergenerational change, to explore how conditions during one’s upbringing may shape attitudes towards gender norms, but leaves room for reflexivity and agency of individuals in how they repeat or break past patterns (Boddington, 2024; Ortner, 2006).

Another theory of change, which operates at the individual level, where social norms are upheld by mutually reinforcing social beliefs, has contributed to interventions intending to change norms by focusing on changing individuals’ social expectations and “correcting” beliefs (Bicchieri, 2006, 2017; Tankard & Paluck, 2016). The phenomenon of ‘pluralistic ignorance’, where individuals misperceive the attitudes and beliefs of others as being different from their own and hence comply with a norm that they disagree with, has received considerable attention (Miller & Prentice, 2016; Prentice & Miller, 1993). Interventions aimed at correcting these misperceptions have multiplied, to counter unhealthy behaviours such as college-drinking, smoking, or encourage pro-social behaviours such as recycling (Reid, Cialdini, and Aiken 2010).

Studies in Saudi Arabia and Jordan have also found high levels of personal support for women’s work outside the home, but underestimations of what fellow citizens report in surveys (Bursztyn et al., 2020; Gauri et al., 2019). The misperceptions thesis is used to generate policy recommendations: “This suggests that restricting female employment, which is perceived to be a popular opinion in many countries, does not correspond to true opinions. In this case, aligning perceived and actual views is a promising policy intervention (Bursztyn and Yang, 2022): It may raise female labor force participation (in particular, outside the home) by shifting perceived social norms in a way that is actually consistent with the underlying opinions of a society.” (Bursztyn et al., 2023, p. 20). The misperceptions hypothesis explains the persistence of unequal gender norms as a function of cognitive heuristics. This does not sit well with the substantive body of evidence from empirical studies in feminist and gender literatures about the complexity of gender relations and the careful analyses of the many factors that impinge on gender dynamics, including power imbalances and structural features of the socio-economic and political environment. It doesn’t explain women’s experiences of male backlash and opposition to change and doesn’t match the emotional reactions observed at times when people talk about family gender norms.

These models depict gender norms change as following from exogenous shocks or externally imposed interventions. They assume, under the right conditions, a relatively smooth transition to a new norm. It is unclear, however, under what conditions a tipping point is reached for the punctuated equilibrium view. Some have argued that the arrival of new opportunities (e.g., garment factory and export-oriented employment) and economic conditions (e.g., male unemployment) create situations where men and women see it in their interest for women to go out to work outside the home (Evans, 2019). However, as will be argued in this thesis, in exploring what it takes for men to become more meaningfully involved in unpaid activities in the home, “interest” is socially constructed and often has to be actively created to go against dominant norms. It is also unclear at what point women exhibiting norm-bending behaviour can be regarded as a ‘critical mass’ for change rather than deviators defying cultural expectations, and what leads to this critical point. Missing are the internal power dynamics of how gender norms are negotiated, contested, or how change is justified. More powerful groups and individuals are likely better able to resist norms, introduce new norms, enforce them, or get away with non-compliance.

### *An endogenous theory of change*

I now explore an endogenous theory of change, where forces of change may be external, but it is the actions of social actors – individuals and groups – that make normative change happen. Here, norm change appears more gradual, non-linear and slow-moving, characterised by contestation and negotiation. Processes of norm persistence and change can go unnoticed, as a persistent ‘equilibrium’ can mask hegemonic power, conflict between groups, active resistance, backlash and exclusionary practices to maintain the status quo, including systemic violence (Badgett & Folbre, 1999; Folbre, 1994; Pearse et al., 2016). A cooperative view of norms as solutions to coordination problems and as upheld mutually reinforcing expectations can be misleading: an “inefficient” equilibrium might benefit some groups in society, and when these groups hold power and benefit from the status quo, they can organise collectively and resist change (Ullmann-Margalit, 1978). In the case of unequal gender norms that are central to the functioning of society, constantly reinforced by various forces, legitimised by tradition or religion and where those whom the norm may disadvantage have the least power to change it, change might require a different set of actions altogether, as informational campaigns to correct misperceived beliefs alone will not overturn gender inequalities.

The thesis asks whether and how gender norms have changed in Colombia, in the context of increasing numbers of women engaging in paid work inside and outside the home. To answer these questions, there is a need for a richer vocabulary to describe how gender norms are changing, by describing and identifying their characteristics and content, e.g., are they rigid or flexible, highly restrictive or relatively permissive (e.g., men should never cook, or men can cook to help their wives), as well as the nature of their interactions with the other concepts identified, i.e., are there gaps and tensions between gender norms and practices or are these aligned, do legal reforms go against gender norms, etc. This departs from an ‘all-or-nothing’ conception of norms to leave the possibility of talking about norms being relaxed, weakening, or becoming stronger. For example, norms about paid work might be (or become) more flexible by allowing greater variations in practices or being more responsive to economic conditions, compared to gender norms about unpaid care work, that place most responsibilities on women irrespective of economic conditions (Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). Gender norms can be more rigid or flexible for different types of norms, in different contexts or times, and for different groups in the population, as Whitson observes for the performance of gender norms for different classes of informal workers in Argentina (Whitson, 2010).

This points us to historical institutionalist theories of gradual endogenous change where actors operate within these institutions to change them (Chappell & Waylen, 2013; Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Mahoney & Thelen, 2009). The interests and actions of those involved in institutional design, enforcement, preservation and reform are key variables that explain institutional persistence and change, where struggles, agency, and contestation are central to this view. Feminist institutionalists have taken up and expanded Thelen and Mahoney’s foundational work, putting a central emphasis on how these power struggles that underline processes of both stability and change are gendered (Waylen 2014, Mackay et al. 2010). The very recognition that institutions result in and persist because of power imbalances also opens possibilities and the motivation for disadvantaged groups to bring about change. This view emphasises that institutional change might occur from the cumulative effects of incremental, intended or unintended, “small adjustments” and small acts of resistance that have transformative effects (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009, p. xi).

Different actors may play different parts in institutional maintenance and change, between those who enforce norms, design rules and institutions, those who can enact change or must comply (Coleman, 1990; Horne et al., 2018). These insights suggest that actors may challenge and renegotiate rules and norms in ways that lead to transformation in the long run or serve to maintain the status quo. Mahoney and Thelen (2010, p.11) emphasise how actors

take advantage of ambiguities, tensions, and “gaps” between a rule, its interpretation and enforcement, leaving room for bottom-up change (2010, p.1). These ideas are relevant to the Latin American context, where diverse interpretations of the meanings of “machismo” have been well-documented (Gutmann, 1996), and where family norms can be applied across diverse household structures, or in new contexts in the case of Latin American migrants (Goetz & Gupta, 1996; Hashemi et al., 1996; McIlwaine, 2010), but often in ways that favour men over women and where normative understandings of gender remain largely undisturbed.

This body of research provides conceptual tools for thinking about ways existing institutions may change or new institutions introduced, from contesting institutions directly and advocating for their change, to reinterpreting or implementing rules differently. The relative power of change actors compared to those defending the status quo, and the relevance of changing political and economic circumstances, may determine whether a norm is replaced, whether rules are re-worked within the system, or whether old or new norms co-exist side by side. These include ideas of “displacement” where new institutions replace existing ones, of “layering” where new rules emerge while old rules stay in place, one of these may eventually “crowd out” the other or various elements of old rules may remain in place, old rules may gradually “drift” away with diminishing relevance as their effects change following changes to the environment, and finally existing rules might be “converted” when they are subtly and strategically redirected to meet different ends, such as in women’s strategic use of the veil to work outside the home, or tactfully reinterpreted or reframed (Streeck & Thelen, 2005, p. 31; Waylen, 2014).

Mackay’s concept of “nested newness” (2014) points to the fact that gendered institutions rarely shift to an entirely new equilibrium, but rather adapt from what has come before, where actors aim to push the boundaries of the existing system. In this view, gender institutional change is bounded by existing structures, taking place within a broader institutional environment that continues to be shaped by historical legacies and path dependencies. Combining the idea of path-dependencies with the possibility of endogenous change, this view “highlights the promise and limit of new institutions by placing them within their gendered institutional context” (MacKay, 2014, p. 550). Waylen (2014) notes how changing circumstances and new development processes may open the space to create new rules, reinterpret or extend old ones, or introduce new practices while appearing to conform with past institutions. Political and economic changes like the one Medellín society is undergoing create a great deal of instability and uncertainty, and a growing breakdown in the relation between past norms and practices, which used to be strongly aligned (Roldán,



1999). The question in this dissertation is whether gender norms remain “uncomplicated” by these changes, as Whitson (2010, p.159) observes in the case of Argentina’s economic crisis, or are they gradually changing, and how?

The thesis explores empirically to what extent these conceptual tools can be applied to gender norms change in family spaces, and how their dynamics may differ in important ways from institutional change in the political arena. As Capoccia argues (2016, p. 1096), there needs greater emphasis on how cultural and social norms themselves shape the conditions and processes of institutional change and continuity: “a central task confronting scholars is to understand the conditions under which institutions and policies’ structure social behavior or become themselves “the object of strategic action” (Hall, 2010a, p. 204).” Deutsch exposes various ways gender norms can be challenged and “undone” (2007), when certain activities may destabilise conventional gender definitions, or in delinking associations between gender identities and particular traits, for example between male identity and virility with not doing housework, or women’s identity as solely bound by being a mother and a wife, or when couples share parenting equally based on fairness or other gender-neutral criteria (Deutsch, 2000). In other words, what changes in organisations and practices at a lower level of analysis erode institutions and structures at higher levels of analysis?

The thesis engages with an extensive body of empirical research studying how external changes reconfigure household gender relations in Latin America and beyond. As Pearse and Connell (2016) point out, gender norms are subject to historical change through both external forces such as technological innovation, restructuring of the economy, democratisation, or legal reforms, and internal processes of change and contestation resulting from inherent contradictions in societies and within individuals’ beliefs and desires. Disruptive experiences, new situations and observing norm transgressions can make the unexamined visible, providing pathways to challenging deeply entrenched gender norms. Tradition is constantly being appropriated, negated and reinvented; hybrid traditions are created in spaces where different cultures come together, and identities are forged and reshaped. The fact that these changes are subtle and take place in everyday social practices can also render them invisible and allow powerful actors to make relatively recent gender norms appear traditional and ‘authentic’ (Pearse et al., 2016; Ratele, 2013).

External change can recompose, intensify, or transform inequalities (Elson, 2010). Ashwin and Isupova (2018) analyse trajectories of change in post-Soviet Russia, arguing that contradictions between normative ideals and actual practices where women have greater access to resources through paid work opened opportunities for change, allowing for

alternative ideals to be discussed and advocated for. Rather than a complete shift in equilibrium, alternative egalitarian models compete with traditional ideas, creating conflicting processes of continuity and change in Russia's "transitional" state.

Theorists have stressed that social norms are constructed, reinforced, and questioned through social interactions (Deutsch, 2007; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Agarwal (1997) highlighted that social norms act as constraints on decision-making but also change through negotiations. Norms may be used as resources drawn upon in struggles over access, rights, and needs; they may also be themselves the subject of ideological and material struggles. Intra-household bargaining approaches have operationalised the concept of power in social interactions as the strength of individuals' "breakdown position", which determines the extent to which they can negotiate and achieve outcomes that suit their needs and desires. Bargaining approaches and the framework of "cooperative conflicts" (Sen, 1990) expose the power dynamics and complex motivations involved in household decisions. Individuals' options outside of cooperation are shaped by their access and control over resources, the legal environment, community norms and perceptions (Agarwal, 1997). In "cooperative conflicts", individuals will cooperate if they can achieve a better outcome than through their fallback position. However, conflict can still arise given that different outcomes benefiting one party over another are possible, requiring individuals to negotiate.

The literature on intra-household bargaining has often focused on the factors that affect women's bargaining power, linking these to outcomes (Doss, 2013; Friedemann-Sánchez, 2006). Although much of this literature has focused on how material resources, especially women's greater control and access to an income or land ownership, improve their fallback position and enable a greater say to negotiate unequal norms, the evidence of this effect is mixed, and these outcomes are far from certain (Gilardone et al., 2014; A. Goetz, 1995; Hashemi et al., 1996). Power is not only constituted by material resources; gender considerations, influenced by social norms, may "trump money" and are equally important in shaping power relations and negotiations (Bittman et al., 2003). Others have focused on less tangible resources and qualitative factors. Friedemann-Sanchez (2006) uncovers the diverse strategies women workers on Colombian flower farms have used to renegotiate unequal division of labour in households, resulting in different outcomes, marital separation or cooperation, depending on the combination of resources and social assets that they have at their disposal. Some women in her study left relationships where they felt overburdened; others demanded better treatment and a revaluation of their roles as homemakers.

Although Agarwal (1997) identifies that social norms can change through negotiation processes within the household, much of the empirical research on intra-household bargaining aims to identify either the determinants of bargaining power, especially that between spouses, or what happens regarding cooperation or conflict and when marital dissolution occurs. Few studies have focused on how negotiation is happening and what this means for gender norms. This is the focus of Chapter 9, which adds to this literature by 1) looking at the processes and strategies through which gender norms are negotiated and contested, and 2) demonstrating that these negotiation processes occur within the family and across generations, beyond the narrow focus on couples.

The examples observed in the flower farms have taken place across Colombian society and are well-documented in Latin America (Chant, 2002). However, these actions may lead to minimal reconfigurations, where women's identities as workers shift but motherhood ideals remain (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2012). Gender norms are resilient in that they allow for adaptations that maintain unequal entitlements and privileges, as the analysis will observe. Everyday negotiations may also serve to maintain gender norms. In the United States, Rao (2020) shows how high-earning couples recreate traditional gender roles at home through their negotiations around an implicitly gendered "ideal job seeker norm" in situations of uncertainty brought about by unemployment. This raises the question about when acts of subversion, defiance, and accommodation lead to rethinking gender norms, breaking away from previous mentalities, rather than providing momentary respite within them. For this reason, I also engage with theoretical insights from resistance studies (Kandiyoti, 1998; Scott, 1987, 1990) to understand how power, authority, legitimacy, covert and overt forms of resistance factor into processes of gender norms change.

Intra-household bargaining approaches are mainly applied to empirical analyses of bargaining between couples. In Colombia's context of high marital instability and high incidence of female-headed households, solely investigating dual-earner households to understand how gender norms are being renegotiated, which accounted for 19% of the household survey sample, risks overlooking important processes of change. In chapter 9, I argue that discussions and pressures over social norms occur within the extended family and in the choice of partners in the context of heterogeneous family forms. This involves "entry, exit, and loyalty" strategies (Hirschman, 1970) through which household members exert agency to express discontent or attempt to change institutionalised practices in the family.

All these suggest more complex, dynamic and varied processes of continuity and change than the punctuated equilibrium literature suggests. In this thesis, I focus on processes

of normative change, analysing how social actors use, contest, and (re)create norms in the context of urbanisation and expansion of women's employment. These may involve "hidden transcripts" of resistance (Scott, 1990) that serve to buttress or dismantle normative understandings in subtle ways, and covert forms of resistance, manipulation, and subversion, as documented by James Scott's "Weapons of the Weak" (1987). Gender scholars have found these concepts fitting to describe women's hidden strategies to carve out greater freedoms while exhibiting outward conformity to normative ideals of female domesticity and male economic provision (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2012; Hart, 1991; Ortner, 2006). The thesis will interrogate how applicable the analysis of class conflict in resistance studies between poor landless peasants and wealthy landowners may be to intimate gender relations in the family, which may require negotiating external forces as well as personal identities. It also explores more direct strategies of contestation and processes of co-creating equality that go beyond covert acts and examines the extent to which these strategies maintain gender norms rather than transforming them.

To summarise, social norms act as constraints to equitable household arrangements, motivate the performance of gendered practices ("doing gender"), but can also be "undone" or contested (Deutsch, 2007). This simultaneous endogeneity and exogeneity is difficult to integrate in statistical analysis. This review of models of normative change raises questions around the form and pace of change and the extent to which individual and collective agency, compared to policymaking and external interventions, may be effective. Changing gender norms and the organisations they are embedded in requires overcoming power strongholds and path dependencies.

Some questions remain that the empirical analysis will aim to address: when and how do men who 'undo' gender represent a challenge to hegemonic masculinity (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005)? How much resistance and contestation are needed for gender norms to change? Secondly, what does normative change consist of? Do meanings associated with the norm change, such as the shift from breadwinner to a primary male and secondary female earner, as will be discussed in chapter 7? Are norms 'relaxed' when transgressions become socially permissible but continue to be frowned upon (Popitz, 2017), or when disruptive experiences and new situations render the unexamined visible? Are old gender norms replaced by completely different standards, or do behaviours become gender-neutral or "gender irrelevant" (Deutsch, 2007, p.116)? Third, should the two models of norm change be reconciled as two processes occurring at different moments – e.g., more gradual change until a tipping point is reached– or do they apply to different types of social norms? Iregui and

colleagues' (2020) analysis of women's transformation in Colombia identifies periods of evolutionary and revolutionary change in Colombia's recent history, for example.

A key point to consider as I explore gender norms change in Medellín is that organisational practices may change without changing gender norms. The thesis explores to what extent greater diversity in practices occasions a rethink in gender norms. Experiences and practices can create more ambiguities and diversity than stipulated by strict norms and moral codes in a large urban city. This can contribute to a more pluralist gender order, facilitating normative change (Pearse et al., 2016). Gender norms are not only part of 'backwards' and 'traditional' cultures, they are present in all 'modern' and 'traditional' societies. Gender norms can be transformed to support standards of equality and justice: "Norms, that is to say, also have an element of transcendence. They may express social utopias, the imagination of how things could be." (Pearse et al., 2016, p. 37). There can also be competing systems of gender norms which co-exist. Holmelin, in a study of Himalayan farming communities in Nepal (2019), observes the juxtaposition of "modern" developmental ideas of gender equality and past gender norms that assign authority over decision-making around agricultural practices to men and found that these two sets of norms interact to instigate change in some instances. At the same time, men and women may downplay changing practices to appear to conform to gender norms, such as women hiding their income-generating activities, or men concealing their participation in cooking and cleaning (Almérás, 2000; Luke et al., 2003, p. 627; N. Rao, 2012; Whitson, 2010).

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter laid out a multi-level analytical framework which considers rules and norms at the abstract institutional level, how they play out at the level of concrete organisations like households, companies, and workplaces, (following North's distinction between institutions and organisations), and social actors at the micro-level, their attitudes and beliefs which are products of these larger structures. To some extent, social actors internalise what these larger structures tell them, take them for granted in ways that these become part of their identity. The focus on attitudes and values is important because social actors are also conscious and aware, and may develop attitudes and values that go against existing norms, which creates the potential for change.

Through its core focus, the thesis emphasises the potential of individuals and marginalised groups to transform gender norms while recognising the limits these gender

norms place on their actions and hence their change strategies, creating a tension in what change is possible and how researchers assess change. In what follows, I analyse the interactions between what people say and reveal publicly, what they do and can be observed, and what they believe *should be* in Medellín's rapidly urbanising context. I describe in Chapter 4 the mixed methods approach I used to investigate these different levels of analysis and their interactions. I also link the empirical observations to a broader historical and contextual understanding of Colombia and Medellín, which I explore in Chapters 3 and 6. Through its multi-level analytical framework, the dissertation emphasises the central role of social actors' agency in social change. It focuses on social interactions that change or reproduce gender norms in domestic organisational settings, rather than (solely) individual-level change in attitudes or beliefs.

## Chapter 3. Colombia: Historical and contemporary context

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores Colombia's historical legacies and recent economic and political developments to contextualise the WVS trends and further empirical research into one of its cities. Colombia is both an exception and exhibits characteristics particular to the Latin American region. The country has remained a democracy since Independence, apart from a brief period of military dictatorship (1953-1958), and it never had a leftist government during Latin America's "Pink Tide" until 2022 (Blofield et al., 2017). Unlike other Latin American countries, it did not experience a debt crisis in the 1980s and was thus not subject to IMF loans and the associated conditionalities (Blofield et al., 2017; Williamson, 2004). It has maintained a close relationship with the United States (Castro et al., 2016; B. L. Coleman, 2008) and has experienced decades of conflict and mass internal displacement fuelled by the drug trade.

At Independence up to the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Colombia lagged behind other Latin American countries on several economic, social, and gender indicators. Over the past century, the country has undergone profound and multifaceted transformations, with conflicting patterns and outcomes of change. The sections below give some sense of the economic and political transformations that have occurred and accelerated since the 1950s, including improving living standards, poverty reduction, rapid urbanisation and increasing female labour force participation and education levels.

The empirical analysis focuses on gender norms and family practices between 1950 and 2021, which corresponded to decades of significant upheaval to Colombians' lives, where it became a predominantly urban and middle-income country and where "Colombian women were able to catch up with developed countries in several areas." (Iregui-Bohórquez et al., 2020, p. 5). The thesis traces the lives and the conditions for three generations of men and women, which can be mapped onto three distinct moments in Colombia and Medellín's recent history: between the 1950s to the 1980s, when the oldest research participants (60-75 years old) were entering their mid-twenties, between the 1980s and 2000s, when those between 40 and 60 years old were reaching adulthood, and since the early 2000s, which corresponds to the upbringings and early adulthood of the youngest generation of respondents interviewed. More particularly, the analysis falls within the 1995-2018 timeframe, where WVS trends are captured and asks how family gender norms and practices have changed

since the 1990s for the more recent generations compared to the previous ones. In this chapter, I go back further in time to situate recent contemporary developments within the country's broader history.

Figure 1. Map of Colombia



Source: *mapsland.com*

### 3.2 The historical and colonial legacies of structural divides

Historians and geographers highlight how Colombia's diverse geography and mountainous topography made it difficult to communicate, establish exchange routes across regions, or control the country from a central location (Melo, 2017; Safford & Palacios, 2002). This stifled national integration and contributed to the formation of relatively isolated indigenous communities in distinctive geographical regions. Both before and during colonisation, regions were relatively autonomous from each other. Throughout Colombia's political history, a strong sense of regionalism obstructed efforts to control the country from a central authority, fuelling political tensions and conflicts after independence (Melo, 2017).



Distinct patterns of Spanish conquest beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, followed by variegated colonisation processes and territorial expansions from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, led to significant regional differences. The degrees and forms of syncretism between indigenous and colonial Spanish cultures varied, as did the patterns of economic production and forms of exploitation of local populations or the use of slaves. In some areas, indigenous populations rapidly declined, killed by the Spanish colonisers or disease, and were replaced by slaves of African origin, in the Caribbean or Western parts of the country, most notably. In others, indigenous populations survived and were forced to work for Spanish landowning settlers who relied on indigenous populations' cheap labour in the *encomienda* or *resguardo* systems (Goyes et al., 2021), which evolved into the *hacienda* economic system employing free farm labourers (LeGrand, 1984). This led to cultural and ethnic difference with distinct proportions of indigenous, African, or Spanish descendants across Colombia. The Spanish conquest was nonetheless rapacious and brutally violent, subjecting native populations and slaves to murder, mutilation, enslavement, rape, and sexual and economic exploitation (Santamaría, 2017) Women lost their sources of community protection and were exposed to the control and abuse of Spanish men (Farnsworth-Alvear et al., 2016).

Different regions served different economic functions and evolved to distinct social structures of class relations, with varying degrees of influence and reach of the Catholic religion and priests. The concentration of land and property also differed: regions around Bogotá, Cundinamarca, for example, were characterised by greater inequalities in land concentration, with the hacienda system and patron-client relationships of deference (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2006, p. 248), while others were more dominated by smallholder farmers (*minifundios*), including Antioquia in the West, where Medellín is located. In Antioquia, gold mining drove the colonial economy; agriculture and local markets remained underdeveloped. These differences created a wide heterogeneity in landholding structures, but a small dominant landholding class was formed across Colombia, alongside a social majority of poor smallholder farmers and peasants.

These regional differences set the ground for distinctive patterns of long-term development across geographical regions, especially between the more populated Andean highlands which include major cities like Bogotá, Medellín and Cali, and the more sparsely populated peripheries distant from major urban centres such as the Amazon Basin, the Caribbean coast or the lowland plains in eastern Colombia (Rausch, 1999), resulting in uneven development outcomes (Safford & Palacios, 2002). Following independence in 1819, and during Colombia's agricultural expansion and integration into global markets through

coffee exports in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Antioquia benefited significantly more than other regions, rising in economic and political power (Brew, 1977). Landowners and smallholder farmers expanded agricultural production and established commercial and trade networks (Berrocal Hoyos, 1980; Parsons, 1949). This wealth accumulation and increasing financial dominance reinforced a distinctive racialised regional identity and mythology among people from Antioquia as being a relatively homogeneous “white-mestizo” Catholic community of hard-working, devout, industrious and entrepreneurial people, as opposed to other regions of the country with larger populations of Afro-Colombians, Indigenous and mixed-raced populations, creating “hierarchies of cultural difference” (Roldán, 2002, p. 37). Historian Nancy Appelbaum exposes the contradictory ways race, ethnicity, and regional identity were manipulated and blurred in Antioquia, where many African slaves arrived and established communities once they were freed. Many of the region’s peripheral zones in rural areas and close to the Caribbean coast were populated by darker-skinned groups who were regarded and constructed as being of inferior moral standing and lazy by wealthy elites to justify their social and economic power (Appelbaum, 2003, p. 35).

The impacts of colonisation and later developments cemented inequalities within and across regions in Colombia along geographical, ethnic, class and gender lines. As for much of Latin America, colonial legacies constitute some of the root causes of the high levels of inequalities that exist today (Coatsworth, 2008; Huffman & Centeno, 2003; Mahoney, 2010). Colonisation led to a small, privileged oligarchic class of Spanish settlers and their descendants which protected its interests and position, perceived “whiteness” and superior morality through marriage, establishing exclusionary structures and moral norms aimed at differentiating their class with other blacks, indigenous and mixed raced peoples (Velasco et al., 2018). These led to a dual system of marriages, one regulated by the Catholic Church and following moral norms and legal rules, aimed at preserving elite families’ lineage, property and status, and the other outside of formal law. This has contributed to a long history of female headship and consensual unions. This created a politics of respectability where marriage and standards of femininity, including beauty standards and moral character, served to differentiate “good” and “ideal” citizens from the rest (Farnsworth-Alvear, 2000; Stanfield, 2013). Children born out of wedlock and single mothers were stigmatised and not protected before the law (Dueñas Vargas, 1997).

In Colombia, race, class, and gender are intricately intertwined and co-produced by complex processes and can be more difficult to separate explicitly. *Mestizaje*, the violent process of racial and cultural mixing, occurred rapidly and extensively in Colombia through

acculturation and intermarriage, which involved and reinforced power dynamics and social hierarchies (Wade, 1995). This blurred racial lines, but also contributed to racial inequalities, as Appelbaum shows in the case of Antioquia. Those classified or identified as “white” or “mestizo” (people of mixed ancestry, usually white European and indigenous background) benefit from higher status than racialised individuals and communities, which have been marginalised in both discourses and economic processes, despite the recognition of plurality and inclusivity in civil rights documents in more recent times. Over time, these divisions became more flexible, as some social mobility enabled *mestizos* and some freed black slaves to obtain land and accumulate wealth. Nevertheless, narratives of mestizaje and regional stereotypes became institutionalised in laws and academic textbooks, serving as a basis for inclusion and exclusion (Viveros Vigoya, 2015; Wade, 2016).

These colonial legacies, along with postcolonial development patterns, have led to a multicultural and ethnically diverse country, but also stark inequalities in wealth and power. Unequal colonial structures of social, land, economic, and political inequalities persist today, despite ambitions of equality, universalism and liberalism. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations are concentrated at the country level in peripheral regions with lower levels of development and investment, in the coastal regions and the country’s peripheries (Rausch, 1999). They tend to correspond to regions with greater natural resources, which have also experienced higher levels of exploitation and violence by the government, multinational companies, and armed groups. Within cities, these populations are more often concentrated in peripheral and informal settlements. The 2018 Census estimates that Afro-Colombians make up 9,34% of the population, and indigenous populations 4,4%, the majority identifying as mestizos (DANE 2018).

Both the social class system and gender order structure gender relations (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2006). Colombia’s class system operates through structural stratification that was first introduced during colonialism, legally formalised in the 1990s and implemented nationwide through the SISBEN means-testing identification (Uribe-Mallarino, 2008). The system divides citizens into six categories, ‘one’ corresponding to the lowest group and ‘six’ the wealthiest. Most Colombians are classified in classes one to three, designating lower and lower-middle classes. Class categories are assigned to residential properties, resulting in neighbourhoods being identified by stratum. Strata five and six are part of the contributory scheme to support public and social services for classes one to three (Ewig & Bello, 2009). Although intended to redistribute wealth and reduce inequality, this social stratification system has contributed to urban segregation and reinforced the formation of class sub-

cultures. It has consolidated hierarchies of power; people identified with lower social classes are often stigmatised and racialised.

Although extreme poverty and inequality rates have decreased in the past decades, this has not been accompanied by substantive social development. The sections below address these processes of economic development with high social costs and prosperity for a minority of the population, which perpetuate conditions for continued violence.

### 3.3 Delayed economic development and incomplete processes of ‘modernisation’

At independence, national economic development was constrained because of political conflicts, limited agricultural infrastructure, inadequate communication and transportation means and a central authority that lacked legitimacy and control over distinct regions. The country remained searching for its identity and political system following the dissolution of Gran Colombia in 1831, which included present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama. Two primary political visions amongst political leaders eventually formed two dominant parties, the Liberals and Conservatives. The Conservatives, more aligned with colonial era structures, aligned with the Catholic Church and called for more centralised and authoritarian political models and protectionist economic policies, whereas Liberals supported a decentralised government, democratic and egalitarian principles and challenged traditional political elites, advocating, for example, for the state rather than the Church’s control over education. Political rivalries and animosities marked the period from the 1840s to 1903. The loss of Panama in 1903 following the Thousand Days’ War (*Guerra de los Mil Dias*) civil war (1899-1902) between these two parties spurred institutional reforms in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to reinforce the central political authority of Bogotá.

Post-independence marked a period of further colonisation and expansion of the Colombian interior, with agricultural development in certain regions, including Antioquia (Parsons, 1949), with Medellín growing substantively between 1850 and 1870. Slow economic development processes set off in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, following improvements in transportation links across the country, steamboats were introduced in the 1850s, allowing for navigation and trade across the Magdalena, for example, and the expansion of commercial agriculture (LeGrand, 1984)

Over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Colombia has undergone economic development, modernisation, rapid urbanisation, and a demographic transition (Caballero, 2016; Melo,

2017). The country's late integration into world markets through coffee production allowed for sustained economic growth and the expansion of local markets during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This growth facilitated early urbanisation processes and subsequent rapid industrialisation, notably with the textile industry in Antioquia, funded by finances accumulated from trade and coffee production (Botero Herrera, 2003; Mejia, 2023)

From the 1950s onwards, urban growth accelerated, with rural migrants in search of factory work and other economic opportunities stimulated by import substitution industrialisation, and because of mounting political and social violence in rural areas, forcing many to flee to urban centres. The manufacturing of consumer goods and agricultural exports supported capitalist development. Economic development was also accompanied by changes to the state, with the growth of state central bureaucracies (Uricoechea, 1987) and modest welfare policies for formal workers, excluding large parts of the population of informal workers and rural peasants (Lora & Henao, 1995).

Some women found jobs in textile factories, with single women entering the workforce in significant numbers, especially in the earlier phase of industrial development between 1900-1930, albeit often disciplined by the Catholic paternalism characteristic of Antioquia's industrial elite (Farnsworth-Alvear, 2000; Gaviria, 1991). Some middle-class women worked as teachers, nurses or secretaries, while upper-class women were often involved in charitable endeavours but did not work in the labour force.

By the 1970s, more than half of Colombia's population was living in urban areas with newly emerging urban classes, including lower middle and working classes who settled on cities' outskirts, and faced underemployment and poverty. Many women migrated to the cities alone with their children because of the violence in rural zones, when their husbands were killed (Roldán, 2002, p. 290). Amid economic slowdown and deindustrialisation, the country adopted structural adjustment policies, following recommendations falling under the "Washington Consensus" and promoted by the World Bank (Isaza, 20032; Ocampo et al., 1998). Colombia's export-oriented economic approach was supported by investment in agribusinesses such as the cut-flower industry (Meier, 1999; Patel-Campillo, 2011), and increasing petroleum exports, making the country more reliant on fluctuations in commodities and oil prices (Pineda, 2015, pp. 105–106). Since the 1990s, extensive market-oriented reforms have been implemented (Isaza & Reilley, 2019), with trade and financial liberalisation, privatisation of social services and weakening of labour laws (Echeverry, 2009). The impact of narcotrafficking and the drug trade, rising rapidly since it was introduced in 1972, had far-reaching social and economic consequences in the decades

following, and created a new source of income-generating activities for poor city dwellers (Roldán, 1999).

President Gaviria's government established the 1991 Constitution which recognises and protects the rights of women and minorities also set in motion '*La Apertura*', a period of economic liberalisation, decentralisation processes, and adherence to neoliberal principles (J. P. Faguet & Sánchez, 2014; Jaramillo, 1992; Londoño Rendón, 1998). The 1991 Constitution combined principles of liberalism and inclusiveness and incorporated resolutions to address gender equality and rights-based policies (Deere & Leon, 1998; Domingo & Menocal, 2015). This increased women's labour force participation but also informal employment, growing insecurities and inequalities (Isaza, 20032; Ocampo & Vallejo, 2012).

After the economic crisis of 1998-1999, a "Post-Washington Consensus" approach was undertaken (Molyneux, 2008), with greater fiscal discipline along with social programmes to reduce poverty and expand social assistance to marginalised populations outside of formal employment. These went some way in reducing extreme forms of poverty. However, according to economic analysts, the reduction in poverty rates was primarily due to economic growth during the commodity boom (2002-2012) rather than redistributive and egalitarian policies (Ocampo & Vallejo, 2012). Colombia, like other countries in Latin America, has experimented with innovative social policies to address poverty and inequality (Barrientos et al., 2008). Since 2000, it has implemented the third largest conditional cash transfer in the region, *Familias en Accion*, a country-wide anti-poverty programme and *Jovenes en Accion*, launched in 2001, provides cash transfers to youth to attend university and technological studies.

The social and cultural changes from these twentieth-century developments were profound. A declining role of the Church since the 1930s led to increasing acceptance and availability of contraception, and with its declining role in political and social life, a liberalisation of values and practices (Melo, 2017). These modernisation processes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century also included "civilising" the lower classes and racialised populations. Seeking to establish itself as a modern state, the country engaged in "whitening" processes to create a cohesive *mestizo* identity and align with images and "modern" norms set by white European political and cultural models (Wade, 1995), resulting in a multi-ethnic nation supporting "multiculturalism that authorizes cultural differences but hides racial inequalities." (Viveros Vigoya, 2015, p. 496). The first country clubs were established in the 1920s and 1930s, reflecting the urban elites' desire to replicate social institutions and cultural lifestyles in Europe and the United States (D. M. Gómez, 2023; Pérez Pinzón, 2023). Political

agendas promoting “public morality” and “social hygiene” were reflective of this “civilizing mission” (Noguera, 2003), which sought to regulate the behaviour of marginalised groups. As an example, Legros et al. (2022, 99) note that early policies used sports as “a symbol of progress, using it as a tool to promote ‘modern’ values and activities, advance the well-being of the nation and cultivate world relations (Ruiz Patiño 2017).”

Women obtained the right to enter university in 1933 and the right to vote and be elected in 1954. The country underwent demographic and social transitions during this time, with declining fertility rates and smaller family sizes, especially with the establishment of Profamilia in 1966, which promotes reproductive health and family planning services, as noted by Iregui et al. (2020). Joint titling programmes, changing relationships in the traditional *hacienda* system, and export-oriented development have provided rural women with access to wages and small plots of land, in the floriculture and coffee growing export industries or coca farming, among others (C. Deere & Leon, 2003; Madrid & Lovell, 2007; Parada-Hernández et al., 2021; Pineda et al., 2019). Declining fertility rates, rising educational levels, deregulation of labour markets and expansion of the service and knowledge economy have contributed to this trend in urban settings (Amador et al., 2013; Parrado, 2002; Pineda, 2014). The 1980s marked a turning point in gender transformations with significant increases in women’s education, labour force participation, and greater political participation (Iregui-Bohórquez et al., 2020), with Domingo et al. (2015, p.7) noting an “accelerated pace of change” for women’s empowerment especially since the 1990s.

Economic development, ongoing macroeconomic stability since the early 2000s and urbanisation have led to relative improvements in living standards and poverty reduction, and achievements for women’s rights and economic and political participation, yet with persisting challenges related to conflict, violence and inequality. More recently, the Covid pandemic’s effects were severe in Latin America, and threaten to undermine decades of progress in poverty reduction and women’s economic rights and may have led to a strengthening of illicit actors’ position in various locations in the region (CEPAL, 2022; Crisis Group, 2023; D. E. Davis & Hilgers, 2022; Tribin et al., 2023)

### 3.4 Violence and political elites

As a backdrop to these social and economic developments is the violence sustained over decades spurred by political tensions, discontent from profound social injustices, the emergence of guerrilla and paramilitary groups, the drug trade and narco-trafficking

(Palacios, 2006), leading to one of the highest numbers of internally displaced populations in the world (IDMC, 2021).

A long history of violence has shaped politics and social life in Colombia. Despite intentions to dismantle colonial structures at independence, deep-seated inequalities persisted. Political power remained concentrated within a narrow circle of regional elites and traditional families, irrespective of their affiliation with Liberal or Conservative parties. These elites retained control over the distribution of state resources through closed networks and alliances, assuring the reproduction of elite power and exclusions. Echeverri (1997) argues that although the Colombian political system appeared democratic, it was fundamentally aristocratic in practice, confining power and business to a select group of families and limiting citizen participation and representation, leading to profound discontent.

The roots of political violence in Colombia lie in the colonial period and the post-independence civil wars and contentions between the Liberals and Conservatives parties. More contemporary manifestations of violence in the decades since the mid-twentieth century can be traced back to *La Violencia* (“The Violence”) from 1948-1958, which was triggered by the assassination of left-leaning Liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. This led to *El Bogotazo*, an eruption of riots in Bogotá following the assassination of the presidential candidate (Braun, 2003) and to subsequent popular uprisings across the country. These were fuelled by longer-term discontent and protests against the exclusionary political system and unequal land distribution. Bipartisan conflicts and violence erupted in rural areas between members of the Conservative and Liberal parties, with the formation of Liberal guerrillas and Conservative “counterguerrillas” (Melo, 2017, p. 219), where entire villages were attacked as “perceived to be political opponents.” (Farnsworth-Alvear et al., 2016, p. 324). Rural peasants were displaced from their land, leading to a first wave of rural exodus to the cities, with a significant rise in the urban poor and illegal invasions in cities (Roldán, 2002; Uribe, 2004).

The military coup by General Rojas Pinilla in 1953, supported by civilians and elites, led to a short-lived military dictatorship between 1953 and 1958. Elites overturned the military government to establish the National Front between 1958-1974 in attempts to end violence and ensure political stability. This consisted of a bipartisan coalition which guaranteed altering presidencies, an equal sharing of ministerial posts and equal representation. Many argue that it led to the entrenchment of elite control and restricted political competition (Echeverri, 1997), and attempts at social and political reforms did not resolve many injustices and inequalities.



With the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution, various leftwing guerrilla movements arose in the 1960s from this complex history of violence, agrarian conflict, and land dispossessions. The growth of drug trafficking, guerrilla insurrections and the formation of armed paramilitary groups led to an explosion of violence and intensification of the internal conflict during the 1980s and 1990s where these groups fought to gain territorial control, engaging in extortion, massacres, and attacks against the civilian population (Taussig, 2005; Uribe, 2004). The armed conflict that has lasted for decades and undergone multiple phases and transformations has engaged a conflation of actors and alliances, including the guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary groups, the Colombian Armed Forces, narco-traffickers, and large landowners. Chapter 6 on Medellín will explore some of its urban manifestations. The United States' domestic stance towards the 'war on drugs' and its political interventions in Colombia have led to further militarisation of the armed conflict, through the provision of military aid for initiatives such as Plan Colombia, which had consequences for human rights violations without addressing the root causes of the conflict (Rosen, 2014; Stokes, 2003).

The historic signing of the 2016 peace deal between the Santos government and the *Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia* (FARC), which included a gender-based approach to peace (Phelan & True, 2022), was the culmination of extensive efforts by civil society, social leaders, and feminist mobilisations, providing some hope to Colombians of a possible end to the complicated civil conflict. The implementation and its effects have been mixed. Implementation of the peace accords was inadequate during Duque's government (2018-2022), a vocal opponent of the peace deal. Since 2016, the conflict has evolved into more complex forms of violence, as new groups have entered former FARC-controlled territories to gain control in the absence of state involvement, leading to fragmentation and complications in violence dynamics (Albarracín et al., 2023; Gariglio, 2023; Rios, 2022). Increased social unrest and the deterioration of the security situation in rural and urban areas alike have led to widespread social protests, massacres, violence against former combatants, and killings of social leaders, with Colombia facing the highest number of environmental activists killed worldwide in 2020 (65) (INDEPAZ, 2024). This context should be taken into account when considering processes of transformative gender change. The lack of protection of social leaders and activists against threats to their lives has profound implications for the possibilities of collective mobilisation.

### 3.5 Conclusion: Colombia today

Colombia's development trajectory today is marked by a series of achievements and challenges related to gender equality and inclusive development. Colombia is now classified as an upper middle-income country, and joined the OECD in 2020. The country has maintained democratic processes and macroeconomic stability, but with large informal, illicit and illegal economies, while also enduring extreme levels of violence from decades of internal conflict rooted in patterns of exclusion and discrimination, as detailed above (Fergusson & Vargas, 2023; Robinson, 2005). Colombia's strong performance on several human and economic development indicators despite facing these challenges forces a rethink of common assumptions in development theory positing transitions from economic development to gender norms change.

Despite the relative absence of barriers to women's empowerment in formal institutions, gender inequality persists in several domains. Colombia ranks relatively high in terms of gender equality and absence of institutional gender discrimination on the Global Gender Gap and the Social Institutions and Gender Indices. Yet, the 2015 Demographic Health Survey finds evidence of traditional perceptions around masculinity and femininity, rigid gender roles, devaluation of women and tolerance for violence against women. Furthermore, there is some evidence that a "re-feminisation" of poverty has occurred in the past decades, with Colombian women's caregiving responsibilities identified as one of the structural causes of continued female poverty (Bradshaw et al., 2019).

Despite progressive social programmes, land reforms, and economic progress, Colombia remains one of the most unequal countries in Latin America and worldwide with extremely low possibilities for social mobility (J.-P. Faguet et al., 2016; World Bank, 2022). Colombian women continue to experience multiple and overlapping inequalities along economic, ethnic, racial, gendered, and spatial lines that limit their economic empowerment (Domingo & Menocal, 2015; Suarez et al., 2010; UN Women, 2018). Women have gained access to leadership positions, in executive positions in Colombian multinational companies or as ministers and mayors, but there are marked class hierarchies between women, where wealthy households heavily rely on domestic workers as a marker of status, which are in the overwhelming majority of women of Afro-Colombian and lower-class origins. High unemployment rates and youth unemployment create further barriers to social mobility (Castillo et al., 2020; Ham et al., 2021). In this context, Latin American and Colombian feminists have emphasised structural issues and the intersections of gender inequalities with other forms of exploitation in their analyses and highlight the diversity of women's and men's experiences (Gamlin, 2022; Leon, 2009; Molina & Galleguillos, 2022).

The context surrounding the fieldwork encapsulates some of the political, social, and economic issues defining the Colombian setting. The fieldwork took place between two salient moments. It started just around the historical protests of the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2019, where Colombians took to the streets in record numbers, mobilising around demands to protect the peace process, express discontent with extractivist and neoliberal models of development, and call for better rights and conditions for workers, students, and indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups (Archila et al., 2019; Guerrero Hurtado, 2022). Although the extent of the protests surprised some observers who saw Colombia along with Chile as exemplars of liberalism, economic stability and poverty reduction in the region, to the country's social majority and activists this was a long time coming with building resentment over decades of human rights violations, restricted social mobility, and the loss of loved ones to violence. The protests exposed frustrations towards the oligarchic ruling class that has benefited from capital accumulation without supporting extensive land and wealth redistribution or investing in public goods around human security or quality affordable education, and allowed for violence and human rights abuses to continue with impunity (J. Pearce, 2018).

I left Medellín in April 2021, when protests around a proposed tax reform were taking place and were met by violent responses from the state (Villegas & Caruso, 2021). In the middle of these two events was the COVID-19 pandemic. Fieldwork thus took place during a time of heightened crises and salient issues that came to the fore, some very much related to the research topic, around care work and school closures, for example. In Medellín, the feminist political movement *Estamos Listas* ("We Are Ready") had just gotten three representatives elected at the municipal level for 2020. It was a time where the dynamic history and strength of feminist activism in Colombia and Latina America was visible, exemplified by the Chilean chant "The Rapist is You" that travelled the world (Ortiz Cadena, 2021), along with the high levels of violence against women in the city, with forced disappearances and feminicides. This illustrates some of the complexities of the Colombian case, and of Medellín which is a particular microcosm of these, where "good" performance along development indicators conceals profound social injustices; but where at the same time vibrant grassroots organisations and social actors are reclaiming their territories and rights, and developing visions for a more socially just and plural society.

Colombia exhibits the asymmetric trajectories of change in the division of paid and unpaid labour that motivated the research topic. Since the 1980s, Colombia has witnessed a steep increase in female labour force participation, especially in urban areas, with some

deceleration in the 2010s and significant setbacks following the COVID-19 pandemic; a trend common to the Latin American region (Busso & Fonseca, 2015). This progress and noteworthy achievements are counteracted by persisting gender norms in the home. Domestic and care responsibilities still fall heavily on women (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2012; García-Herreros, 2011). Official statistics estimate that women spend two to three times more time in unpaid housework, especially on caring for household members and that women uphold more than 80% of domestic responsibilities (DHS, 2015; Osorio Pérez, 2015; Urdinola & Tovar, 2018). A limited number of families in Colombia's low-income neighbourhoods have access to quality public childcare (Pineda Duque, 2020).

Rising poverty, exclusions, and violence have accompanied rapid urbanisation processes in Colombia. To explore gender norms within these processes of modernisation and urbanisation, I focus on one city, and particularly a peripheral district in this city. As the second biggest city in Colombia, Medellín is a typical example of the developments and challenges facing Latin America, with high urbanisation rates, a sizeable urban population living in informal settlements, widespread urban inequality and insecurity, but also demonstrating noteworthy efficiency in tackling these issues. As such, Medellín stands out as a compelling context to explore patriarchal gender norms in the context of globalisation, extensive informality, and inequality despite innovative urban interventions. This raises the questions around whether cities can be catalysts for gender equality or instead lead to the recomposition of gender inequalities (Chant, 2013; Chant & McIlwaine, 2016; A. Evans, 2018a, 2019); and the extent to which transgressions of gender norms in everyday practices can transform normative ideals underpinning unequal gender relations (Whitson, 2010).

## Chapter 4: Methods

### 4.1 Introduction

There are methodological challenges to researching gender norms. Gender norms are recognised as root causes of gender inequalities because they are embedded in routine institutional functioning in organisations, embodied in gendered actors' core identities, aspirations, and emotional reactions in ways that are not easily quantifiable, and because they structure power relations and the unequal distribution of resources at a broader scale. Social norms are not directly observable (Bhaskar, 1978), and their processes of enforcement and change are not easily identifiable, as they form the “hidden” part of institutions (Chappell & Waylen, 2013; Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 733). The high level of abstraction of gender norms and the complex pathways through which they influence organisations and individuals create “deep methodological uncertainty” (Lowndes, 2014, p. 686).

Having outlined the multi-level conceptual framework and described the research project's historical context, I now turn to the methodological question of how to research gender norms during periods of societal transformation such as the one detailed for Colombia in the past seven decades. Engaging with recent debates in social norms measurement, this chapter reviews the strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative methodologies employed to capture gender norms and how they change. It explains the primary objective of the research approach, which is to compare observations from different data collection methods to understand the complexities of gender norms' dynamics of change. The research approach's novelty lies in its following questions commonly used in large-scale surveys to track gender norms using different methods at different levels of analysis, taking them to the grassroots level to consider how socially situated actors understand and respond to them. These additional methods include locally driven household surveys, participant observation, and group and individual interviews where these questions could be elaborated on and explored in more interactive ways than from analysing trends and statistical relationships from the WVS.

### 4.2 Researching social norms: the strengths and limitations of quantitative methods

Efforts to measure norms using quantitative methods have included experimental designs (Ozaita et al., 2022; Tankard & Paluck, 2017; Xiao & Bicchieri, 2010), analysis of

large-scale datasets through multi-level modelling (Benebo et al., 2018; Grose et al., 2019; Mabsout & van Staveren, 2010), social network analysis (Paluck & Shepherd, 2012), or econometric analysis of natural experiments to capture the long-term persistence of institutions (Aguilar-Gomez & Tolonen, 2018; Tabellini, 2010).

Recent quantitative studies have attempted to systematically disentangle various dimensions of social norms and their relation to collective practices. These have integrated survey measures of norm perceptions, comparing them with measures of personal attitudes, and exploring which types of beliefs impact behavioural outcomes. Two such studies on female labour force participation in Saudi Arabia (Bursztyn et al., 2020) and in Jordan (Gauri et al., 2019) find discrepancies between survey respondents' support for women's work outside the home and them underestimating others' support, leading the researchers to suggest that "misperception of social norms" may be driving low levels of female labour force participation in Saudi Arabia. Based on further experimental evidence and regression analyses, they conclude that correcting for these "misperceived beliefs" through information campaigns can change long-standing social norms and engender rapid behavioural change to encourage greater female labour force participation.

More recently, Bussolo et al. (2023), analysing WVS questions and novel survey data measuring social expectations, infer a "stability of conservative attitudes" from persistent levels of agreement to the WVS questions between age groups. They assume that all women are conservative. However, these results do not tell us whether interpretations and reasons behind these survey answers may be changing, or anything about changing awareness of alternatives and other qualitative dimensions. They conclude that "gender equality in [South Asia] does not seem to be an automatic byproduct of economic development, indicating that restrictive gender norms are constraining progress in gender outcomes," (Bussolo et al., 2023, p. 29) but as the analysis in the thesis will show, it is important to critically analyse *which* gender norms are most responsible for a lack of progress in outcomes, these might not be the ones being asked in the WVS survey. If responses to WVS questions partly describe what is happening in society, rather than personal attitudes in isolation, the fact that "attitudes are related to gender outcomes, and conservative gender attitudes linked to worse gender outcomes" (2023, p.29) may reflect other constraints and barriers for change rather than conservative attitudes.

Oxfam's We-Care household survey also integrated measures of attitudes and gender norms through vignettes to analyse their relation to time-use patterns (Rost et al., 2020), but found inconclusive causal linkages between the two (Karimli et al., 2016). Bernhardt and

colleagues (2018) compare norm perceptions between spouses to explore intra-household power dynamics mediating the influence of gender norms on female labour force participation. They find considerable disagreements between rural husbands and wives in Madhya Pradesh, India, with men opposing women's work outside the home more strongly, and that men's personal beliefs and women's perceptions of their husbands' beliefs impinge on women's decisions to work.

Challenges arise in survey methods to capture gender norms underpinning the household division of unpaid labour. They don't always connect to a single decision or specific event, such as the decision to start a job, open a bank account, or for men to sign their wife up for a job, that have been used in these survey and experimental studies about gender norms and women's paid work outside the home (Bursztyn et al., 2020; Field et al., 2017). Gender norms around unpaid work and care responsibilities relate to activities that are harder to measure and identify because of the nature of the activities, as well as their being undervalued in society. This makes it more challenging to study the effects of gender norms on behaviours and practices. As Folbre observes, "The quality of direct care work is difficult to monitor or to specify in an explicit contract. As a result, social norms and personal preferences have an important impact on the quality of care." (Folbre, 2006, p. 189).

Important advances from time use studies have contributed to making visible women's many non-market contributions to the economy that are not captured in Gross domestic product statistics or labour surveys and to estimating gendered inequalities in time allocations which limit women's leisure and rest time, or their possibilities to gain further skills and training (Hirway & Jose, 2011). However, a focus on quantity does not capture qualitative aspects such as control over time (Eissler et al., 2022), the quality of time (Seymour et al., 2020), or perceived fairness of time allocations (Zhao & Yoon, 2023) and how these are interrelated with gender norms dictating how men and women should spend their time and qualifying different forms of work and workers as having more value than others. Time use estimates vary considerably depending on the measurement techniques used and there are widely acknowledged challenges in estimating time use in developing countries (Daum et al., 2019; Seymour et al., 2020), where work may be highly seasonal, when there is considerable overlap between productive and reproductive activities, and where agricultural and market activities are conducted in the home. Time use measurements also risk underestimating the responsibilities and efforts related to childcare, "as a responsibility that constrains all activities, rather than merely an activity in and of itself" (Folbre, 2006, p. 192), many child supervision activities are undergone simultaneously with other paid and

unpaid activities. As the empirical analysis will bring to light, the status and interpretations that are attached to time spent on certain activities, e.g., are they perceived as “help” or as someone’s natural duty, are related to gender norms in more fundamental ways than is captured by a quantitative measure of time spent on a given activity.

Survey measures to capture social expectations are relatively recent and therefore can’t be tracked over time to assess change. For this reason, the WVS is often drawn upon for macro-level analyses of gender norms as one of the main datasets that captures attitudes over time for many countries. The WVS lends itself to studying gender attitudinal change through a minimum of 5-year intervals and is used to study how aggregate gender attitudes may influence or respond to macro-level developments, such as the effect of a policy, structural changes in the economy, or changing levels of female participation in politics or labour markets. Aggregated attitudes are presumed to capture gender norms at the country or sub-national level, although the theoretical link between attitudes and norms is often not made explicit. Sometimes no explicit distinction is made between norms and attitudes: “we exploit the fact that cultural norms and beliefs – unlike institutions, policies, and markets – are internal to the individual.” (Alesina et al., 2013, p. 473). In others, attitudes may be thought of as internalised gender norms or as individuals’ subjective interpretations of gender norms. Seguino (2007, p.23) notes that although attitudes are distinct from gender norms, “attitudes towards various subject matters are based on the underlying set of gender definitions that a person holds.” Regardless of how gender norms are thought to shape attitudes, a change in attitudes in the WVS is taken to indicate a change in social norms.

In analysing WVS data, authors draw connections between aggregated gender attitudes and gender equality outcomes that have influenced development agendas, such as female labour force participation or indices of gender equality and human development. What is studied here is thus the linear relationship between women’s inclusion in economic and political development and more equal gender norms. Egalitarian attitudes have been positively associated with higher levels of female labour force participation, greater gender equality in total work or political participation and other measures (Campaña et al., 2018; Field et al., 2017; Seguino, 2007). Some argue that women’s labour force participation and greater control over income or assets lead to more equitable gender norms (e.g., Seguino, 2007); others, that more egalitarian gender norms lead to more egalitarian outcomes (Branisa et al., 2014; Tabellini, 2010). The WVS cannot tell us, however, about the processes through which gender norms are contested and change.



### 4.3 Researching social norms: the strengths and limitations of qualitative methods

Qualitative methods have also been implemented to evaluate development interventions, using interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory methodologies (Boudet et al., 2012). Qualitative methodologies have been used to complement quantitative studies (Gauri et al., 2019; Karimli et al., 2016), often being incorporated at the beginning or end stages to test survey questionnaires and themes or interpret patterns observed, or as an additional data source (Dunckel Graglia, 2016). These, however, also present limitations to study gender norms: in-depth interviews and ethnographies might decontextualise gender norms and their effects, especially when standardised across countries, they can place too much emphasis on individuals at the expense of structural factors and risk masking institutional contexts and patterns (Lamont and Swidler, 2014; Chappell & Waylen, 2013).

Although gender norms might not be the direct object of analysis, numerous sociological and anthropological studies have provided contextual knowledge about gender norms in the family and domestic sphere in distinct geographical settings. A longstanding tradition of combining interviews with close ethnographic observation within households illustrates the numerous inconsistencies, internal struggles, and mental adjustments that can arise between intentions, desires, and realities regarding the gendered division of household labour (Hochschild, 1989; Rao, 2020). These methods have also shed light on the important processes and negotiations that occur in households that deviate from the norm, which convey important learnings for how equality comes about in cases that may be registered as “outliers” in statistical data (Deutsch, 2000).

Through creative research designs, qualitative methods may also offer nuanced understandings of how change occurs over time or as a response to distinct external environments.

Through a longitudinal ethnographic study, Collier (1997) details the far-reaching changes in kinship and family relations in an Andalusian village in Spain that became integrated within the national labour market. Through a combination of her fieldnotes, personal memories from her fieldwork in the 1960s compared to the 1980s, and informal interviews, Collier observes a drastic shift in how people talked about their lives, explained social inequality, and organised social relations and customs. She maps her interlocutors’ view of radical changes that have taken place in village life due to the emigration of younger generations for work, leading them to reject traditions and social conventions. Old customs around courtship, marriage, parenting and mourning were replaced by what was conceived as

self-interested choices: marriage was performed out of romantic love rather than obligation, households that used to be organised under patriarchal authority became organised as partnerships, children's relations with their parents became based on affection rather than respect, and wearing a black dress during a mourning period as a sign of respect for the dead was replaced by exhibiting personal grief. As professional performance became the organising principle of social relations, individuals revised how they made sense of the world and themselves. Nevertheless, Collier's account shows that norm evolution is not linear or delinked from the past: people revisited old norms at different times, with different questions, interests or aims.

Through a comparative qualitative study, Kabeer (2000) studied how Bangladeshi women in Dhaka and London navigated, challenged, or adhered to *purdah* norms to work in the garment industry. In Dhaka, women reported different reasons for deciding to work in factories outside the home, and their decisions were also met with differing levels of consent and resistance by their family members. Several women workers reinterpreted the meanings they attached to the concept of *purdah* and the norms associated with it, shifting from the idea that 'women should not work outside the home' (Kabeer, 2000, 88) to 'women should think and behave in a pure way' (Kabeer, 2000, 91). The norms of *purdah* did not wholly disappear, and women workers experienced backlash and stigmatisation within the family and community. Change here required manipulation, relabelling, and reinterpreting norms in socially acceptable ways. Kabeer also finds that in Britain, where the external circumstances and the nature of income-generating activities in the garment industry differ, Bangladeshi migrant women were unable to negotiate gender norms in the same way.

Finally, qualitative interview studies have explored how changing economic circumstances, whether through migration (McIlwaine, 2010) or because of economic crises (Whitson, 2010), may create disconnects between expected norms and practices, and how gendered identities are transformed in the process. They bear witness to the multiple and potentially contradictory performances of masculinity and femininity and how these can vary by social class, race, or ethnicity. By bringing attention to everyday adaptations to changing environments and how people talk about these changes, these authors uncover both degrees of flexibility and resistance in gender norms and ideologies. Assessing change and continuity in gender norms, because of the ways gender norms are embedded in organisational structures as well as individuals' consciousness, requires moving back and forth from a bird's-eye view of a community or society and the nuanced inner lives of families and actors

within them, for which, the next section will argue, mixed methods can reveal shifting societal patterns along with deeply personal realities.

#### 4.4 A nested mixed methods design

There is increasing recognition of the value of mixed methods to study gender norms and track their change over time (Cookson et al., 2023; Samman, 2019). Mixed methods are better suited to study the interconnections between micro-level and macro-level factors (Kabeer et al., 2021). As Lachance-Grzela and Bouchar (2010, p. 778) note, “we need to continue studying individuals within their broader social context if we wish to arrive at a thorough understanding of the persistent gendered division of household labor and what could change it.” The methodological approach in this dissertation is shaped by the multi-level conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2. The research design in this project goes further than previous studies in how different methods are linked together and allow for more systematic comparisons to capture the dynamic nature of gender norms, going beyond individual-level measures of gender norms by recognising that norms are manifested in individual interpretations of shared rules of behaviour and as a feature of collective life, embedded in institutions (Morris et al., 2015; Pearse et al., 2016). Through a nested mixed methods design (M. L. Small, 2011), the research integrated variables that are commonly used in the literature on gender norms and the household division of labour, adapted them to the Medellín context, and complemented these with rich qualitative data and observations around these variables, enabling critical reflection on standard methodologies used to study social norms.

Researching gender norms change requires an empirical focus on social practices, informal institutions, shared expectations, and perceptions of change. A “problem-driven” research design (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 26) allowed both for a close methodological examination of the WVS by exploring what they mean on the ground and putting them in a particular socio-economic context, while also facilitating the study of how gender norms are changing. To address the dual methodological and empirical aims, I explored a similar set of issues at different levels of analysis.

I started with the variables in the WVS. I then explored these WVS variables at lower levels of analysis in primary surveys in urban communities in Medellín and qualitative interviews. In each method, I complemented these WVS survey items with other questions to determine how gender norms relate to individuals’ beliefs and social practices. The approach

allows for evaluating whether researchers' readings and interpretations of survey findings are the same as survey respondents' interpretations and provides a deeper understanding of the meanings attached to different behaviours, and of the power relations and the social processes involved.

The analysis begins by analysing WVS data on gender attitudes and comparing global trends with those of Latin American region and Colombian sample. I analyse how Colombians' responses to WVS questions have changed and might differ by demographic characteristics, noting research avenues and what further questions arise. The WVS provide a point of departure for the subsequent empirical analysis. I then critically examine what can be revealed at lower levels of analysis to explore the strengths and limitations of standardised, decontextualised, and individual-level measures used to measure social norms. In particular, I examined what lower levels of analysis had to say about a significant omission in the WVS: the WVS asks questions about gender roles in the paid economy and women's traditional roles as mothers and housewives, but almost none about gender roles in the unpaid economy and men's roles in the domestic sphere, and this is what the research is picking up.

The findings from the WVS are contrasted with a contextually grounded study of gender norms change in Medellín. I integrated WVS questions to primary household surveys and added questions about norm perceptions and related to men's participation in unpaid domestic and care work missing from the WVS. These build on recent developments in social norms measurement, but I also added open-ended survey questions to understand reasons behind survey responses (for norms questions) or ensure that they captured the diversity of practices (e.g., for questions about economic activities).

The survey aimed to capture three primary outcomes: (i) participation in remunerated work, (ii) participation and responsibilities in domestic and care activities, and (iii) personal attitudes and norm perceptions to capture gender norms. Research in labour studies and time use data has illustrated the difficulties in obtaining precise and reliable data in developing countries. Surveys used a combination of methods to capture participation and time spent in paid and unpaid activities, but also who is perceived as responsible for these activities, including keyword questions, activity list-based questions, 24-hour recall questions, questions about decision-making and responsibilities in the household. The COVID-19 pandemic required additional questions to ask how these activities and responsibilities had changed, as they might have diverged from "normal" times, but this also brought the issues researched to the fore. Although precise estimates cannot be inferred, the survey data is nevertheless informative of general trends (Mueller, 2018) that can advance our

understanding of gender inequalities and allows for the comparison between survey and qualitative responses, the primary aim of this mixed-methods approach.

For social norms questions, common answer formats were modified to adapt to the population sampled (Samman, 2019). For example, survey items about what respondents believe is typical in their community often ask how many men or women out of 10 engage in certain behaviours in relevant reference groups. This seemed difficult for participants to conceptualise, so we opted for a scale of “none / some / half / many / all”. For questions about personal beliefs, I simplified answer choices and changed the survey item formulation from a Likert scale as in the WVS to a yes/no question (e.g., *should men earn more than their wives?* (Samman, 2019, p.6), adding the option choice “it depends.” Questions about the perceptions of the direction of change were also included which can provide greater evidence for how norms are changing (Callen et al., 2023; Tankard & Paluck, 2017).

In collecting and analysing survey data, I remained cognisant of reporting issues where survey responses may be influenced by gender norms which undervalue certain forms of work and workers, see certain activities as less important, or where some tasks are naturalised so that they are not registered as an unpaid activity. Static survey categories did not seem to capture the fluidity and changes in respondents’ lives, how families were recomposed, children born from several fathers, and the insights from personal work histories. Discrepancies were found between beliefs and behaviours reported, showing inconsistencies between what people say and what they do. The qualitative and ethnographic components investigated the underlying reasons for this mismatch.

Interviews with a subset of survey respondents compared survey responses with individual narratives. Interview participants were asked about the subjective meanings they attach to concepts in the survey and to expand on their answers to survey questions around daily practices, household arrangements, and social norms. These were further complemented by my own observations of household dynamics, where possible, and with comparisons of family members’ accounts. This approach investigated the social interactions and practices through which social actors engage with norms in everyday life and conversations more dynamically than can be done through close-ended surveys questions, by asking research informants for the reasons and motivations behind their decisions and considering the broader context and structural constraints. My identity as a foreigner and the time limitations limited the possibility of meaningful participation in households; this would place me as a “complete observer” (Gold, 1958, p. 217) and most likely an inconvenience to the family. I circumvented these issues in different ways; household visits and interviewing several family

members provided additional information about household dynamics and opportunities to triangulate data and verify interviewees' claims about how paid and unpaid work was divided in their households.

Studying gender norms requires identifying the agreed-upon principles that govern the assignment of roles and responsibilities, determine access to resources, and influence how household members' contributions are perceived. This entails asking what people do and why they do it, what would happen if they didn't, and the associated rewards, approval and disapproval, punishments and consequences for taking one action or another. As Lowndes remarks (2020, p.557): "It is important to pay attention not only to *how* individuals act, but also what these actions *mean* for them." Focusing on unequal gender relations, there is the need to understand both the objective situations social actors are embedded in that limit or enable their possibilities, and their own subjective interpretations of what they are doing, including their interpretations of the norms that regulate social life. To explain social practices is to decipher the "game" made of "the configuration of practices involving the players in question, its underlying logic, and its cultural goal" (Ortner, 2006, p. 5). Shifting the focus from individuals' social beliefs to social practices and the institutions and broader norms underlying them brings to attention the social processes of continuity and change.

To study formal political institutions, researchers can turn to the constitution, formal laws and written rules to analyse how they were created and discussed and observe their effects on political processes and outcomes (Sheingate, 2010). Feminist institutionalists look at the informal institutions governing these processes, to what extent aggressive behaviour is permitted, for example, what assumptions are made about parliamentarians, and what effects these might have on political outcomes (Kenny, 2013; Waylen, 2017). Researchers can investigate the unwritten rules, norms, and social practices governing the household division of labour. Interviewees related their interpretations of gender norms, their routine everyday practices and barriers they face (Brinkmann, 2013; Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I asked about social expectations, beliefs, and socio-economic constraints, how these affected decision-making processes and mapped these back to gender norms and institutions to identify "the complex matrix of rules" (Lowndes, 2014, p. 687) that result in the persistence and resilience of the gendered household division of labour, what social actors do to comply with them, navigate around them, or reinterpret them.

This requires substantial contextual knowledge, an adequate "proximity to social reality" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 21), as Helmke and Levitsky declare, "Here there is probably no substitute for intensive fieldwork" (2004, p. 733). I used "ethnographic sensibility" and deep

engagement with communities (Henderson, 2016; Pader, 2019; Simmons & Smith, 2017) over several months to serve as complementary observations to research participants' reports in surveys and interviews. Survey and interview accounts were thus embedded in an understanding of local meanings and the broader context within which people make decisions and follow norms and institutions. This “triangulation between varied sources” (Lowndes, 2014, p. 688) allowed for the reconstruction and mapping of the normative landscape in the past and present, and how they have changed, referencing Colombia's history and Medellín's urban transformation.

The “complementarity” of mixed methods (Small, 2011) provides the ability to situate individual narratives and viewpoints within broader life histories and socio-economic relations. Quantitative findings from the WVS and household surveys provide breadth with descriptions of trends and distributions, while qualitative findings provide depth and contextualisation (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Greene, 2008), shedding light on subjective experiences, individual interpretations, imaginations, and meanings (Harriss, 2002; Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The household and phone surveys gave some approximation of the degree to which social norms and household arrangements are shared across working-class neighbourhoods in Medellín and speak to which views and practices are more common or atypical; in this sense, they frame qualitative findings from individual interviews. Qualitative findings, on the other hand, can provide more nuanced explanations of trends observed in surveys and make explicit the various processes behind a single survey statistic.

Data from different methods provide different points of reference, including survey responses to WVS statements, their relation to other survey responses, reported behaviours and outcomes, and explanations given in interviews. Using these “cross-method comparisons and analyses” (Lee & Greene, 2007), the research data offers a unique opportunity to explore how respondents interpret survey items used to operationalise gender norms, and what reasons and justifications they give for their survey answers. Analysing this mixed methods data allows for reconstructing the higher-level norms and patterns that structure these practices, beliefs, and explanations.

This approach revealed discrepancies and conflicting evidence regarding how much the division of unpaid labour has changed in recent decades. I encountered mixed accounts about male participation, with some respondents assuring that “everything is equal now”, “we share tasks equally”, “machismo has gone down” while others are categorical that the situation is worse today, that “all men are very *machistas*”, that “men stand out for their absence”, or that “men nowadays are very relaxed, lazy, or entitled without shame”. These

discourses of equality and reports of egalitarian attitudes did align with women's complaints about feeling overwhelmed, especially during the pandemic, and observable gender gaps in responsibilities. As Stokes emphasises, it is important to “discern the factors influencing people's answers” (Stokes, 2003, p. 21). In the empirical chapters, I explore what lies behind these contradictory views. Through a series of methodological comparisons, I critically examined the WVS research tools and their use, demonstrating that reality might be more nuanced than how survey results are typically interpreted, and that the tools may not measure what they are thought to measure.

The approach combines methods more comprehensively, to study gendered institutional change across generations and within changing external circumstances. The pluralist methodological approach is used to assess different models of norm change reviewed in Chapter 2 and to what extent they fit with the empirical findings, instead of seeking to diagnose norms or confirm a theory from a reductionist framework. This can provide a better understanding of the complex research problem.

#### 4.5 Change and continuity in a society in flux: intergenerational and family perspectives

For the topic at hand, there is also an issue of how to study change when we are unsure of the baseline. Indeed, there is no unified statistical data about the levels of family compositions, female household headship or male participation in unpaid work in the past century. There is evidence that there has always existed a wide variety of family types and forms in Antioquia since colonisation, but also that the share of female-headed households has risen considerably since the 1980s, but precise estimates are not available. Colombia's first national time use study took place in 2012-2013.

I relied on a family and intergenerational perspective to uncover how changing practices and circumstances may or may not erode norms over time (Deutsch, 2007, p.115). As Callen et al. (2023) note, to avoid “ex post” identification of institutional change, “real-time studies of plausible critical junctures” can shed light on processes of institutional change. The case selection of Medellín, a society in flux, allows one to study how wider change processes create new sites and opportunities for institutional design and innovation (Mackay, 2014).

A family research design permitted to study change where before-and-after data is scarce, by comparing across generations within the same family and between families.



Family interviews provided the space for family members to compare differences in circumstances between generations, make sense of changing conditions and to identify key events in the family's trajectory. Interviewing several family members, whether separately or together, encouraged interviewees to map changes by comparing their lives to that of their grandparents, parents, and children (Tsikata & Darkwah, 2014). This helps trace the broad generational changes that have impacted urban residents. Sampling for surveys and interviews aimed to obtain sets of dyads and triads of participants from the same family of different genders and generations to capture household power dynamics, missing from the development and social norm literature. The family sampling strategy provided insights into intergenerational dynamics unobtainable from surveying one respondent per family.

Ethnographic and secondary data and questions explored in interviews about what was done in the past provide a picture, described in Chapter 6, about past norms and their effects on the household division of labour. The empirical analysis then traces changes in gender norms and explores how broad-based societal changes, such as the effects of rising education levels and growing up in an urban environment, interact with family dynamics and trajectories. In surveys and interviews, I examined how social expectations are changing: do people expect men to contribute to domestic tasks, judge women who work outside and aren't "good mothers", and hold men to the same account? What are the expected consequences for men who do housework or women with children who work outside the home? When do people feel compelled to follow norms, when do they feel like they can dismiss or contest them, and when do these questions not even arise?

The sampled populations consisted of men and women from low to middle-income backgrounds to study men's attitudes and motivations for acting in more traditional or egalitarian ways, alongside women's. Considering slow progress in transforming masculine norms (England, 2010; Friedemann-Sánchez, 2012; Friedman, 2015), entails investigating men's reactions to women's paid work, the dynamics of "hegemonic masculinities" linked to breadwinner roles (Chant, 2000; R. Connell, 2005), how men's identities are also constructed in the home (Chant, 2000; Gutmann, 1996) and what barriers exist against taking on more 'feminine' roles in the labour market and at home.

## 4.6 Fieldwork and Data Collection

I conducted the research during 16 months of fieldwork in Medellín, between November 2019 and April 2021. The initial research design included 12 months of fieldwork:

I planned to conduct a comparative analysis between two urban districts to account for variations in employment patterns, economic opportunities, and social class. At the beginning of March 2020, as I was about to start the enumerators' training for the household surveys, the first cases of COVID-19 in Colombia were announced, and a strict lockdown ensued for six months. Research plans were severely disrupted and several rounds of lockdowns and restrictions followed over the next year. This generated considerable uncertainty around what would be feasible a few weeks and months away, introducing considerable challenges to planning and data collection.

Because of the disruptions caused by the pandemic, I was not able to follow the perfectly sequential design of surveys followed by interviews originally planned and had to extend my fieldwork by six months. A substantial portion of the fieldwork – approximately 8 months out of 16 – had to be conducted virtually before in-person fieldwork could resume towards the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021. Below, I describe the research design and phases as they unfolded.

The project started with a country-wide analysis of patterns over time, to a city-wide investigation, to progressively narrowing down to an in-depth localised study in one urban district.<sup>4</sup> An exploratory scoping phase in November-December 2019 with 23 key informant interviews, informal conversations, and participant-observation helped introduce broad city dynamics, select field sites, identify key issues and local meanings. Comuna 6 was chosen because I was granted access to a well-respected community organisation in *comuna 6* with over thirty years of experience and deep ties with the community which served as a first entry-point in the district, and for safety considerations where the presence of surveyors would not be regarded as threatening to local actors.<sup>5</sup> To adapt to challenges posed by the pandemic, I conducted two iterations of the nested mixed-methods design of differing geographical scope and modes of interaction, this created an “ethnographic sandwich,” a cyclical implementation of quantitative and qualitative investigations (Ofem et al., 2012, p. 161).

A first iteration during the first lockdown took place from April to November 2020. The phone survey resulted in a sample of 650 participants from lower and middle-income districts in Medellín and 54 phone interviews. I selected phone survey participants by systematic and quota sampling from a list-based sample of 3,365 contacts obtained from

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<sup>4</sup> This was one of the two districts selected in the initial pre-pandemic research design.

<sup>5</sup> There is still a wide presence of gangs in *Comuna 6* but there are fewer territorial disputes compared to some other districts, making it safer to walk around unaccompanied.

social leaders and community organisations.<sup>6</sup> As different geographical districts in Medellín are marked by diverse settlement histories, trajectories of violence, and infrastructure capacity, the phone survey and interviews permitted to draw a general panorama of the gender dynamics and their variations across the city. This city-wide phase informed the design of locally relevant survey instruments and interview topic guides for the subsequent in-depth study.

The second iteration took place in-person in *comuna 6* from January to March 2021, resulting in a sample of 262 household survey respondents and 27 semi-structured interviews. Given the shorter timeframe, survey and interview data had to be collected simultaneously. The concurrent mixed-methods design was implemented under a reduced timeframe, around three months instead of nine months planned. Unfortunately, even this limited timeframe had to be cut short at the end of March 2021, as the pandemic's third wave was straining the hospital system and physical distancing measures were re-installed.

Participants were randomly selected through a multistage cluster sampling in five purposively selected neighbourhoods of different socio-economic strata. Primary sampling units consisted of street blocks in each neighbourhood, identified through official maps of the district from the government website (based on Google Earth 2020) from which households were selected through a random walk method (Bauer, 2014), and individuals were selected in each household using the birthday method (Groves, 2009). Following a multi-actor sampling strategy (Hank et al., 2017; Kalmijn et al., 2019; Müller, 2017; Ponnet & Wouters, 2014), we then sampled family members of the randomly selected "primary respondent" (i.e., "anchors"), asking for permission to contact and survey grandparents, parents, and their adult children who were living in the area. 186 respondents were randomly selected for the household survey, and 75 family members of these primary respondents were also surveyed, with 75 dyadic pairs: 44 parent-child and 28 husband-wife pairs, a grandchild-grandparent, and two siblings pairs.

Staying six months longer than planned and starting the household survey several months later than expected presented benefits, as I was better prepared and knowledgeable for the in-depth 2021 study. It allowed for refining and testing local concepts and the emergence of more pointed questions and new research avenues to investigate in the subsequent inquiry. Given the unfolding of events, this was also the only feasible option, as I could not resume in-person fieldwork before the end of 2020. The phone survey made it

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<sup>6</sup> We called 1202 of these numbers, 25% of these phone numbers were not operative.

possible to interview individuals from peri-urban and difficult-to-access locations. Although not a strict comparative design, this ‘funnel-like’ design, moving from a broader city panorama to a deeper dive in one district, borrowed elements from multi-site ethnographies (Hannerz, 2003), providing a comparative lens to contrast observations from *comuna 6* with other districts across the city. Furthermore, I continued to engage with a community organisation and facilitate weekly workshops for a women’s group online during lockdowns. Maintaining activities throughout the pandemic ultimately contributed to my being regarded as an integral part of the organisation. This sustained participation assured continuity of the research project despite interruptions and changing conditions from the pandemic.

#### 4.6.1 Surveys

Research teams of students and recent graduates helped collect survey data, twelve for the phone survey and seven for the in-person household survey, many from the neighbourhoods in question. I recruited students from a master’s program in human rights and development studies and local contacts’ recommendations. They had backgrounds in social work, psychology, political science, masculinities studies, feminist activism, and sociology. I ensured they were well-paid, monthly for those who served as research assistants and on a half-day rate for survey enumerators, above minimum wage rates and in line with research assistantship stipends at a local university. I also wrote references for those who needed them.

Enumerators’ trainings introduced the themes and key concepts of the research project, and covered survey methodology, research ethics, and the informed consent process. We discussed the questionnaire at length, revising survey items and discussing sensitive questions. The trainings included peer-to-peer practice sessions and pre-tests, followed by a week-long pilot in two of the neighbourhoods selected (70 respondents surveyed), for final adjustments to the fieldwork strategy and survey questionnaire. Qualtrics software was used for data collection, allowing for real-time checks of response statistics. Regarding members of the research team as active contributors, I discussed their interpretations and observations during individual and group debriefing sessions (Temple & Edwards, 2002). One recurring subject revolved around the truthfulness of men’s responses about their participation in the domestic sphere, and what the challenges of surveying men revealed about gender dynamics.

Seeking the support of community leaders was central to research implementation because of safety concerns and a context of general distrust for outsiders or government

institutions. Communities have developed strong networks of trust and information exchange amongst residents where social leaders serve as referents for outside individuals and organisations. We had several meetings with social leaders from each neighbourhood where we reviewed the maps, eliminated street blocks that would be unsafe, and identified where a social leader should accompany the survey team. They gave us a tour of the neighbourhood, sharing valuable information on the neighbourhood's history, social and economic dynamics, and characteristics of families.

For the phone survey, each surveyor had a data-protected Excel list of phone numbers to contact where they also added information about the calls and the outcomes (e.g., refusal, non-valid number, completed survey, or rescheduled). They called phone numbers up to ten times, at which point we counted the contact as a non-response. For in-person surveys, we met as a group at a central location, a community centre or someone's house. Surveyors visited households in groups of two or three. We conducted household visits and surveys on weekdays and weekends, varying the times of day. I accompanied the team most days, walking around with the group. I sometimes stayed at our meeting point to review surveys and identify potential interview participants. I also conducted interviews in the neighbourhood while survey data collection was taking place. Surveyors had individual printed tracking sheets where they recorded each household visit and outcome.

The household surveys provided a valuable entry point into questions about social norms and household practices. Beyond the actual data collected, setting up the household survey involved interacting with leaders and representatives in the district, which provided insights into the political dynamics structuring community relations. Spending so much time walking around neighbourhoods and interacting with community members in street blocks provided valuable contextual information about varied living conditions. Roaming and moving around by foot across the district contributed to acquiring a "sense of place" (Kellett, 2011; Low, 2015; Pink, 2008). Primary survey data were used to study associations between variables and to present descriptive statistics of respondents and their households. Statistical representativeness and generalisability were not the primary aims for this study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Gobo, 2011; Small, 2009). Although the survey data only provides rough estimations of time use and distribution of domestic and care responsibilities within households, it nevertheless provides a reference point for individuals and couples' interviews which aimed to uncover processes of change and continuity in gender norms.

#### 4.6.2 Interviews

I interviewed 77 survey respondents and their family members, 46 from the phone survey, 21 from the household survey, and 10 additional respondents recruited through my own local contacts and snowball sampling. Potential interviewees were selected to include diverse participants that would reflect meaningful variations observed in the household survey for comparisons with the survey findings and within and across families. Participants were sampled through a systematic design (Lamont and Swidler, 2014), using a sampling matrix to track participants' characteristics and guide the recruitment of future interviewees. I selected interview respondents to fall in the three age groups of younger, middle-aged, and older respondents and to include a diversity of occupations and work status, education levels, family compositions, normative ideologies, and household arrangements. I also interviewed men who appeared to take on unusual caring roles, as examining exceptions can be instructive about established norms (Okely, 1991; Pearce, 2002).

I contacted survey respondents who had agreed to be interviewed. Survey enumerators acted as "interlocutors" (Fuji, 2017) or the first point of contact to recruit interview participants. Although I aimed for gender balance, more women were interviewed than men, especially for face-to-face interviews where it was more difficult to interview men alone. Men often asked for their female partners to be present if the interview was to be conducted in the home, which says a lot about who occupies the domestic space. I interviewed family members for more in-depth qualitative information and did repeat interviews and house visits with some research informants.

Most in-person interviews were conducted in interviewees' homes. Some were conducted in a public square outside the district's municipal library or a meeting room at a community cultural centre. This helped circumvent privacy issues in crowded homes and it made it easier to interview men alone. I conducted all interviews in Spanish and recorded the conversations after asking for their verbal consent. Depending on participants' availabilities and preferences, family members were interviewed separately or together. Interviewing family members separately was useful for comparing their perspectives and their distinct accounts of the same events. Interviewing family members together allowed for direct observation of interactions between couples or parents and their children, even if this might lend itself to consensus-building (Nyman et al., 2018; Valentine, 1999).

I interviewed five family groups of members from three generations (Samuels & Jones, 2015; Tsikata & Darkwah, 2014), identified from the survey's housing listing question, my

knowledge of families in the district, and social leaders' recommendations. The group discussion gave the members the opportunity to reflect together on their family timeline, distinct responsibilities, and broader societal changes. The discussion started with each member introducing themselves in their own words and how they regarded their roles and responsibilities within the family. We then did a family timeline exercise where each participant wrote on post its significant dates in their own life or their family's history. This provided a basis for the subsequent discussion.

Interviews combined life history elements (Atkinson, 1998) with thematic topics (Edwards & Holland, 2013). They enquired about family backgrounds and significant life events covering participants' childhood and young adulthood, their arrival in Medellín, their work trajectories, when they got married or had children, and their family life. This encouraged participants to reflect on changes in their own lives and compared to previous generations. Interviews also integrated a thematic approach to probe the meanings, interpretations and beliefs underlying the survey questions. Concepts of women's work and right to a job, parenthood, housewife, and household providers that come out of the WVS questions were integrated into the topic guide, and ideas around men's relation to domestic life and care captured in the primary surveys. To understand the negotiations and contestations in the home, I enquired about the processes and strategies through which intra-household allocation decisions were made and what alternatives were regarded as possible. I asked what tasks needed to be done in the household, who usually did them or was responsible for overseeing them, and how they felt about these allocations.

Interviews were transcribed by some of the students in Spanish in a Word document and uploaded into NVivo. I reviewed the transcriptions while listening to the audio. This process took several hours per interview and several months to complete, but ensured high quality and rigour of the data produced. I discussed their perceptions and reactions to the interview with each transcriber to triangulate my interpretations.

I conducted thematic analysis in NVivo (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Brinkmann, 2013). Coding and analysis took place in three phases. I recorded initial reflections in fieldnotes and emerging themes in an Excel Sheet to identify broad categories. I coded these general themes in NVivo, identifying broad chunks of texts. From these broader categories, I performed a second close coding for each chapter, separating elements of the data into segments according to codes describing the text, and then organised the codes into more abstract and analytical themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A third phase involved stepping back from smaller chunks of data to re-analyse interviews in their entirety, situating normative stances and

decisions within research participants' life histories and family trajectories (Atkinson & Coffey, 1996). I also compared accounts between family members and different generations.

#### 4.6.3 Participant-observation

During the scoping phase, I participated in activities organised by NGOs and the municipal government. This involved for example helping facilitate Sunday workshops with an NGO for the union of Afro-Colombian domestic workers (UTRASD). I accompanied community actors in their activities and municipal government workers on site visits across the city for specific events. The transition to the newly elected local government in 2020 also provided the opportunity to observe political participation at different levels, with negotiations around the new Development Plans and associated budget allocations in several districts.

Beyond these sporadic events, I volunteered with a community organisation in comuna 6. I participated in their weekly team meetings, neighbourhood events, and facilitated workshops for a group of women every Saturday. I participated in activities such as memory workshops, community lunches, and a community garden project. I wrote reports of the women's group's activities and collected the women's life stories to support the organisation's monitoring efforts. These yielded profound insights about local power dynamics, the complicated relationships and co-existence between civil society, the municipal government, and armed actors, and about forms of social contestation and collective empowerment.

I facilitated weekly meetings for a group of fifteen women, meeting virtually through WhatsApp every Saturday for two-hour sessions during the six months of the 2020 lockdown. The WhatsApp chat became a space for the women to share their daily experiences and for information-sharing about existing relief efforts and how to access resources. Women shared their problems, stresses, and joys, giving insights into how their families were adapting to lockdown conditions. The instant messaging nature of the chat provided insights into the daily realities of women in 'real-time' that might not have emerged in the weekly on-site sessions or through interviews.

#### 4.7 Safety and Ethical Challenges

The research raised several ethical issues to contend with. It involved individuals from a *barrio popular* in Medellín, living under informal conditions and faced with time



poverty. The “field” was situated in an insecure and violent context (Doyle & McCarthy-Jones, 2017; Huggins & Glebbeek, 2009), it was crucial to ensure safety for myself, the research team, and anyone involved in the research. As a European researcher doing research in Latin America for a UK-based research institution, I had to be mindful of power relations and asymmetries in knowledge production and take steps to avoid extractive knowledge practices and “othering” of lives and experiences (Rajan, 2018). The Covid pandemic entailed further ethical dilemmas due to increased health risks and precarity in people’s lives.

To address these ethical challenges, I engaged in extensive preparations and familiarisation with the local context to ensure local adequateness and relevance of the research project. This “legwork” (Fuji, 2017, p.41) before going on fieldwork and upon arrival helped build a local support and communication system to ensure reactivity to ethical dilemmas that might arise. Secondly, the research applied feminist ethics research practices (Leung et al., 2019; Rayaprol, 2016), aiming to be as empowering and collaborative as possible given the resources and timeframe available. Thirdly, I negotiated and responded to ethical issues emerging during fieldwork, seeking the community’s involvement when necessary and maintaining continual conversations and reflections with the research team and local informants.

Participants were provided with locally appropriate information about the study and were asked for their oral consent to record and transcribe interviews and surveys. Stored data was anonymised and protected in line with ethical and legal standards and saved on LSE’s network. After receiving authorisation from the LSE Ethics Committee and Health and Safety Team to resume in-person activities in October 2020, I implemented protocols to comply with government guidelines and minimise risks of Covid infection.

Conducting a random household survey in Medellín is not straightforward; it isn’t always advisable to go knocking on doors without warning. Walking around with clipboards and scrutinising household addresses close to street corners where drugs are sold can risk making drug dealers uncomfortable and hostile. Using visible forms of identification that demonstrate institutional affiliation is a common security mechanism in Medellín, contrary to other insecure contexts where it is preferable to keep a low profile. I arranged visible markers for the survey team, including lanyards with an identification card and t-shirts with keywords (*Economy, Work, and Care*) and their role (‘Social researcher’). Data collection took place in groups and ensured no one stayed alone in the neighbourhood at night. Constant WhatsApp communication and checking Qualtrics surveys in real-time ensured that we were aware of everyone’s location.

We did not run into any major safety issues during the household survey implementation or my interviews. We limited data collection in one of the neighbourhoods where people seemed less open to sharing information and less trusting of the research process. We had some uncomfortable interactions with men on the street, who were visibly inebriated and asked what the research was for in an aggressive tone and with a local gang member who asked one of the surveyors not to interview an elderly man who had agreed to participate. I ended data collection in this neighbourhood until the social leader we could accompany us.

I attempted to navigate the ethical tension that arose from the fact that the research was not actively initiated by the participants and that participation in the research would not directly benefit them (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Oakley, 2013). For the phone survey, compensation could not easily be offered. We made clear that participation in the research did not entail any benefits. For the household survey, we provided a succulent plant and a cereal bar, which amounted to more than the hourly minimum wage (5000 pesos, or £1.03). For interview participants, I provided a snack and drinks to follow local customs of serving the *refrigerio* (i.e., light refreshments) expected in community workshops. For family group discussions, the “*refrigerio*” was a little more substantial, consisting of a small meal, ordered from a local eatery to support local businesses. Social leaders received food vouchers for their support (of 200,000 pesos, or £41.15), to recognise the knowledge, legitimacy and trust built over many years and counter dynamics where their contributions are under-valued in encounters with state institutions.

Applying feminist engaged ethics throughout the research project was a priority, where I aimed to put into practice values of reflexivity, respect, collaboration, and forms of reciprocity and care (Bloom & Sawin, 2009). I combined formal data collection with participatory and feminist practices and long-term support of community processes. Engaging with a community organisation with a historical presence in the district was a way to make the project more inclusive, meaningful, and worthwhile to those involved in the research and to give time to community projects to follow principles of reciprocity, a continual process requiring constant negotiations (Butcher, 2021; Cahill, 2007; Rajan & Thornhill, 2019). Weekly meetings and activities with the community organisation were important as a form of mutual exchange for the access granted by the organisation.

I also applied feminist research practices to survey and interview data collection. For the household surveys, the succulents as a form of compensation generated surprising positive effects. It created momentum that fostered collaboration amongst the research team

due to the logistics required to store and carry the small plants during field visits. It added a touch of novelty and interview participants often showed me where they kept the succulent, in their home garden or on a windowsill. Although it was a small gesture, it did go some way to show appreciation for participants' time, which I perceived was valued both by the survey team and the respondents. I did not aim for neutrality but rather understanding and sympathy, adopting a receptive interviewing style (Back, 2007; Wengraf, 2001, p. 155) prioritising emotional safety, deliberately not asking details around bereavement or violence if they were brought up. In the context of violence and forced displacement, asking for life histories can inevitably touch upon traumatic experiences, and seemingly innocuous questions about the family can be upsetting to research participants. I aimed for interactions to be mutual and imbued with empathy and respect, and trained the survey team in the same way for the survey interviews. I ensured that interviews took place in a secure and private location, leaving it up to the interviewees to decide where it would be conducted.

The project also aimed to feed back into the community to support social change in useful ways. We organised meetings with community actors, NGO representatives and political leaders to build bridges between the community, political leaders, and academia, a need identified by one of my research assistants. Volunteering throughout the fieldwork was a way of giving my time to collective processes and to participate in local systems of exchanges and favours. I helped community organisations and a local researcher's project by sharing advice from my research experiences, facilitating contacts, and accompanying them to an interview. I conducted research dissemination events with stakeholders and participated in the research community at the city and national level, presenting on-going research at a non-profit foundation to staff, researchers and advocates for domestic workers, co-presenting preliminary findings at a national conference in Bogotá with a research assistant and giving a lecture for a course on women's economic empowerment organised by the municipality. I also wrote a methodological article with some of the surveyors which I shared with community organisations and key informants (Legros et al., 2021).

In 2024, I conducted participatory workshops with four community organisations to co-produce a community action plan around community-based care for a Knowledge Exchange and Impact project. I shared infographics and quotes from the research through playful group activities and in a booklet and digital resource. The booklet serves as an advocacy and awareness-raising tool; the workshops a platform through which social leaders came together to discuss current challenges, their understanding of community-based care, and collaborative ways forward, providing a space of mutual learning and co-creation of

solutions. This set the ground for embedding the research into broader projects of community activism and social change, a process that is ongoing and, by its very nature, unfinished.

#### 4.8 Positionality

Although a definite outsider to the communities I was studying, as a French American, university-educated woman, I was positioned somewhat ambivalently in some of my fieldwork activities. As a facilitator-participant rather than an outside researcher, I had a natural place as a member of the organisation, even if I was from outside the community, albeit not on the same footing as the group members. Those who knew me called me “*profe*” (teacher) when I walked around the district, acknowledging my involvement in the organisation. Being an outsider in this setting was a legitimate position within the organisation, a sort of “in between” (Milligan, 2016).

Being an outsider created opportunities to collect rich, albeit situated, data. At times it may have eased access to participants, although also conditioned their responses. I have a foreign accent in Spanish but also use *paisa* lingo and intonations, which seemed to grab research informants’ attention as perplexing and unusual, and perhaps made them more open to the project out of curiosity. This created more openness to the interview, but maybe a certain distance in how they were prepared to reflect on personal matters with me.

In Colombia’s highly segregated society a researcher from a private Colombian university and wealthy class might also be viewed as an “outsider” in working-class neighbourhoods. Being a foreigner, I was regarded as external to the Colombian class system and not associated with the Colombian elite. This became apparent when I visited one of the women’s group members with a friend. The woman asked my friend if she hired “domestic work”, assuming that she would, and how she treated her employees. I was never asked that kind of question. This position outside of the Colombian class hierarchy could have made informants feel more comfortable explaining aspects of their experiences without feeling socially observed. This “outsider-effect” (Bucerius, 2013; Dávila & Doyle, 2020) can present advantages when inquiring about social norms, as informants make daily practices more explicit than they would with another Colombian, where they might rely on culturally shared but unspoken assumptions to refer to their lived experiences.

Likewise, the impact of my gender on the research was ambivalent. During the enumerators’ training, we pondered what effect researchers’ gender might have on respondents’ readiness to answer questions about domestic life. They sensed that men might

be more embarrassed to discuss family dynamics with a male enumerator. Nonetheless, in a context where men should not show vulnerability and where the domestic sphere has traditionally been associated with a lack of virility, getting men to share their thoughts on their relation to the home could be challenging no matter the gender of the interviewer. Some men also engaged in flirtatious behaviour with me, even over the phone. Although they were more talkative than others, their accounts had to be taken with additional critical distance.

Although being a foreigner may have presented benefits, there is no denying that being an educated White European comes with privileges and a remoteness to the challenges and lived realities discussed in the research. There were certainly references and understandings that I may have missed, which I tried to rectify through extensive discussions with the research team and transcribers. As I am married to a Colombia from Medellín (from a different social class to the residents of comuna 6), I also benefited from the memories and experiences of my in-laws family shared throughout my time living in and visiting Colombia.



Figure 2. A field day during survey data collection in comuna 6, March 2021. *Source:* Author.





Figure 3. Survey data collection in comuna 6. *Source:* Author.

## Chapter 5: The WVS story of change

### 5.1 Introduction

It remains an open question how best to study gender norms as a direct object of analysis, which is what this thesis sets out to explore through its mixed-methods design. Most large-scale surveys do not include variables directly measuring social norms. Researching norms has required analysing existing datasets in creative ways (Jones et al., 2015; Mackie, Moneti, Denny, et al., 2015; Marcus & Harper, 2015; Weber et al., 2019). The WVS has frequently been used to study gender attitudes and gender norms and their connection to social and economic outcomes, including gender equality (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), the gendered division of labour (Seguino, 2007), the long-term effects of agricultural practices on gender equitable norms (Alesina et al., 2013), and religiosity (Miller & Stark, 2002; Seguino, 2007). Some of these studies use the gender attitudes in the WVS as the dependent variable, exploring determinants of more gender equitable or inequitable attitudes/norms, others place the gender attitudes as an independent factor and test their relationship with economic or gender outcomes (Cho, 2016; Seguino, 2007, Campaña et al.).

Individual attitudes are analytically distinct from social norms. Agreement or disagreement with the WVS statements is sometimes understood as trying to capture individuals' subjective interpretations of social norms or their perceptions of social norms. The attitudes reported are thus interpreted as reflecting underlying norms. As Seguino explains: "The World Values Survey provides just such a mechanism [to capture gender norms and stereotypes] because it contains a series of gender questions that span a twenty-year period and includes respondents from more than seventy countries. This paper uses that survey's data to analyse determinants of trends in norms and stereotypes over time and accounts, and finds evidence that increases in women's paid employment promotes gender equitable norms and stereotypes." (Seguino, 2007, p. 1). Likewise, Alesina and colleagues interpret reported attitudes about gender roles in the WVS (along with levels of female labour force participation) as indicating more or less equal gender norms in societies, considering that "cultural norms and beliefs – unlike institutions, policies, and markets – are internal to the individual" (2013, p. 473).

However, this does not imply that attitudes always directly influence behaviour. Norms and attitudes are theoretically linked in WVS studies as gender norms become embedded in personal attitudes or in individuals' norm perceptions and expectations, which

influence behaviours and social practices, and which can result in observable gender and societal outcomes and behavioural regularities. Agreement to statements advocating for gender hierarchies and difference is interpreted as measuring degrees of adherence to gender norms. These are then aggregated at the regional or country-level to measure a society's underlying gender norms and correlated with (macro-)economic or gender outcomes (Alesina & Giuliano, 2015, p. 903). Exploring the extent to which these reported gender attitudes are shared within a society and comparing across regions, countries, or trends over time are thought to provide insights into how social norms are evolving. UNDP (2020), for example, constructed a social norms index using WVS data, where WVS responses were coded as binary variables to produce several indicators, which are aggregated to compare cross-country variations in the proportion of survey respondents who agreed with the statements and hence exhibit gender biases. Individual-level observations thus form the basis of social norms measurement and change in the WVS, thus committing to a model of change that is largely individual based.

Some studies analyse the gender attitudes variables in the WVS separately, taking them as measures of beliefs and values across different domains, others combine opinion poll items in an index. These approaches differ in the extent to which they assume that the survey variables constitute measures of the same underlying construct, such as more egalitarian or discriminatory gender norms, or whether distinct variables refer to meaningful differences in domains. Some research on gender attitudes has suggested the importance of distinguishing between gender domains, where individuals might hold egalitarian views across some domains and discriminatory ones in others, supporting equality in the workplace and public spheres but backing separate roles in the domestic sphere, for example (Scarborough et al., 2018). The Human Development Report of 2020 on tackling social norms distinguishes between attitudes that relate to more “practical” and “strategic” domains which are easier or harder to change (UNDP, 2020). Regression analyses of determinants of gender norms also suggest that different factors might have different or no effects on separate attitudinal domains (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Scarborough et al., 2018).

Looking back at the origins of the WVS makes evident that it was founded on a specific theory of change that informed the design of the survey questionnaire, its aims and how it is interpreted. Some of the WVS' limitations become clear when we look back on this history.

The WVS was founded in 1981 by political scientist Ronald Inglehart. It builds on the European Values Survey, also launched in 1981 (Esmer & Pettersson, 2007). The first wave



included twenty-two countries, largely based in industrialised Western countries. The project has since expanded into a global network of social scientists and institutions that carry out nationally representative values surveys worldwide. There have been seven waves, spanning four decades between 1981 and 2022. So far, the WVS has been conducted in 106 countries. The survey is conducted periodically every five years, with different countries included in different waves. Countries in Africa, the Middle East, and South-East Asia were under-represented in the early waves, raising concerns that analyses of trends over time are largely based on the experiences of a limited number of countries. The standardised survey questionnaire has been modified over the years, with some questions added or removed in different waves or with alterations in the question prompts and response formats. Separate country-specific modules have also been included in different waves.

The WVS' underlying motivation was to study cross-national variations in cultural values and their relation to economic development processes related to industrialisation. The surveys were originally designed to “test the hypothesis that economic and technological changes are transforming the basic values and motivations of the publics of industrialized societies” (WVS, 2024). The WVS therefore embodies a clear theory of change, one based on the experiences of the advanced industrialised countries at the time it was being developed. The focus in later waves also evolved to how cultural changes relate to democratisation (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010), and the effects of globalisation on cultural values (Jung, 2008; Li & Bond, 2010). Research using data from the first waves linked levels of economic development to “predictable” changes in cultural values, explicitly associating economic growth to values found in the industrialised countries studied, related to rising secularisation and support for gender equality, amongst others (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Later waves included more countries to incorporate a greater range of societies with varying income levels to further this hypothesis.

The WVS has been used to test and advance revised versions of modernisation theory (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). The central premise is that processes of “modernisation” follow “set” stages from agrarian societies to industrialisation and then post-industrialisation that are associated with distinctive cultural values at each stage, although the pace of change may depend on historical legacies<sup>7</sup> (Inglehart, 1997). This body of research claims that WVS variables at the national level have predictive power on political, economic, or social

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<sup>7</sup> See for example Inglehart's claim that “modernization goes through two main phases, each of which brings distinctive changes in people's worldviews” (1997).

outcomes such as democratic institutions. These theories espouse a model of progress based on “post-materialist” values of rationality, secularisation, trust, and democratic participation even if they recognise historical path-dependence and country-specificities (Inglehart et al., 1998). Various cultural maps have been developed using the WVS, included the Inglehart-Welzel cultural map which groups societies according to their values along two dimensions, a traditional – secular-rational axis and a survival – self-expression axis (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), the Welzel’s emancipatory and secular values distinction (Welzel, 2013), or the Schwartz’s theory of value orientations (Schwartz, 2006). The observation that these different cultural classifications largely map onto similar regions of the world is used to infer a certain “universalism” in the relation between economic or political development and cultural change: “Analysis of data from the World Values Surveys demonstrates that the linkage between individual resources, emancipative values and freedom rights is *universal* in its presence across nations, regions and cultural zones; that this human development syndrome is shaped by a *causal effect* of individual resources and emancipative values on freedom rights” (Welzel et al., 2003, p. 341), my emphasis. People’s “motivations and behaviours” have been inferred from the WVS attitudinal measures, and claims made that these change in “roughly predictable ways” (Inglehart, 2018, p. 23), for example that high levels of economic security support gender equality (Davis & Williamson, 2019).

However, one is led to wonder whether this presupposed “universalism” may follow from the standardised nature of the questionnaire and whether oversimplification, Eurocentric concepts, and a unique data set may play a role in producing a certain way of “seeing” (Scott, 1998). This thesis enquires into what might be erased in this process of deciphering intangible motivations and complex social processes. What effect does this measurement produce and what is lost in the process? The thesis shares the concern that informal institutions and cultural values matter for economic analysis. However, claims of predictable changes in religiosity, gender roles, or democratic institutions stand at odds with scholarship in development studies that emphasise the role of different patterns of economic growth (Ang, 2016; Kabeer & Natali, 2013), uneven progress in gender equality (Moghadam, 1996), or the importance of background conditions in institutional reform (Mkandawire, 2011).

The WVS has not been without its critiques and controversies, raising questions about sources of errors and the potential for a Western and urban bias, with the underrepresentation of Africa and the MENA region and of rural and illiterate populations all over the world (Heath et al., 2005). More recent studies of the WVS have reinterpreted earlier views of modernity, based on contemporary developments. Tausch (2015) notes that assumed

“modern values” such as individual freedom over familism may be associated with adverse outcomes in well-being. Others have also criticised the essentialist and simplifying tendencies of the WVS that tend to pit ‘Western values’ against ‘Asian’ or ‘Muslim’ cultures (Bomhoff & Gu, 2012; Çavdar & Yaşar, 2014; Gu & Bomhoff, 2012).

Norris and Inglehart use the WVS to assess Huntington’s problematic ‘clash of civilization’ thesis (2005). Although they find that Huntington was mistaken in assuming differences in political values, they nevertheless argue for “basic cultural fault lines between the West and Islam” around issues of gender equality. Dervin, Moloney, and Simpson (2020, p. 51) argue that the cultural maps produced from the WVS can lead to “cultural essentialism and potential racism.” The vague and homogenising representations of cultures can reinforce the tendency to portray Islamic civilisations as monolithic entities with uniform beliefs, values and behaviours, overlooking the internal diversity and complexities of cultural identities within Muslim-majority societies (V. M. Moghadam, 2003, 2004; Spierings, 2014). See, for example, Ucal and Günay (2019) who claim that ‘traditional’ and ‘religious’ values in Arab League countries are responsible for low levels of female labour force participation. The focus on individual values disregards historical and political factors that shape cultural values and societies, including colonialism, imperialism, and patterns of socio-economic development.

As the WVS is considered the “largest survey of human values and beliefs”, covering 85-90 percent of the world’s population, it is one of the most commonly used datasets for cross-country comparisons and is frequently used by governments and international development organisations. Thus, it significantly impacts on academic research, policy-making, and public discourse, with results often cited in the media and news outlets. Comparable survey items to measure attitudes are found in other surveys, such as regional barometers (the Latinobarometer or Afrobarometer), the European Social Survey, or the General Social Survey. The WVS is one of the leading research tools to study gender norms. Many have drawn correlations between egalitarian attitudes in the WVS and more gender equitable outcomes (Alesina et al., 2013; Campaña et al., 2018; Field et al., 2017). There is thus a critical need to reflect on the WVS measures beyond statistical issues, looking more closely at what the data is measuring about gender norms and evaluating the assumptions in the design of survey questionnaires and the interpretations of the results from a critical feminist perspective.

I chose the WVS as a starting point in this project because of its frequent application to study social norms and because these variables are commonly used in indices such as the

Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) or the in OECD's (2021) proposed indicators for a masculine norms. This enables a critical assessment of common measures used to study gender norms. Colombia was included in four waves of the WVS spanning two decades between 1995-2020, allowing for comparison of trends across time and with other countries. The most recent WVS was released during fieldwork (first released July 2020), in contrast with the latest Demographic Health Survey (DHS) conducted in 2015, allowing for the most up-to-date data on gender attitudes in Colombia. Although the DHS benefits from more rigorous sampling design and representativeness, only the 2015 DHS contains a separate section about attitudes and perceptions around gender roles.

In this chapter, I use WVS data to explore preliminary trends at the country-level, asking what it might suggest about how gender norms have evolved, changed, or persisted across time and regions in Colombia and how this compares to Latin America and other world regions. I critically reflect on the use of attitudinal data from large-scale surveys to infer changes or persistence in gender norms, considering what the trends observed can tell us about social norms and their limitations. I discuss the difficulties in interpreting these results and ask to what extent a change in the proportion of individuals agreeing to the statements is indicative of change in gender norms. I also identify omissions and biases that expose a limited conception of social development and gender equality.

Further contextually appropriate investigation is required to examine the assumed theoretical link between attitudes and norms, as we will discuss later in this chapter. Other methods, including locally relevant household survey data and qualitative interviews, were subsequently applied to explore how and when individual attitudes affect behaviour and social practices, among other aspects of gender norms dynamics. The analysis of the WVS survey trends and the methodological reflection that follows from it serve as the basis for further thinking on how to study gender norms as a direct object of analysis and to what extent different methods capture the intended constructs.

The chapter identifies research avenues and limitations of survey data that the mixed-methods research will aim to explore and correct. Using secondary time series data from the WVS also allows for the incorporation of observations related to gender norms at multiple levels of analysis in the research project, as a complement to the primary data collected at the community and interpersonal level. Integrating different methods reveals inconsistencies and misalignments between people's accounts in surveys and interviews, their social perceptions and interpretations of change, and their actions in practice.

## 5.2 Data and Methods

The WVS explores attitudes around work, environmental conservation, politics, religious affiliations, and gender equality. Colombia is included in four rounds spanning more than twenty years from 1995-2020: in wave 3 (1995-1999), wave 5 (2005-2009), wave 6 (2010-2014) and wave 7 (2017-2022). I use these four waves as references to select the variables to be included. The WVS contains several variables that are relevant to the research topic:

1. *When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.*
2. *On the whole, men make better business executives than women do.*
3. *On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.*
4. *A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.*
5. *If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems.*
6. *Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income.*
7. *Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay.*
8. *When a mother works for pay, the children suffer.*

Answers to these questions measure personal attitudes about the division of labour and appropriate roles for women and men in society. The statements relate to different social domains including politics, education, labour markets, and the household. Questions about statements 1-4 capture attitudes about gender stratification in employment, politics, and higher education. Statements 5 and 6 relate to decision-making around household income and spouses' relative income. Responses to statements 7-8 capture attitudes around women's domestic roles and ideas of motherhood.

Not all variables relevant to the research topic were included in all waves under consideration and some of the wording and answer choices format were modified across waves. To make matters more complicated, not all gender attitudes questions are measured in the same way, some used a 3-point Likert scale including a middle point "neither agree nor disagree", others a 4-point Likert scale without a middle point. To be consistent with the subsequent analysis of primary survey data, I coded attitudes as supporting gender equality only when there was an explicit agreement with gender equitable statements or explicit disagreement with gender inequitable statements, which I coded "0", and coded responses as "1" otherwise.

All questions attempt to capture the presence or absence of gender-equitable attitudes, most using Agree/Disagree rating scales. Individual attitudes are analytically distinct from social norms. Agreement or disagreement with these statements could be understood as trying

to capture the subjective interpretations of social norms, pointing to what extent gender norms are endorsed in a population (Mackie, Moneti, & Shakya, 2015; Seguino, 2007), although this does not imply that they will always directly influence behaviour. Exploring the extent to which gender attitudes are shared within a society and comparing across regions, countries, or trends over time could provide insights into how social norms are evolving. However, further contextually appropriate investigation is required, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

### 5.2.1 World sample

I compare the Colombian results to those in Latin America and other countries worldwide. I classified countries into seven regions: Central & Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA), Western and Northern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and North America.

The WVS suffers from various shortcomings that make it difficult to compare across variables, time, or geographical contexts due to different methodologies, sampling strategies, wording of questions across waves, and answer choice formats that may influence responses (Alemán & Woods, 2016; Constantin & Voicu, 2015). Different countries are included in each wave; although each round covers a substantial number of countries, the number of countries included in multiple waves is more limited. This makes analysis of trends by world regions more difficult. Some regions have considerably fewer countries in the WVS samples, compared to the European countries. The MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa regions only have a few countries surveyed and not in all waves, making comparisons with other regions dependent on only a few countries of these regions, collapsing meaningful intra-regional variations.

This makes it difficult to compare trends over time and to establish whether changes between waves reflect changes in attitudes or measurement differences. Despite these challenges, I present results of unweighted percentages of men and women in agreement with WVS statements by world region for the most recent period considered (2017-2022).

Figure 4: Proportion in agreement and gender gaps for attitudinal variables by world region for wave 7 (2015-20222)

|   | CEECA    | Western<br>and<br>Northern<br>Europe | LAC      | Asia     | SSA      | MENA     | North<br>America | World    |
|---|----------|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|----------|
| <b><i>When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women</i></b>                |          |                                      |          |          |          |          |                  |          |
| Women   | 48,8     | 19,0                                 | 31,6     | 59,3     | 49,8     | 77,0     | 11,4             | 42,8     |
| Men   | 60,9     | 25,2                                 | 41,4     | 68,5     | 64,2     | 86,9     | 24,9             | 52,4     |
| Gender gap  | -12,1*** | -6,2***                              | -9,8***  | -9,2***  | -14,4*** | -9,9***  | -13,5***         | -9,6***  |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better business executives than women do.</i></b>                    |          |                                      |          |          |          |          |                  |          |
| Women   | 32,5     | 7,2                                  | 13,6     | 35,7     | 34,9     | 44,6     | 6,9              | 25,1     |
| Men   | 48,1     | 15,2                                 | 23,1     | 46,4     | 46,2     | 61,0     | 19,5             | 36,6     |
| Gender gap  | -15,6*** | -8,0***                              | -9,5***  | -10,7*** | -11,3*** | -16,4*** | -12,6***         | -11,5*** |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do</i></b>                       |          |                                      |          |          |          |          |                  |          |
| Women   | 37,6     | 9,0                                  | 16,4     | 42,5     | 45,9     | 55,0     | 9,6              | 30,1     |
| Men   | 51,3     | 14,4                                 | 26,7     | 52,0     | 55,8     | 70,1     | 20,8             | 40,2     |
| Gender gap  | -13,7*** | -5,4***                              | -10,3*** | -9,5***  | -9,9***  | -15,1*** | -11,2***         | -10,1*** |
| <b><i>A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl</i></b>                  |          |                                      |          |          |          |          |                  |          |
| Women   | 16,0     | 3,8                                  | 14,3     | 25,5     | 19,1     | 22,8     | 4,3              | 15,2     |
| Men   | 23,0     | 6,0                                  | 18,8     | 34,0     | 26,2     | 34,6     | 10,7             | 21,4     |
| Gender gap  | -7,0***  | -2,2***                              | -4,5***  | -8,5***  | -7,1***  | -11,8*** | -6,4***          | -6,2***  |
| <b><i>If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems</i></b> |          |                                      |          |          |          |          |                  |          |
| Women   | 59,3     | 34,4                                 | 59,1     | 52,5     | 63,8     | 66,7     | 32,2             | 53,7     |
| Men   | 65,1     | 30,9                                 | 55,1     | 55,5     | 73,6     | 71,9     | 32,0             | 55,5     |
| Gender gap  | -5,8***  | 3,5***                               | 4,0***   | -3,0***  | -9,8***  | -5,2***  | 0,2              | -1,8***  |
| <b><i>When a mother works for pay, the children suffer</i></b>                                    |          |                                      |          |          |          |          |                  |          |
| Women   | 44,0     | 25,7                                 | 55,9     | 41,7     | 35,4     | 65,1     | 16,3             | 41,0     |
| Men   | 46,1     | 29,9                                 | 54,3     | 44,7     | 35,9     | 71,8     | 23,9             | 43,7     |
| Gender gap  | -2,1***  | -4,2***                              | 1,6**    | -3,0***  | -0,5     | -6,7***  | -7,5***          | -2,7***  |
| <b><i>Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay</i></b>                          |          |                                      |          |          |          |          |                  |          |
| Women   | 55,1     | 56,7                                 | 63,5     | 68,5     | 43,5     | 66,9     | 68,8             | 62,5     |
| Men   | 59,0     | 60,1                                 | 62,0     | 68,2     | 44,3     | 76,0     | 69,0             | 64,4     |
| Gender gap  | -3,9***  | -3,4***                              | 1,5**    | 0,4      | -0,8     | -9,1***  | -0,2             | -1,9***  |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\*,  $p < 0.1$ \*

Compared to other world regions, Latin America reports the lowest proportion of respondents agreeing with statements advocating for or justifying gender discrimination in the public sphere after Europe and North America, lower than the world average. That is, according to the WVS trends, people in Latin America hold more egalitarian attitudes about women's roles in the public sphere than other world regions apart from Europe and North America. Comparing responses about the public and private spheres, I find in all world regions that the proportion of people agreeing with statements about women's role as

housewives being as fulfilling than working for pay – more than 50 percent in all regions except from Sub-Saharan Africa – and for the idea that children with working mothers suffer are higher than for the statements’ asking about gender differences in business, politics, and employment. In other words, these results indicate, on average, higher support for women’s roles in the public sphere than for rethinking women’s roles in the private sphere. More people agreed with the statement that children of working mothers suffer in Latin America than in other regions of the world, apart from MENA. Colombians reported more egalitarian attitudes around political leaders and business executives and for the right to a university education than the Latin American region. Colombians were comparatively less likely to believe that a woman earning more than her husband will cause problems than the region or that children of mothers who work for pay suffer. Nevertheless, gender attitudes in Colombia follow broadly similar patterns to the Latin American region.

As found in the literature, women tend to report greater egalitarian views than men. The MENA region presents the largest gender gaps for several variables, except for attitudes about women’s right to a job, followed by CEECA and North America. In Europe and Latin America, the gender gap is reversed for the question about women earning more than their husbands, where a greater percentage of women agreed with the statement than men. In fact, for all variables that relate to marital life, ideas of motherhood and gender roles in the family, the gender gap is reversed in Latin America, suggesting that women are more in agreement with the statements than men. This could be because they derive social respect from these positions, because the domestic sphere is where they exert some authority and influence that they do not want to lose, because their interests are more closely tied to those of their children and households, or due to a belief that men are not as good caregivers. The thesis explores what drives agreement or disagreement with the WVS statements. As Chant and Brickell (2010) analyse, individual attitudes and personal characteristics (altruistic tendencies in their case) may reflect socially constructed opportunities and constraints rather than inherent gender differences or preferences.

This signals a theme that will be discussed further in the empirical findings for Medellín: the absence of strong norms against women’s work outside the home *per se*, but a strong preference for mothers to be responsible for childcare. The variable around women earning more than their husbands follows different patterns than the first four variables in the table. It is difficult to ascertain whether agreement to this statement refers to actual experience, normative attitudes, or social expectations. This is the case for all statements more generally, but because of how this statement is phrased around the consequences to a



situation (i.e., “it will cause problems”), compared for example to the statement that “both men and women *should* contribute to household income”, the ambiguity is even more pronounced than for the other statements. I try to disentangle these meanings in the primary survey and interview analysis, asking respondents if “men *should* earn more than their partners” in the primary household survey.

From the limited samples of countries included in both wave 3 and wave 7, I study longer-term changes in these gender attitudes between 1995 and 2022. Here, I report the percentage point changes in the proportion of respondents in agreement with the gender questions.

Worldwide, there has been decreasing agreement with statements justifying gender discrimination between 1995-2022, suggesting a trend towards greater support for gender equality, with a narrowing of gender gaps as the proportion of men agreeing to the statements has dropped faster than the proportion of women. Nevertheless, these worldwide trends mask variations across world regions and variables. We observe the most drastic change in reported gender attitudes between 1998 and 2022 in Latin America for the statement that men should have more right to a job than women. This coincides with Latin America having seen the largest increase in female labour force participation worldwide in the past decades. This has not however been accompanied by changes in attitudes about women earning more than their husbands, no significant change in attitudes towards this statement has taken place since 1998 in the Latin American countries surveyed, according to the WVS data. This makes some sense if we consider observations of persisting male breadwinning identities made in chapter 6 on paid work. I find that women’s work outside the home or as self-employed entrepreneurs has become more acceptable and expected in Colombia, but changes around cultural conceptions of the primary breadwinner and family provider have been more ambivalent.

Figure 5. Long-term change 1995-2022 in agreement (%) by gender and region

|   | Percent Point change 1998 - 2020 |                             |          |         |         |               |          |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------------|----------|
|   | CEECA                            | Western and Northern Europe | LAC      | Asia    | SSA     | North America | World    |
| <b><i>When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women</i></b>                |                                  |                             |          |         |         |               |          |
| Women   | -6,4***                          | -13,2***                    | -40,6*** | -2,8*** | 9,5***  | -14,0***      | -14,1*** |
| Men   | -9,8***                          | -11,8***                    | -37,3*** | -2,5*** | 5,9***  | -10,5***      | -15,8*** |
| Gender gap  | 3,4***                           | -1,4***                     | -3,3***  | -0,3*** | 3,6***  | -3,5***       | 1,7***   |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do</i></b>                       |                                  |                             |          |         |         |               |          |
| Women   | -21,3***                         | -8,9***                     | -15,5*** | -3,0*** | 4,1     | -16,1***      | -17,1*** |
| Men   | -19,3***                         | -9,8***                     | -17,7*** | -2,6*** | -0,5**  | -19,2***      | -18,0*** |
| Gender gap  | -2,0***                          | 0,9***                      | 2,2***   | -0,4*** | 4,6     | 3,1***        | 0,9***   |
| <b><i>A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl</i></b>                  |                                  |                             |          |         |         |               |          |
| Women   | -13,9***                         | -8,3***                     | -4,1***  | -0,2    | 8,6***  | -7,1***       | -9,3***  |
| Men   | -14,5***                         | -8,2***                     | -5,0***  | -0,2    | 3,1***  | -10,5***      | -10,5*** |
| Gender gap  | 0,6***                           | -0,1***                     | 0,9***   | 0,0     | 5,5***  | 3,4***        | 1,2***   |
| <b><i>If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems</i></b> |                                  |                             |          |         |         |               |          |
| Women   | 15,6***                          | -14,8***                    | 1,1**    | 6,8***  | 15,5*** | -9,7***       | 5,5***   |
| Men   | 15,3***                          | -11,1***                    | 1,0      | 9,1***  | 6,8***  | -6,3***       | 4,5***   |
| Gender gap  | 0,3***                           | -3,7***                     | 0,1      | -2,3*** | 8,7***  | -3,4***       | 1,0***   |
| <b><i>Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay</i></b>                          |                                  |                             |          |         |         |               |          |
| Women   | -9,1***                          | 6,7***                      | -1,1***  | 0,3*    | -4,7    | -9,0***       | -0,8***  |
| Men   | -12,6***                         | 0,3***                      | -5,9     | 1,6     | 1,3*    | -12,9***      | -4,4*    |
| Gender gap  | 3,4***                           | 6,4                         | 4,8***   | -1,3**  | -6,0    | 3,9***        | 3,6***   |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\* ,  $p < 0.1$ \*

I also compared changes between the two most recent waves 6 (2010-2014) and 7 (spanning 2010-2022) to include countries from the MENA region because none were included in both waves 3 and 7, and to study shorter-term changes. I found that agreement with the statement that men have more right to a job rose for the Latin America region between 2010 and 2022, consistent with the recent trends towards rising inequalitarian attitudes I found in the Colombian sample between 2005 and 2012. Agreement with this statement also rose, to a lesser extent, in Sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region. Agreement for the question related to the housewife role being just as fulfilling as working for pay also rose in Latin America, Western Europe, and Asia in the shorter time frame studied. Agreement decreased or stayed the same for statements about political leaders, university education, children of working mothers, and women who earn more than their spouses in most regions of the world.

## 5.2.2 Colombian trends

I report descriptive statistics for gender attitude variables for the Colombian sample. I examine the proportions of women and men in agreement with the variables of interest – i.e., attitudes exhibiting gender bias – the gender gaps between them, and how these have changed over time in Colombia. I estimate the change in gender attitudes between 1998 and 2019 by calculating the percentage points differences between the most recent and earliest waves.

Figure 6: Agreement to gender inequitable statements over time in Colombia (in %)

|   | 1998      | 2005      | 2012      | 2019     | Change<br>1998 - 2019 |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------------------|
| <b><i>When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women</i></b>                |           |           |           |          |                       |
| Men   | 32,4      | Not asked | 38,0      | 30,0     | -2,4                  |
| Women   | 29,2      |           | 31,9      | 22,0     | -7,2***               |
| Gender gap  | -3,2**    |           | -6,1***   | -8,0***  |                       |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better business executives than women do.</i></b>                    |           |           |           |          |                       |
| Men   | Not asked | 27,8      | 25,0      | 24,2     |                       |
| Women   |           | 15,7      | 14,8      | 13,7     |                       |
| Gender gap  |           | -12,1***  | -10,2***  | -10,5*** |                       |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do</i></b>                       |           |           |           |          |                       |
| Men   | 38,5      | 36,3      | 32,6      | 29,7     | -8,8***               |
| Women   | 26,5      | 22,1      | 24,4      | 18,6     | -7,9***               |
| Gender gap  | -12,0***  | -14,2***  | -8,2***   | -11,1*** |                       |
| <b><i>A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl</i></b>                  |           |           |           |          |                       |
| Men   | 13,1      | 12,7      | 13,0      | 20,5     | 7,5***                |
| Women   | 9,4       | 6,8       | 8,7       | 15,8     | 6,4***                |
| Gender gap  | -3,7***   | -5,9***   | -4,3***   | -4,7***  |                       |
| <b><i>If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems</i></b> |           |           |           |          |                       |
| Men   | 49,9      | Not asked | 52,3      | 44,5     | -7,8***               |
| Women   | 58,9      |           | 64,6      | 52,1     | -12,5***              |
| Gender gap  | 9,0***    |           | 12,3***   | 7,6***   |                       |
| <b><i>When a mother works for pay, the children suffer</i></b>                                    |           |           |           |          |                       |
| Men   | Not asked | 37,2      | Not asked | 44,2     |                       |
| Women   |           | 48,9      |           | 54,0     |                       |
| Gender gap  |           | 11,7***   |           | 9,8***   |                       |
| <b><i>Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay</i></b>                          |           |           |           |          |                       |
| Men   | 67,1      | 57,6      | 53,3      | 58,2     | -8,9***               |
| Women   | 64,0      | 55,2      | 58,4      | 62,0     | -2,1***               |
| Gender gap  | -3,1**    | -2,4*     | 5,1**     | 3,8*     |                       |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\*,  $p < 0.1$ \*

The WVS data points to a general trend towards more egalitarian attitudes across the two decades studied. However, changes in gender attitudes are not linear, with fluctuations between waves and different trajectories across variables. For variables included in wave 3 and 7, attitudes reflecting support for gender discrimination have declined, apart from attitudes towards gender equality in higher education. This is surprising: agreement that

university education is more important for boys rose between 2012 and 2019, although agreement with this statement was considerably lower than other statements in 1998. In 2012 and 2019, fewer Colombians agreed that men make better political leaders or business leaders than that men have more right to a job when jobs are scarce, where the percentage of people agreeing that men's greater right to a job rising between 1998 and 2012. This is somewhat contradictory to findings in the literature, as one expects that the first two questions, which appear to reflect areas of greater power and status, should exhibit greater opposition towards gender equality compared to ideas about women's participation in the labour market (UNDP 2020). The question about men's right to a job is however a question about "priority", the questions about political leaders and business executives are about perceived skills and competencies. The question about the right to a job could point to persisting notions of the status and privileges of the male breadwinner that I discuss in the next chapter.

Variables capturing attitudes about gender discrimination and hierarchies in the public sphere have negative gender gaps, with women less supportive of gender inegalitarian beliefs compared to men. The gap is reversed for survey items around spousal income and ideals around housewives and working mothers, where women tend to agree more with the statements on average than men. This could also be because the statements are ambivalent as to whether they aim to address lived experiences, reflect attitudes about *what should be*, or these roles represent a source of influence and social respect for women. Agreement that if a woman earning more than her husband is almost certain to cause problems and that being a housewife can be just as fulfilling as working for pay went down between 1998 and 2019, whereas agreement that children of working mothers suffer increased between 2005 to 2019. Surprisingly, women were less likely than men to view women having the same right as men as an essential feature for democracy, and between 2012 and 2019 the percentage of women not considering this an essential characteristic for a democracy rose substantially.

These descriptive results would appear to reveal differential paces of change for men and women's attitudes. For the variable around the right to a job, the magnitude of the gender gap has increased, with women's move towards greater support for gender equality in this domain occurring faster than for men. For gender beliefs about political leaders, business executives and university education, the gender gaps remain largely the same across waves, suggesting similar rates of change towards egalitarian attitudes for men and women. The gender gap was reversed for the housewife variable: between 1998-2005 women were on average less in agreement with this statement, this changed after 2005, with men on average more likely to disagree in 2012 and 2019.

Focusing on wave 7 for the Colombian sample, I examined descriptive statistics for the attitudinal variables disaggregated by demographic characteristics, including age, social class, region, and marital status. I analysed gender-disaggregated data by age category for each gender variable. Chi-squared tests indicated that the relation between age and the variables job, political, business, university, and suffer was significant ( $p < 0.05$  for children of working mothers suffer,  $p < 0.001$  for the others), where younger respondents tend to exhibit more egalitarian attitudes (Appendix 1).

Although I explored the relationships between self-reported social class and gender attitudes in cross-tabulations, it is difficult to ascertain the connection between these two variables because of limited sample sizes, especially for the upper-class category with only 21 observations.<sup>8</sup> Chi-squared tests found significant relations between gender attitudes and social class for women's right to a job, men making better business leaders, university education, and whether children of working mothers suffer. For all variables, respondents from the lowest social class category tend to exhibit greater discriminatory attitudes, except for ideas about the housewife role, for which the upper-middle class is more likely on average to agree that being a housewife can be just as fulfilling as working for pay. Social class appears to have different effects on different variables, comparing for example statements about housewives and children of working mothers, where members of the upper-middle class appear to support gendered statements regarding the appropriateness of the housewife role to a greater extent but are less likely to believe that children of working mothers suffer than those belonging to other social classes. It is unclear whether these differences reflect more unequal attitudes held by the lower class or whether they reflect differences in the ability to access quality childcare services.

I grouped the WVS regional variable into six geographical regions, in addition to Bogotá, following the Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) classification. Chi-square tests show a significant relationship between geographical region and gender attitudes for all variables apart from attitudes about women earning more than their husbands. I thus find within-country heterogeneity in support for gender equality, with the Bogotá region exhibiting on average the greatest support across most domains. The Caribbean and Pacific regions, on the other hand, report on average more unequal values, as well as some of the largest gender gaps, with men in these regions often exhibiting

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<sup>8</sup> Social class was not found to be significant in regression results, including logistic regressions with the individual attitudes questions as the dependent variable and OLS regressions for a norm index combining several questions together.

much higher gender bias compared to men in other regions. The Antioquia region where Medellín is located, occupies somewhat of a middle position between the more gender discriminatory Caribbean and Pacific regions and more gender equitable Bogotá and Central regions. However, *paisas* are more biased than in other regions in their attitudes about political leaders and women's access to university education.

What does this tell us about evolving gender norms in Colombia over time?<sup>9</sup> The WVS appears to show growing support for gender equality and rethinking women's roles in the public spheres of labour markets and politics in Colombia, with fewer biases against women's paid employment and leadership roles in business and in politics in 2019 compared to 1998, however the evolution is not uniform. When interpreting these trends as reflecting underlying gender norms would suggest that gender norms about women's access to paid employment have changed, especially when taking into consideration that these appear to match increasing labour force participation rates for women in the past decades.

The trends for Colombia also indicate persisting gender attitudes about motherhood and housewife roles, and reservations against women earning more than their husbands. The WVS findings point to an ambivalent trend between growing support for gender equality in the public domains of labour markets, politics, and education but persisting support for gender difference in the private sphere of the home, a trend also identified in other countries and interpreted as “egalitarian essentialism” (Scarborough et al., 2018, p. 177). Agreement to statements about gender hierarchies in the public sphere are relatively low for Latin America compared to other regions and to the world average, with Latin America seeing the greatest drop in survey responses advocating for men's greater right to a job between 1995 and 2020, whereas agreement with statements related to women's gendered roles in the domestic sphere and in the family are relatively high compared to some other regions. Colombia, and the Latin American region more generally, thus present a marked contrast regarding the evolution of attitudes about gender roles in the public and private spheres that is highly relevant to the research problem. If the aggregate attitudes reported in the WVS are taken as evidence for collective norms, the WVS findings thus appear to show changing gender norms around women's public roles but persisting, less rapidly changing, or even more entrenched conservative norms about women's roles in the home since 1998 and the early 2000s.

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<sup>9</sup> I conducted multiple linear regression analyses for the WVS samples and for the primary surveys to explore determinants of gender attitudes and the relation between gender norms with outcomes. I only present descriptive statistics here as the aim is to compare survey measures with qualitative observations.

I will investigate the interpretation of these findings more closely in the remainder of the thesis, where I draw an urban Colombian story of change from the mixed-methods data, thinking through the ambivalent results. I finish here with a methodological reflection on the WVS that will be expanded on in the monograph's main body. I raise methodological concerns around the WVS results and describe how I attempted to address them in the mixed-methods component of the research. These foreground themes that will be addressed throughout the thesis through a closer engagement with the empirical data.

### 5.3 Methodological reflection and limitations of the WVS

#### 5.3.1 Measurement and interpretation

There are debates as to how reliable public opinion items such as those found in the WVS are at adequately capturing beliefs and values (Banerjee, 2018; Datler et al., 2013; Davis & Greenstein, 2009) and the validity of scales using these measures (Constantin & Voicu, 2015; Zanella & Bellani, 2024). Questions in the WVS to capture personal attitudes provide an abstract statement, usually expressing a gender inequitable opinion, and ask respondents whether they agree or not with the statement. Recent developments in social norms measurement have emphasized the need for survey measures of social norms to go beyond individual attitudes, to include second-order beliefs about what others do and believe, and beliefs about the consequences of norm violations (Bicchieri et al., 2014; Binstock & Thornton, 2007; Gauri et al., 2019; Thornton et al., 2015). The primary research surveys included these types of questions, which were also compared to qualitative observations.

The WVS statements' abstract and generalised format is problematic. They are far removed from household decision-making processes and how everyday and strategic choices are made. Extensive behavioural science literature and sociological studies have shown that idealised intentions do not seamlessly translate to actions. Hochschild (1989) notes the misalignments between her interlocutors' beliefs about what should be, what they want, what is, and how they feel regarding responsibilities in their marital lives, and how they create "family myths" to rationalise or ease tensions stemming from these misalignments.

The generalised format and respondents having to answer multiple questions during the survey interview encourages the recall of surface-level gender beliefs, rather than deeper, more personal, and contextualised beliefs about gender ideologies. Asking respondents to agree or disagree with value-laden statements forces an artificial binary in attitudes towards

gender ideologies, it erases many internal contradictions, ambivalences, and does not get to the complexities that characterise human cognition and decision-making which important sources of change. As such, WVS results may exaggerate coherence and stability in attitudes and bear only weak links to how social norms are applied and engaged with in practice. Open-ended qualitative questions in the primary investigation that go beyond close-ended survey variables explored how lived experiences differed or aligned with professed beliefs and ideologies.

Abstract statements allow for respondents to acquiesce to what they think the researcher might want to hear. Respondents might profess support for gender equality in the abstract, but when it comes to specific situations, they might give excuses or justifications for inequitable arrangements and hierarchical practices, as I saw frequently in my interviews. Most inhabitants from Medellín expressed support for gender equality, only one elderly man in my research identified as having *machista* thinking, some did admit that they used to think in a *machista* way, but not anymore. This was contrasted with the observation of continued gender gaps in the workplace and at home. Part of the analysis in the remaining chapters will unpack this common discourse of equality: to what extent it reflects departures from past norms and transformative change, how support for equality is enacted or constrained in practice, and when is egalitarian discourse used as a cop-out or a genuine effort to share responsibilities more equally.

The extent to which reports of gender egalitarian attitudes reflects social desirability bias, from respondents' increased awareness of "development idealism" values, for example, (Binstock & Thornton, 2007; Thornton et al., 2015), or genuine commitment to gender justice is an open question which requires empirical investigation. Likewise, how changes in attitudes reported in the WVS are acted out in everyday lives also demands further investigation. Even if social desirability bias is influencing respondents' answers, this could reflect social pressure for gender equality, or that the gender order is being challenged or questioned. This may reflect progressive change or constitute pre-requisites for change, but this can't be uncovered from the WVS data alone.

It is also assumed that the WVS attitude statements are easily understood and their meaning is evident. There is, however, a lot of ambiguity around what the statements measure and how respondents understand them. As my primary research will reveal, survey respondents frequently misunderstood the meanings of these questions. This could partly be due to methodological issues, if the survey questionnaire is not adapted to how the target population thinks: people with low levels of education might not be accustomed to abstract



thinking or to “imagining otherwise” in highly hypothetical terms. However, it could also be due to the diverse ways individuals interpret social norms. A recurrent confusion for survey respondents related to whether the question was asking about what they thought was the case and what they believed should be. This confusion can arise because they misunderstood the question’s intent, but it could also be that there isn’t always a clear distinction in people’s minds between how things are and how things should be, or that the two mutually influence each other.

Lived experiences can be highly intertwined with individual attitudes. I found that some statements remain ambiguous and unclear, despite my familiarity with the theoretical literature around gender attitudes. This is the case for questions 5 (women earning more than their husbands), question 7 about housewives, and question 8 about the well-being of children of working mothers. In these questions, it is unclear if the intent is to capture respondents’ own experiences and observations of their social context, or to capture underlying normative ideals about breadwinning norms, domesticity, and motherhood. The questions don’t appropriately separate normative beliefs, lived experiences or observed social realities. For these reasons, I adapted the WVS question #5 in the primary household survey for this research project, asking whether men *should* earn more than their wives or female partners, to frame the question explicitly as a normative statement.

In the phrasing of the housewife question, it is also not evident if agreement/disagreement represents support for gender equality or attachment to ideals of domestic roles for women. From a purely logical standpoint, disagreeing that being a housewife is just as fulfilling could mean that the respondent believes that working for pay is more fulfilling or that being a housewife is more fulfilling than working for pay. They also may believe that women should have the right to work but also respect women who decide to be stay-at-home mothers or wives.<sup>10</sup> The question pits being a housewife and working for pay against one another, perhaps aiming to capture the most valued or preferred decision. The question appears to mix beliefs about whether women should be housewives with preferences to work, and the value given to being a homemaker in society. Furthermore, the question is heavily biased in its wording, assuming that homemaking is only relevant to women.

In Latin America, agreement with statements about the value of the housewife and paid worker role is one of the highest in the world along with Asia and the MENA regions,

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<sup>10</sup> This was a common push-back against “feminism” for women in the group I facilitated, who at times felt that their roles as mothers and housewives were being criticised by feminist activists.

and North America. This contrasts with Colombia and the broader region reporting some of the lowest levels of agreement with gender discrimination in the public sphere in labour markets, politics, and education, close to levels of Western and Northern Europe and North America. Likewise, WVS survey participants in Latin America were the most likely after the MENA region to agree that children of working mothers suffer, almost twice as likely as respondents from Western and Northern Europe. This indicates persisting significance and cultural meanings assigned to the housewife role and the continued influence of motherhood ideals, but it is necessary to explore precisely what meanings and conditions drive agreement to these questions. As mentioned above, agreement to this question could reflect the lack of childcare options and limited access to family policies that support work-life balance in a highly informal economy like Colombia.

The primary research explored the reasons and beliefs behind the attitudes expressed in the WVS, the cultural meanings surrounding the role of the housewife, and how motherhood ideals are evolving. Beliefs about the negative consequences of women working for their children and families emerged as particularly important in shaping decisions and evaluations of gender roles in families in the Colombian context. I did not include a question along the lines of question #8 (whether children of working mothers suffer) in the primary surveys.<sup>11</sup> The relevance of these beliefs emerged later on during interviews, after the survey questionnaire had been designed and implemented. Chapter 6 and 7 explore the context of violence and insecurity within which paid work decisions are made, putting forward contextually specific factors driving the concern for the children of working mothers' well-being expressed in Colombian sample of the WVS, which differs in important ways from a straightforward normative belief that women should not work outside the home for purely moral reasons.

The analysis in the following chapters will show that it is important to ask *why* people agree or disagree with survey questions and the reasons they give for their responses. The primary household survey included open-ended questions where respondents explained why they agreed or disagreed with a normative statement and semi-structured interviews with survey respondents probed for deeper meanings and ideologies behind these survey answers. I found that the reason for answering survey questions was often more illuminating to understanding existing gender norms and how they might evolve. Their explanations in

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<sup>11</sup> The household survey included a question about whether childcare activities should be women's responsibility.

interviews revealed how common and relevant they perceived these statements to be, and to what situations they believed they applied. The research shows that agreeing/disagreeing with the WVS statements might be for different reasons in different geographical contexts, with differences that matter for women's empowerment and pathways towards gender justice.

### 5.3.2 Biases, assumptions, and omissions

No research is value-free (Douglas, 2009). In the choice of questions to include, the WVS presents assumptions and biases related to a particular vision of “modernity” and ideals of gender equality that are characteristic of “developmental idealism” (Thornton et al., 2015). The items included expose an understanding of gender limited to women and their participation in economic development processes, as is espoused in liberal feminism and “women in development” thinking (Razavi & Miller, 1995). The biases and assumptions in the WVS are defined as much by what is included as by what is missing. Most problematic is the complete inattention to attitudes around men's roles in the family and the domestic sphere, such as conceptions of fatherhood and participation in housework, a crucial component of the second part of the “gender revolution.” The primary research aimed to remedy this by focusing on attitudes towards men's domestic and caring roles.

The WVS includes questions that are not always meaningful or relevant to certain country contexts, revealing a bias towards eurocentrism and towards “WEIRD” countries' experiences (Alemán & Woods, 2016; Amin, 2009; Muthukrishna et al., 2020). It enquires about, and therefore implicitly promotes, a concept of gender justice based on the idea of equality as sameness rather than gender justice with difference or complementarity (Nentwich, 2006; Tolo Østebø, 2015; Walby, 2005). It also implicitly assumes the nuclear family model in some statements' phrasing. It pits the difference between “traditional” and “modern” in simplistic terms, allowing for the ranking and benchmarking of countries that reinforces ideas of European models of progress and other countries as “backwards” or “patriarchal” (Vleuten et al., 2024). Revealing of this is the fact that many studies that use the WVS for analysis draw on modernisation theory (Haller, 2002; Tabellini, 2010).

Literature on the “geography of gender” highlights regional variations in patriarchal constraints that structure gender relations (Boserup, 1970; Kabeer, 2016; Kandiyoti, 1988). As the set of questions and statements are not country-specific, they allude to specific dimensions more relevant in certain contexts than others. For example, women's right to a job might be less problematic in Latin America or West Africa, where there is a long history

of women's work and self-employment. In Medellín, ideas about the rightful family provider appeared as more influential in shaping the terms and conditions of women's labour force participation and how it is perceived socially than women's right to a job (see chapter 6). However, the earnings statement is ambiguously phrased, not constructed in the same way as other attitude statements and does not explicitly ask who *should* be the primary family provider. The question about business leaders also presupposes a more urban setting and formal labour markets; in large informal economies, the question might not be as meaningful to respondents, or the meaning of a "business leader" might differ for respondents who work and live informally and respondents from elite classes who engage in corporate workplaces.

To address some of the issues of comparability of trends over time within the possibilities of a doctoral project, I conducted intergenerational interviews and asked interview respondents to compare their decisions and life outcomes with older and younger generations. I located reported beliefs and preferences within individuals' life histories and decisions around family and work. The thesis also frames results within a historical analysis of the macro-context and an understanding of local meanings acquired through prolonged participation in the communities studied.

Lastly, the WVS tends to encourage an individualistic and unidimensional perspective of gender. Studies on gender attitudes do not pay sufficient attention to social interactions. To address this gap, the primary household survey included questions about the community's expectations and their partners' beliefs if they were cohabitating or married. Sampling different family members in the household surveys and interviews also allowed to compare responses of several household members to capture household power dynamics and respondents' social positions in their family and society. Interviews inquired about household decision-making processes and their perceived outcomes, with some discussions conducted with several family members, where interactions between them could be observed. The focus on individuals discounts the institutional dynamics of gender – such as legal rules, land ownership, organisational practices, and symbols in the media –, and reduces multiple dimensions and different structures of gender constraint into unidimensional measures of difference (Scarborough et al., 2019), resulting in a simplification of gender and a view of normative change as confined to individual change.

## 5.4 Moving forward

This analysis contributes to the research problem by providing the background ‘big picture’ of gender attitudes across regions. The WVS results expose general patterns that raised further research questions that need to be unpacked with attention to the local context to understand gender norms’ dynamics of change and how they impact household arrangements and paid/unpaid work decisions.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the WVS analysis shows a general move towards egalitarian attitudes towards women’s public roles in Colombia from 1998 to 2019 and puts this in context with trends in Latin America and worldwide. This builds support for what I describe as a rising “discourse of equality” that I observed in surveys and conversations with people in Medellín, that contrasts with persisting gender gaps in practice. This paradox, and the extent to which gender equitable attitudes are linked to social desirability bias or other reasons, will be explored in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. The WVS results suggest a separation between egalitarian ideas about women’s leadership and participation in economic and political spheres which co-exist with gender difference ideas about women as better caregivers than men in the home. The differential pace of change across these different gender domains is precisely the focus on this thesis.

I found gender and age differences in individual attitudes about appropriate gender roles. Attitudinal data in the WVS and my primary survey show that women are generally less supportive of inequitable statements than men as a group whereas ethnographic data shows that there is often more pressure on women and girls to conform; in Colombia I found that mothers and female kin-networks often exert pressure on family members to conform to patriarchal norms. This discrepancy is explored in chapter 9 on family negotiations. I also find that younger respondents are more likely to support for gender equality. Although it is impossible to infer generational change directly from these results, they did motivate the more extensive investigation into intergenerational dynamics that is conducted in the empirical analysis. I carried this out in chapter 9, where I examined how individuals decide to reproduce or break past patterns observed in their family or society, turning to other pathways of intergenerational continuity and change than those suggested by theories of socialisation and intergenerational transmission of values.

In Colombia, geographical location and social class contribute to socio-economic differentiation and uneven development patterns (McGraw, 2007; Pizarro & Melo, 2013; Safford & Palacios, 2002; Wade, 1995). The primary research focuses on an urban context in

the Antioquia region, with research informants from lower and lower-middle socio-economic positions. I did not find conclusive results around the relationship between social class and gender attitudes in the WVS. Although data from Colombia's most recent wave indicates that the lowest income groups tend to exhibit more conservative gender attitudes, this observation was not evidently replicated in the primary research, where findings reveal considerable heterogeneity in ideologies and household arrangements among members of lower socio-economic classes. Research participants put forward a variety of justifications for both equitable and inequitable household allocations, some were based on more practical considerations, others appealed to traditional values, while others drew on concepts of women's rights and gender justice.

There are limitations in relying on the WVS to address the research problem. There is not a clear relation between what people answer in a generalised survey statement and what they do in practice. The WVS does not ask about whether men should contribute to unpaid household responsibilities. Men's relationship to the "private sphere" however is crucial to understanding the research questions raised in the thesis. Secondary survey data does not indicate the reasons for holding these attitudes or the meanings associated with them. Results giving the appearance of consensus can mask the nuances, varied meanings, and conditionalities that are all central to explaining gender norms dynamics of change. Furthermore, WVS data sidesteps the role of institutions and social interactions in shaping the attitudes, expectations, and beliefs reported in surveys which the subsequent chapters will explore in greater detail. Researchers should be cautious when interpreting these survey variables as well as cognisant of the distorting effects that quantitative analysis methods can have by emphasising coherence over contradictions, exaggerating consensus, and simplifying complex and multi-dimensional aspects of gender structures (Figart, 2005; Sigle, 2021; Sochas, 2021). Both the WVS results and their limitations identified motivated the development of research instruments for the mixed-methods study in Medellín.

## Chapter 6: An urban Colombia case study

Medellín has become an emblematic case of urban transformation. Its metamorphosis from being labelled one of the world's most violent cities to receiving international awards for urban design, innovation, and resilience is a testament to far-reaching changes. The drastic drop in homicide rates in official statistics and outward signs of economic modernity in the built environment invite grand narratives about the city's successes, innovative policies, marginalised neighbourhoods, and violent past. However, these only tell part of the story of this kaleidoscopic and highly uneven territory. Feminist, intersectional, and critical scholarship concerned with the everyday life and resistance practices of marginalised communities reveals more complex and heterogeneous trajectories of change.

The remainder of the thesis explores whether and how gender norms have changed in Medellín using methods other than standardised and context-independent survey data. This chapter introduces the study location in one district of the city's periphery, drawing from primary and secondary data on households, the local economy, and violence dynamics. The chapter gives an overview of the landscape of change in the past century from the perspective of low-income residents to provide background insights into the socio-economic realities that shape gender relations today. It underscores the great diversity characterising urban districts classified officially under the same socio-economic status, with an amalgam of cultures, social imaginaries, professional occupations, education levels, and lifestyles.

The chapter traces the evolution of family relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to base subsequent discussions on how gender norms and family practices have changed in recent decades. It then explores how paid work decisions and opportunities have changed for urban residents of Medellín's popular sectors. This offers an alternative picture to official narratives of successful urban transformation, where economic precarity and chronic violence constitute persisting challenges. In a final section, I outline the evolution of violence since the 1950s, spelling out the multiple forms of violence that permeate insecure neighbourhoods, and the conditions of their reproduction. Less visible forms of violence continue to shape social relations and subjectivities and give rise to local strategies for community solidarity.

These contextual features are central to understanding how social actors make decisions about work and care and how these relate to gender norms. As will be argued, they are also crucial to how the WVS statements are understood by urban residents in Medellín. These contextual aspects will be referred to in subsequent analysis. Chapters 7 and 8 analyse the meanings and implications of survey responses that support egalitarian attitudes about



gender roles in the public and private spheres. Chapter 9 investigates how these historical legacies and changing external circumstances create room for negotiating gender norms. Accounting for gender norms processes in this context of uneven change challenges assumptions of linear and uniform development trajectories. This can offer new learnings about the pathways between gender norms and socio-economic development.



Figure 7: A view of the city from afar (*Source: Author*)

## 6.1 Gender dimensions of the ‘Medellín model’

Located in Antioquia, in the central northwestern part of Colombia, Medellín has a long history of successful business enterprise from agricultural and economic development based on small mining, commerce, and coffee production. Little is known about the pre-colonial populations in Antioquia; it is thus difficult to reach conclusions about women’s status in these indigenous societies. Indigenous groups in this region were not densely populated; they consisted of small groups of horticulturalists with a warrior tradition. During the conquest and early colonial period, many of the indigenous populations in Antioquia were killed, enslaved or assimilated through processes of *mestizaje*. Antioquia’s colonial economy was



primarily based on small-scale agriculture and mining compared to other regions with larger indigenous populations where large *latifundias* estates were established to extract labour. This led to a relatively more equitable distribution of the land and a larger proportion of independent smallholders, which spurred agricultural expansion along the frontier in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (LeGrand, 1984). This allowed for early processes of capital accumulation and the formation of a merchant class and networks, leading to a gradual establishment of small villages and towns (*pueblos*). This set Antioquia apart from other regions in Colombia and set the grounds for a greater democratisation of property, the respect for free initiative and the foundations for a strong entrepreneurial class characteristic of the Antioquia spirit and regional identity (Christie, 1978; Safford & Palacios, 2002).

The family became the central unit of production, cementing patriarchal family values as an essential feature of Antioquenan culture, with high marriage rates and large families with numerous children (Gutiérrez de Pineda, 1968; Jiménez Zuluaga, 2005). The Church took a prominent role in family life, exercising greater control and moral regulation of gender relations according to the Spanish Catholic family model than in other regions in Colombia. Despite its regional identity based on ideas of a homogeneous white-mestizo population and “conservative orderliness” (Appelbaum, 2003, p. 2), racial, class, and gender-based inequalities were reflected in the formation of a group of elite families, large landowners and merchants, a “commercial bourgeoisie” (Safford and Palacios, 2001, p.47), alongside poor mestizo and mixed-raced smallholders and landless peasants who worked as agricultural labourers (*agregados*) on farms, living on a small plot of land with their families.

The mid-19th century marked the advent of the capitalist society and the start of sustained industrialisation and urbanisation processes that lasted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, spurred by growing coffee exports. The city became the country’s industrial and entrepreneurial focal point. By the 1960s, it was widely recognised as a manufacturing centre through textile-led industrialisation under the control of a small number of families (Farnsworth-Alvear, 2000). Unmarried and young women factory workers were highly involved in the first phases of industrialisation in the 1930s-1950s; although subject to strict moral codes, they also acted as political agents in labour strikes (Gaviria, 1991). In the 1980s, industrial decline gave way to a crisis of violence and narco-trafficking (Roldán, 2003). Medellín became known as one of the most violent cities in the world in the 1990s, with homicide rates peaking at 395 homicides per 100.000 inhabitants in 1991 (Alcaldía Medellín 2019).

Since the early 2000s, Medellín underwent transformation and urban renewal leading to a dramatic decline in homicide rates, upgrading of informal settlements through infrastructure developments with libraries and sports fields, the expansion of citizens' participatory processes, and public-private ventures. Local authorities, in collaboration with the business elites, invested in innovative interventions for social inclusion, most famously aerial cable-cars linking informal settlements to the city centre, along with promoting economic activity through micro-enterprises, university education and vocational training, and urban mega-projects such as the botanical gardens and major hydroelectric complexes. This "social urbanism" approach has been portrayed as a model of local development and participatory democracy (Cordoba et al., 2014; Maclean, 2014; Restrepo & Orsini, 2015; van Holstein, 2018). Today, Medellín has changed its image to that of a modern city attractive to tourists, digital nomads and foreign investors (Auschner et al., 2020; Duque Franco & Ortiz, 2020). The city is home to some of Colombia's biggest corporate and financial conglomerates. It was the first in the country to have a metro transit system (in 1995) and is being promoted by the authorities as the new "Silicon Valley of Latin America" through investments in science and technology.

However, it is crucial to contrast this story of urban transformation with the lived experiences and alternative narratives from marginalised sectors and critical scholars. These highlight persisting challenges related to insecurity, social exclusion, precarious livelihoods, and evolving forms of criminal governance. Social security often fails to reach the poorest and lacks transparency; there is limited access to quality childcare services, and increased vulnerabilities due to the climate crisis and environmental hazards. Medellín's 'success' is not just a product of effective technocratic interventions or public-private partnerships. It has a long history of creative resistance from the urban margins where women have held a central role, with collective activism and solidarity in the absence of state involvement, rooted in processes of auto-construction by displaced communities, mutual aid, and informal community negotiations with armed actors for peace (Ciro et al., 2013; Ortiz & Duarte, 2023; Pérez & Duque, 2019). The packaging of Medellín's record into transferable "best practices" for other cities often downplays these histories and contributions.

Some have questioned the apparent success of the "Medellín Miracle" (Bateman et al., 2011; Franz, 2017), with its highly segregated geography and social mobility barriers. These remain visible at all times due to the city's location in a valley, where the densely populated peripheral neighbourhoods stand on top of the hillsides and glitter at night, and from which it is also possible to view the skyscrapers in the wealthy *Poblado* district in the

distance, accommodating luxury hotels and apartment homes, and the symbols of the city's industriousness such as the headquarters of the *Grupo Empresarial Antioqueño*, Business Group of Antioquia) or the public utilities company EPM.

Medellín is a city of many contradictions and multifarious realities that 'resist a single narrative', in the words of a social leader.<sup>12</sup> Reductions in homicides rates do not signify an end to violence, as other forms of violence have increased in recent years, such as forced disappearances, assassination of social leaders, suicides, extortion, and intra-family violence (Tubb, 2013). Pacification efforts have transformed rather than resolved violence dynamics, in ways that it is more dispersed in the hands of micro-criminal groups (Abello-Colak & Pearce, 2015; Moncada, 2016). Moreover, the influx of tourists and digital nomads has presented economic opportunities while introducing further challenges such as increasing demand for prostitution and drugs, controversies surrounding the exploitation of the city's violent past, and criminal groups regulating and benefiting from tourism profits (Hernandez-Garcia, 2013; Naef, 2018, 2023).

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<sup>12</sup> Group discussion, April 2021.



Figure 8: View of Comuna 6, Doce de Octubre (*Source: Author*)



Figure 9: View from El Poblado (*Source: Author*)

Less has been explored around the gender dimensions of the ‘Medellín model’. Research on the effects of urban mobility projects shows marginal positive effects (Milan & Creutzig, 2017), but Montoya’s grounded ethnography (2019) of domestic workers’ realities highlights how the public transport system is not planned for these marginalised workers and their feminised work circumstances. Other studies of women’s realities have highlighted their experiences of fear and gender-based violence in the city (Jiménez & Sierra, 2017; Marzi & Pain, 2024), their involvement in policymaking and in formulating gender policies through the Women’s Secretariat (Hajdarowicz, 2022; Martínez Flórez et al., 2016), their everyday coping and organising practices (Gómez, 2010; Rivera & Mejía, 2022), and the labour conditions of garment workers, community mothers or domestic workers (Cañas & Henao, 2019; Echeverry Fernández, 2016; Osorio Pérez, 2015). Gerardo Pérez’s book featuring a view of the city from below (or rather from the hillsides) relates community mothers’ endeavours to claim their right to education through high-school certification-equivalents through participatory budgeting in *comuna 6* (2019, p.84-101). These rich works reveal various dimensions of women’s experiences and contributions to the city. Fewer studies have engaged directly with how household gender relations are changing in this urban context,<sup>13</sup> compared to more extensive literature on household gender relations in rural areas (Farah-Quijano, 2013; Pineda et al., 2019).

*Paisa* society has thus undergone profound economic, political and social changes. Traditional histories intersect in multidirectional ways with the effects of accelerated globalisation and financial liberalisation. Migration networks connecting Medellín to the United States, from New York to Miami, the inflow of international tourists, de-industrialisation, and narcotrafficking have coloured beauty standards, popular slang, food, clothing styles, and music and transformed ways of life and aspirations. Individual consumerism models from abroad intertwine with a more conservative and civically-minded culture that celebrates entrepreneurship, resourcefulness and cunning to make money by any means. Some of these changes have reinforced traditional gender roles or led to exaggerated expressions of masculinity and femininity, as exemplified by the burgeoning of the plastic

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<sup>13</sup> Munevar and Pineda (2020) analyse studies on care work in Colombia and find that many concentrate on remunerated care work, few concentrate on care that occurs in the family. An exception may be Meertens (2001), who focuses on the experiences of internal migrants displaced to cities because of violence in their rural territories. She finds differential gendered experiences before and after displacement, where displaced women find work in domestic service in an urban setting whereas displaced men are confronted with unemployment, creating ruptures in gender roles.

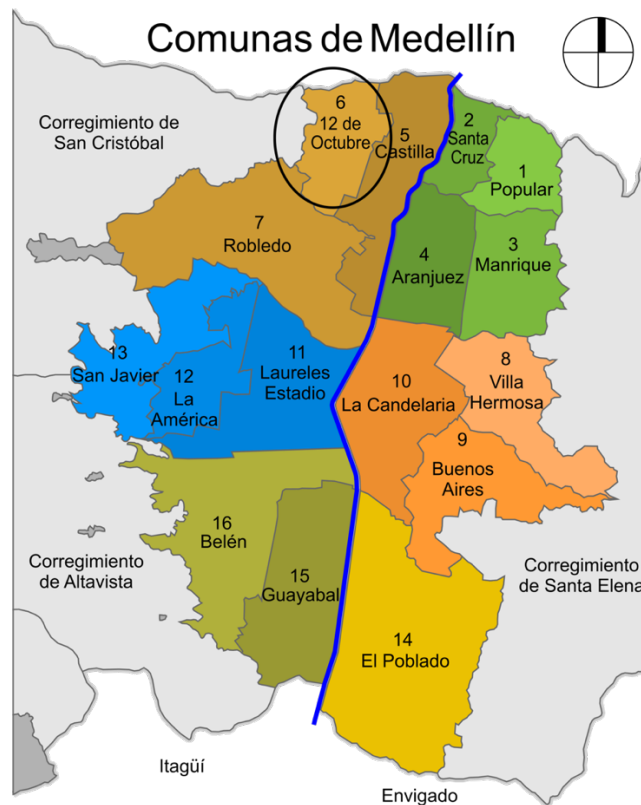


surgery industry; others have introduced tensions in household models of the past, to which I turn to after introducing the district studied.

## 6.2 Comuna 6 – Doce de Octubre

Administratively, Medellín is organised into 16 districts or *comunas* and 5 peri-urban districts; each district divided into several neighbourhoods. Urban segregation is geographically demarcated: areas further away from the river, higher up the hillside and towards the northern and outer parts of the city tend to be more disadvantaged, comprising of densely populated formal, informal, and squatter settlements with lower access to public services or educational opportunities and home to many of the city's internal migrants and displaced populations.

Figure 10: Urban districts “comunas” of Medellín



Source: Wikipedia.com

*Doce de Octubre* (Comuna 6), situated in the North-West side of the valley, is the city's second most populous district and was populated during one of the later waves of Medellín's urbanisation through both formal and informal processes, from the 1950s and especially in the 1970s-1990s (Castaño Arboleda, 1989; Sierra Londoño, 1995). The district faces common challenges of insecurity, informality, and weaker state presence typical of

Colombia's peripheral neighbourhoods. There have been improvements in infrastructure and increased State presence since the late 2000s, with the establishment of one of the municipal libraries, sports complexes and an aerial cable-car system, which started operating after fieldwork in 2021.

Propped up on the hillside, the terrain is saturated with few spaces to build, and many dwellings are constructed on steep slopes and geographically unstable terrain, vulnerable to environmental disasters from floods and landslides. According to official statistics, the district has some of the highest unemployment levels in the city and relatively low human development indicators (Medellín Como Vamos 2017). Lack of basic services and past experiences of acute violence have led to strong social mechanisms of peacebuilding and a dynamic civil society and cultural scene (Ciro et al., 2013), mainly concentrated in the lower and middle parts of the district.

The district is relatively homogenous regarding social class, with neighbourhoods classified into social strata 1 and 2 (*low-low class or lower class*) and some households classified as stratum 3 (*lower-middle class*) under the Colombian SISBEN classification. Nevertheless, there exists a diversity in living conditions and socio-economic achievements, with residents distinguishing between the middle parts of the district and the more elevated areas. Parts of the district closer to the riverbed benefit from a relatively higher quality of infrastructure and services, with larger roads and two to three-storied houses built over several generations, while dwellings further up the hillside are more precariously built in cramped spaces like alleyways or narrow staircases and have fewer neighbourhood councils and community centres. The extent to which gangs or the state regulate the area only partially follow these geographical divides (Blattman et al., 2021).

Compared to other neighbourhoods that are characterised by greater in- and out-migration flows, *comuna 6* stands out as a district where families settle, and younger generations have stayed. It is common to find families with a long history in the district, who have built houses over several generations and family members occupy different floors or live close-by. This made it a propitious context for the family research design. To make sense of changing family dynamics, I outline family patterns rooted in colonial legacies and the region's distinct patterns of economic development and strong rural origins.

### 6.3 The 'traditional' family and household relations

There has always existed a diversity of family structures in Colombia, with non-marital unions and female headed households having existed for centuries, although Antioquia has had a greater prevalence of official marriages relative to informal unions than in other parts of the country because of the influence of the Catholic Church (Gutiérrez de Pineda, 1968). Despite these variations, a relatively uniform division of labour and gender norms around family roles came out of research participants' accounts of the past, from their descriptions of what their grandparents and parents did, with more rigid and well-defined boundaries than what exists today. The traditional image of the *paisa* family was one subject to moral norms and notions of piety stemming from Spanish Catholicism. A patriarchal and *machismo* culture stipulated the father as the family provider and women as housewives or *matronas* with authority over the household. Female authority in the household depended on her upholding norms of virtue, self-sacrifice, and submission. The model of the “united family” and catholic marriage acted as ideals that structured hierarchies on moral and economic grounds, acting as powerful social control mechanisms for women and lower classes (Bohman, 1984).

The gendered *casa-calle*/house-street distinction demarcated appropriate spheres and responsibilities and was identified by many informants as a core aspect of “machismo” culture. This has roots in Spanish colonialisation (Mirandé, 1997). Women's role as a housewives stipulated that their occupation, activities, and identities should be confined to the home and domestic spaces in the neighbourhood (Jiménez Zuluaga, 2005). Gender roles were also underpinned by standards of cleanliness, female beauty standards, and ideals and symbolisms of female suffering and a mother's sacrifice for her family, epitomised in the image of the Virgin Mary, whose duty is to serve her family, even if it comes as a great personal sacrifice (Chant & Craske, 2003, p. 9; Melhuus & Stolen, 1996; Stevens, 1973). Women were confronted with a “double bind” (Holmelin, 2019, p.90) as housework was assigned the lowest value in society, considered demeaning work, and kept them economically dependent on men, and at the same time conferred them with social respect and status in the community, the home being associated with women's respectability and duty. Parts of the neighbourhood were still considered the domestic domain, women often moved around the neighbourhood, across houses to visit relatives and neighbours or run errands at small neighbourhood shops (Bohman, 1984). In some situations, women were contained to the home; some participants described how their grandmothers were “locked up” (*encerradas*), isolated because their husbands wanted them to stay at home. The house/street distinction also carries a moral connotation as “being of the home” brought social respect by



fulfilling appropriate gender roles, compared to being “of the street” (*callejera*) which conveyed inherent social judgment of disapproval.

Nevertheless, in practice, poor women and single mothers had to work to ensure the basic sustenance of their families. In rural areas, the wives of *agregados* and smallholder farmers also worked on farms, although they were not often remunerated, and their work was not recognised as such. Women worked on the family’s small plot of land, conducted occasional cleaning and cooking tasks for the landowners’ family, cooked for agricultural labourers, or participated in seasonal activities related to agricultural production during harvesting season (Leon & Deere, 1978, pp. 14–19). However, many of these activities took place on the family’s plot of land or were viewed as tangential to the permanent male labour force. A common practice was to send young girls to the city to work, most often as live-in domestic workers for a family, and send money back to their parents. In urban areas, many women worked out of economic necessity and before marriage. Still, the norms were clearly defined, could be easily identified and described, and served to morally demarcate “respectable” women from those that were not (Farnsworth-Alvear, 2000). The main alternatives for women who had to find work outside the home were as domestic workers or working in factories or restaurants, mainly applying domestic skills such as cooking or cleaning. Social structures and family practices made women dependent on men for economic security, social reputability, and respect. This was reinforced by social stigma against single mothers and divorced women, setting limits on women’s possibilities to live alone or return to live with their family.

The male household head was considered the economic provider and controlled the household income. Men were expected to be responsible and hard-working for their families. Men were “de la calle” (“of the street”)—referring to their privileges and entitlements to exert diverse occupations and participate in political and social spaces outside the home. This was accompanied by an expectation of economic provision of male sons towards their mothers and fathers and husbands towards their families, but this expectation was not always strongly enforced. Men often paid for rent or large household expenses and gave their partners what they deemed appropriate to cover basic household necessities and child support, and women managed that money for daily expenses. Women had to ask their husbands for more money if greater expenses were needed, for children’s schooling or clothing, “making the money last” (*hacer rendir la plata*) for as long as possible. Women often had to find ways to supplement the basic income provided by their partner. Because of this, it was common for women to perform some livelihood-generation activities “on the side” as they would describe, preparing

*arepas*, *gelatos* in their home to sell on the side of the road or directly from their house, or watching over someone's children for small compensation. In most cases, when men and women separated, men stopped their contribution to the family, and women were left to pay the additional expenses.

Several participants described their fathers leaving their family in their childhood, or growing up with a single mother, which often involved considerable economic difficulties. A striking example came up in Sofia's ambivalent descriptions of her mother and father, remembering her father fondly, 'until he left us': *"He was a really good dad, an excellent father. He took us to school, he would go to parents' meetings, he would ask for our grades, my mother never... she had a strong character, but she is a grand person, with beautiful feelings, I feel proud to have my mother, and also my father because he was very calm, he was never rude, I have beautiful memories. Not so nice memories when he left us, because we went through huge economic difficulties and he never gave us food again, he never gave us anything again, he left and forgot all about us."* Many research participants did not specify why their father had left; they often just stated it as a fact, as something to be expected.

Men's participation in unpaid domestic activities was a strong taboo. Men had no place in the domestic sphere, or in cleaning, cooking, or washing clothes. This was considered demeaning, abnormal and threatening male authority and virility. Internalised fear of social mocking and ridicule that men who perform housework are or will become homosexuals deterred men from participating in domestic activities. Mothers would prohibit sons to enter the kitchen, and only required their daughters to help in house chores. These strong social sanctions against men's household participation, which both men and women enforced, created rigid distinctions in the division of household labour and excluded men from the domestic sphere. Sons were asked to run errands such as going to buy milk at the store or helping their fathers cut and carry wood on farms, but had nothing to do with housework, in many narratives of people interviewed.

Anthropological studies have signalled a generational shift in men's and women's roles in Antioquia (Jiménez Zuluaga, 2005; Puyana et al., 2003; Viveros Vigoya, 2002). Fathers include their children as part of their life plans – expanding their minimal role as economic provider – and mothers pursue other projects, although motherhood still represents a central part of their identity (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2012). Symbols of manly success include wealth, womanising, drinking, encouraging the sexual objectification of women, but these are also mediated by class, race, and ethnicity, as young men from lower-class neighbourhoods are unable to meet these standards in the context of economic precarity (Baird, 2015; Chant,

2000). Yet, these ethnographic studies underline the rigidity of the domestic division of labour, the considerable share of female-headed households and men's oppressive treatment of women, noting the contradictions "new fathers" face in Medellín's society in transition.

Any analysis of gender dynamics in *paisa* families must also contend with the high levels of marital instability, consensual unions, and extended families that characterise the cultural landscape, as illustrated in figure 11. Colombia has one of the highest rates of single-parent families in Latin America and the "highest percentage of children living in female-headed households in the region" (Cuesta & Meyer, 2014, p. 61). With rising housing prices and saturation of the urban space, it is more difficult to obtain a plot a land or buy a house. Paying rent is expensive for families with workers on minimum-wage salaries, many young people prefer to stay in the family home of their parents or grandparents. These dynamics have led to the perpetuation of extended families and multi-generation households. Already a long history of female headship in Latin America, scholars have noted the feminisation of household headship as a significant shift since the 1980s, impacting gender relations (Chant, 2002).

Figure 11. Household structure in the primary phone survey (Percentages of households)

| Household Type   | Proportion of Households Surveyed (N=649) |
|--|---|
| Nuclear families with children (incl. adult children)  | 27% (173)                                 |
| Cohabiting partners without children                   | 7% (45)                                   |
| Single parents with children                           | 15% (100)                                 |
| Extended families                                      | 38% (244)                                 |
| Other (living alone, fraternal households, recomposed) | 13% (88)                                  |

Source: Author, primary phone survey.

The following examples encountered throughout the research illustrate the multiplicity of family situations encountered in the city. Liseth lived with her partner and their adolescent son in what would be classified as a nuclear family. However, they shared a plot of land with her older sister Valentina who was living in the house next door with her family, and on the other side was their mother and grandmother's house. Gina had separated from the father of her children and was living with her partner and her two young boys in an apartment they bought together. Sandra, another single mother, was living with her boyfriend

in her parents' home along with a cousin; she yearned to move out with her partner and her baby once they saved enough money. Kelly had been living in a peri-urban district with her spouse and her three children, one from a previous partnership and two that they had had together. They had to move back to comuna 6 during the pandemic to live with relatives, eight people under the same roof. Edgar lived with his wife and his two adult daughters, the youngest was divorced and had a young child. Juan lived with his wife and their son in a nuclear household but had a daughter who lived in the same district with her mother. All of these are representative of the diversity of household forms that any analysis of household relations and gender norms needs to recognise.

The empirical analysis contends with these conflicting forces of modern change. In the next two sections I go explore these complex dynamics as they pertain to the local economy and violence in marginalised urban sectors.

#### 6.4 The local economy: heterogeneity of economic activities in popular sectors

Macro-level statistics for Colombia show a rapid increase in female labour force participation in the past sixty years, from 17,3% in 1964, to 40,6% in 1985, to 60,0% in 2017 (Iregui-Bohórquez et al., 2020), with notably married women and less educated women entering the labour force in greater numbers (Abramo & Valenzuela, 2005; Amador et al., 2013). However, these trends have taken place in the context of evolving forms of informality (Isaza, 2003; Mondragón-Vélez et al., 2010) and working women are often concentrated in the service sector as waitresses or in micro-enterprises or small sales. The effect of the COVID-19 crisis also laid bare persisting gender vulnerabilities in the labour market, with women experiencing greater job losses and worsening of working conditions, in addition to increasing domestic and caregiving workloads (Tribin et al., 2023).

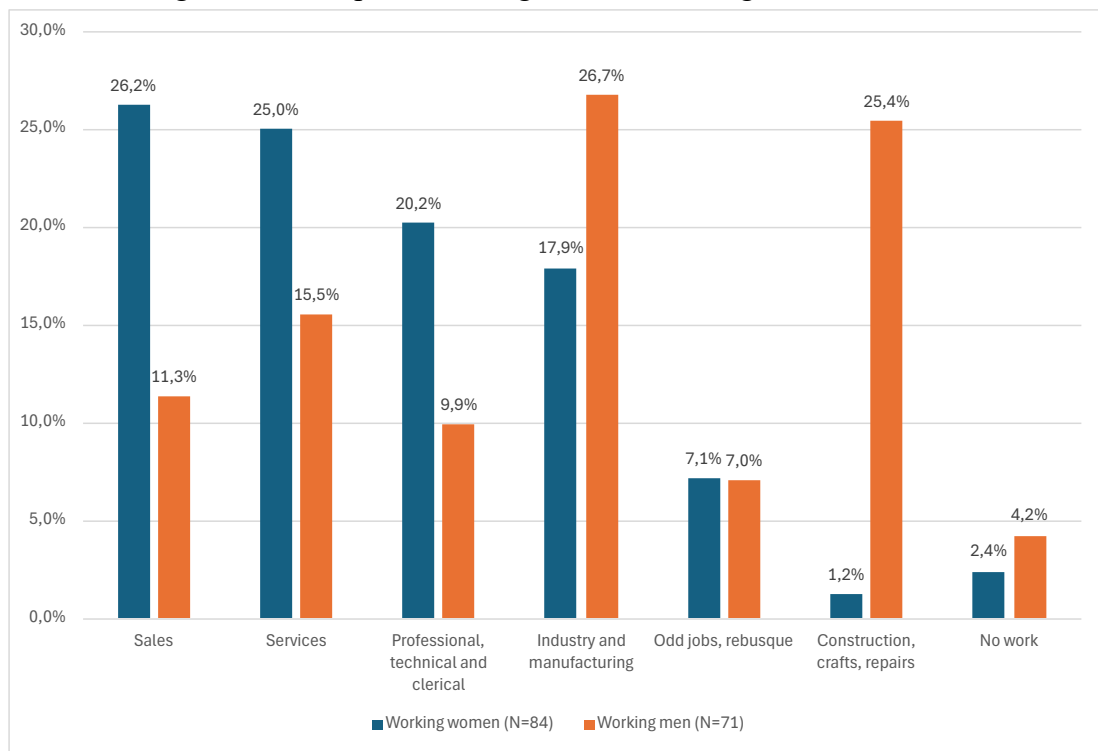
In this section, I trace how paid work opportunities have changed in the past decades for inhabitants of Medellín's popular sectors. The analysis exposes the diversity of work experiences in Colombia's heterogeneous economy, with formal, informal, and "popular" economies (Benjamin et al., 2022; Valenzuela-Levi, 2020). The popular economy encompasses a range of grassroots, community-based and small-scale activities such as street businesses, family shops, or self-managed tailoring workshops that provide livelihoods for marginalised groups. These activities are anchored in social networks of family-based and neighbourhood ties that take place at the margins of the formal economy. These tend to have

a collaborative character, are embedded within the socio-economic life in peripheral neighbourhoods, and fulfil social, economic, and political roles as both livelihood and social reproduction strategies. They can also represent forms of social resistance against extractive modes of development and modernisation that have led to the marginalisation of popular classes (Gaiger, 2019; Nyssens, 1997). Contending with the diversity and fluidity of livelihood strategies in contexts of informality, I outline here three categories of economic activities that distinguish motivations, subjective experiences, and implications of paid work and identify images of working women commonly associated with these categories.

Taking a broad definition of work to include casual, home-based, and temporary forms of economic activities (ILO, 2013; Langsten & Salen, 2008), over half of women in both survey samples reported carrying out some form of economic activity in the months before the Covid pandemic: 67 percent in the phone survey, 55 percent in the household survey. Workers in the sample made on average one to two times the minimum wage about (\$908.526 - \$1.800.000 monthly, or £160-£320). Women on average earned less than men. There were also differences in work characteristics, with women more likely to work from home and part-time (Appendix 2).

I found some overlap between occupations, especially in service jobs and sales, where men and women carry out similar roles and tasks. Other economic activities were more feminised or masculinised. Men were most likely to be in construction work, transport as taxi drivers, deliveries, lorry drivers, or industry and manual labour, working in factories or small workshops. Women were heavily concentrated in the service and sales industry, with half of working women in these two sectors. They worked in paid domestic and care work, as saleswomen, in garment work at home or small workshops across the neighbourhood, in beauty parlours or door-to-door cosmetics sales. There was a similar percentage of working men and women in the 'odd jobs' category, representing the most vulnerable, casual, and low pay work, such as street vending, recycling, and home-based sales of *arepas* or sandwiches. Working women were as or more likely than working men to report working in professional, technical, or clerical jobs, which represent better and more secure forms of employment.

Figure 12. Occupational categories for working men and women



*Source:* Author's own data from the primary household survey. Percentages of men and women surveyed who reported being economically active in the past three months, by occupational category.

Survey statistics thus reveal that it is common for women to engage in some economic activity but that gender inequalities in labour markets and work conditions remain (Annex 2). With changes in the structure of economic opportunities and the rise of the service and knowledge economy, there are more diverse income-generating activities in the neighbourhoods studied. Still, many of these remain in “low productivity” sectors and embody continued and new forms of informality and precarity. Economic liberalisation, more flexible labour laws, and technological advancements have led to a proliferation of low-pay forms of work which lack social security protections because of subcontracting arrangements, in sectors such as finance, tourism, services, the gig economy, light manufacturing and construction (Ferguson & Li, 2018; Franz, 2018; Isaza, 20032; Pineda, 2015).

Diversity, instability, and fluctuations characterize men's and women's working lives in the urban periphery. This unstable and transitory nature of work is difficult to capture in household surveys through a categorical work status variable. Individuals often perform several activities at once, such as combining domestic work and home-based sales on different days, or they might have a primary occupation and a small business on the side. Those with caring responsibilities or in temporary contract-based forms of employment will

often move in and out of the workforce. Where a “proper job” is not the norm (Ferguson & Li, 2018), fixed survey categories do not adequately capture the diversity of these work experiences or the transitions over an individual’s life course. Similarly, they fail to capture the extent to which work might be experienced as exploitative or empowering.

Moving attention away from participation in paid work as a binary variable, I highlight the diversity of paid work experiences in the popular economy. I identify three types of economic activities to decent wage employment: i) precarious work, ii) mid-level occupations, and iii) salaried and “professional” employment. These work categories provide different degrees of status, security, (un)predictability, levels of pay, and casualisation. They correspond to different work logics, meanings, and implications for poverty, resilience or vulnerability to crises. Where a worker is located on this ranking will depend on a combination of objective criteria and subjective perceptions, and shape how empowering, enjoyable, and valuable the work is perceived to be.

#### A. Low quality and precarious work– el “rebusque”

*The rebusque [informal work] that I am talking about, I’ve been scraping a living from day to day. In what way? I help myself by selling fruit in the street, I set up a table on the side of the road, put up a barbecue and sell sausages. I have tried a thousand things, doing deliveries for anyone who needs, errands, like queueing, it takes forever to queue at the bank or at a health centre, so you need to have availability and patience, and I have all the availability and patience. That’s the kind of thing that I’ve done as rebusque. That’s what “rebusque” has meant to me, I’ve tried it all since 2017 when I closed the workshop, everything I told you I’ve tried to do for the last two or three years. – Leonardo, 48-year-old man, on the meaning of rebusque, i.e., informal work.*

The first category corresponds to the most vulnerable forms of employment, composed of odd jobs and “elementary occupations” (ILO classification), such as running errands or small favours for neighbours, recycling and waste picking, doing circus tricks at traffic lights, rummaging and begging, as well as home-based sales at a micro-scale, peddling and street vending, working as a day labourer, domestic service, or industrial outworker. Pay is most likely occasional and irregular, is often not conceived as a salary, and can also be up to people’s discretion. Workers often combine activities to generate money with relying on charity or help from family members, a community organisation, or people in the street. Or workers might have some fixed pay but there is little possibility of increasing salary throughout their life, staying dependent on the minimum wage. In fact, “work”, “employment”, “salary”, or “income,” are not used to describe these income generating

activities but rather with language such as “I help myself with...” or “I defend myself with...”, or “day-to-day work”.

This reveals a work logic around survival and basic sustenance. Work is associated with what workers can get to cover daily necessities for themselves or their children, in some cases making a direct link between what they manage to earn with what they can eat for the day. Work is often perceived as an obligation, motivated by economic necessity, as something done “on the side”, or when the opportunity to earn some cash presents itself. Some talked about their work as a “struggle”. For others, work represents a little more than basic sustenance, such as the ability to pay rent, save to build their house or get their children through school. As for subjective definitions of work, many workers in this category (although not all of them) tended to experience their work as “enslaving”, exploitative, “burdensome”, or “exhausting”. They talked about how employers overload employees with work and take advantage of the informal workforce, in restaurants or for domestic workers.

Workers usually find work informally, through interpersonal connections and family networks, working with a parent or relative who runs a shop, restaurant, or workshop. They also sometimes found work by chance, by talking to someone, sometimes asking directly for work, or working for a friend who had started their own micro-enterprise. Workers most commonly perform these economic activities at home, in the street, or moving from door to door (for catalogue sales), in other people’s homes, or small workshops.

Workers have little control and autonomy over their work conditions, with long work hours for very low pay, and higher risks of exploitation and mistreatment by employers or in the street. These forms of work can be seen as demeaning by both the workers and others, because of the undignified working conditions and their low social standing. In some workers’ stories emerges a sense of lack of agency, of dependence on external situations, and that they were treated like inferior human beings in the case of domestic workers talking about their relationship with their employer.<sup>14</sup> This does not imply that all workers in this category don’t manage to find dignity in their work. Some found meaning and enjoyment; “community mothers”, often mentioning how they enjoy working with children and the community. These jobs are socially acceptable insofar as there is social regard for those with little resources doing what they can to get by. This is part of the *paisa* spirit of

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<sup>14</sup> I found the worse stories of mistreatment of domestic workers more common in older generations of women recounting their work in the past, 30 years ago, for example. The work conditions and rights of domestic workers have improved in Colombia. However, as a discussion with a syndicate representative for Afro-Colombian domestic workers during the pandemic lockdown made clear, domestic workers are still very much prone to abuse and exploitation (Lorena, 29 April, 2020).



resourcefulness and finding a way to make money no matter the circumstances – “a *paisa* never gets stuck” as the popular saying goes<sup>15</sup> – but they do not provide much in terms of respect or social status.

Work that falls into this category is usually heavily reliant on the worker’s physical labour, or small assets such as a sewing machine or a motorcycle, with dire consequences like losing the only source of livelihood if these are stolen or broken. As workers have few resources, assets or training that they can draw on to get a job, they also rely on gendered skills learned during early socialisation, such as cleaning or cooking for women and heavy carrying, lifting, or familiarity with machines for men. Those with military experience often find jobs as security guards. Amparo, who was over 50, recounted how she had to stop domestic service because of arthritis, her other option was to open a community home, looking after neighbourhood children at home. Her daughter helped her in the day-care and worked as a domestic worker herself. In contrast, one of her sons started washing cars in the bus parking lot in front of their house, learning to drive with other men there and ultimately gaining the skills to become a lorry driver.

There are frequent interruptions in work trajectories, because of difficulties in finding work, short-term contracts interspersed with periods of unemployment, unexpected events, accidents at work or family care responsibilities, or because they found work conditions too difficult or not worth coping with for the low pay levels. These jobs are also affected by high turnover of employees, as often these workers’ only possibility to combine work and home life and address family needs is to move in and out of the labour force. Under these conditions of job instability, irregularity and precarity, workers livelihood strategies are framed in terms of accepting whatever opportunity to make a little cash comes their way, to wait for opportunities to arise and to work when they can and in what they can find.<sup>16</sup> Work trajectories are often characterised by a “snakes and ladders” or “up-and-down” trajectory, with small progress set back because of unexpected shocks and crises.

During fieldwork, I encountered different images of working women that broadly correspond to the categories of economic activity I am identifying here. The first was that of the “*verraca*” woman, reflecting positive social regard for people who do what they can to support their families. Used in the Colombian context, it is a slang term with positive connotations often meant as a complement that could translate to “badass” or “gutsy”. It is

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<sup>15</sup> *Paisa no se vara.*

<sup>16</sup> “*en lo que le resulte*”.

applied to someone who is seen as brave, tough, hard-working, who doesn't give up and does challenging but worthwhile things. Despite cultural ideals of masculinity demanding men to be tough and strong, I found in my research that the term was most often used to refer to women by interview participants. *Verraca* was often used to designate single mothers, female heads of household, or mothers who were economically providing for their children on their own because of a lack of support from the father. It was usually associated with the idea of a woman who "gets their children ahead" to give them a better future<sup>17</sup> under difficult conditions and social contexts. It was occasionally used for middle-class women, meaning they are entrepreneurial and intelligent. This image of the working woman is associated with stereotypes and demands on women that follow motherhood ideals where women are expected to make sacrifices to their well-being for their children, but it also recognises and values women's resourcefulness, hard work, and ability to cope with challenges, highly regarded traits in *paisa* culture. It underlines the determination and strong will of women who are nonetheless in "survivalist" forms of work.

#### B. Mid-level occupations

The second mid-level comprises activities that are usually still informal but provide some more regularity and stability than those at the bottom level. These included small to mid-level personal businesses, a salesperson at a store, store manager, or working in a factory with a big company. Some occupations or professions here might be broadly the same as in the first category but are exercised under better conditions. This was the case for a street vendor who had a stall in one of the main bus stations and had worked with the same employer for 20 years and had not been laid off during the pandemic lockdown even if the station was closed. He could continue paying for his pension contribution which would allow him to retire in a few years' time. Edgar, a security guard who worked with *Comfama*, a progressive workplace institution, explained that he had a considerably better work-family balance than other security guards because he only worked 8-hour shifts. His employment came with additional advantages, he was offered life skills and professional development training and had social security benefits.

Work activities that fall under this category usually require slightly higher levels of specialisation and strategic planning and can be found via personal networks and by sending CVs and going through formal recruitment processes. They include self-employed enterprises

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<sup>17</sup> "*sacar sus niños adelante*"

as well as waged employment. Two examples of small individual or family businesses stand out as illustrative examples. Both mentioned that they were grew their business and did not go bankrupt during the pandemic.

The first is that of Sandra, a single mother in her early twenties with her own beautician business, where she goes to clients' homes. She started doing nails at 16 during high school for pocket-money, as her parents did not have much money. She did not start as a beautician; in fact, she completed a technological degree in administrative management. She had an office job where she worked as an administrative assistant and during the company's lunchtime break, she would do nails for the other employees. When she got pregnant, she was discriminated against and ultimately fired, a situation that is still common in Colombia (Berniell et al. 2023, Ramírez-Bustamente 2019). Her company paid her maternity leave but then did not renew her contract. She followed several courses offered by cosmetic brands and decided to become "independent" (self-employed). She describes how she built her business:

*I have a very large family, so I started with the women in my family, they recommended me to their friends, to their aunts, and so on. It worked and now I have a large catalogue of clients, more than 90 clients. I work every day and rest on Sundays. I wanted a job that would give me more time with my baby, now I make good money because the new techniques allow that... Regarding my aspirations, I started with this small briefcase, it's only been a year and now this is my work briefcase [shows me a much larger briefcase containing the beauty products]. I was able to buy a motorcycle after one year and work equipment. The idea for next year is to have a small shop, because all this material is costly, and I have a lot of it.*

Laura, another single mother in her late twenties runs a food packaging business at home with her husband who had become a father figure for her son. They distribute the products to shops in their district. This was originally his business before they got together as a couple. She stays at home and deals with the packaging and administrative tasks, which allows her to supervise the child and pick him up from daycare. Her partner has a motorcycle and is in charge of distribution outside the home.

*We are with my husband a company, a family business, everything [laughs]. It's a condiments business, we handle everything around colouring, cumin for example, we have it all here. The business has been growing, so we don't even fit in the house anymore. During the pandemic we did very well because people turned to food, with the anxiety of being locked in. We handle spices, cinnamon, raisins, coconut, those were in demand in supermarkets. So, our workload has increased especially in December, where a lot of money is spent on natillas.<sup>18</sup> We have had to adapt to grow at the pace that is demanded of us.*

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<sup>18</sup> Typical Christmas dessert that uses cinnamon.

In both stories, there was a sense of purpose or enjoyment in how they discussed their work, partly from thinking strategically about the business, indicating some stability and security that enabled them to think and plan medium to long-term or invest in better tools and resources. This category often corresponds to the “working poor” who are not eligible for social assistance.<sup>19</sup> Although not always receiving a stable and regular pay, workers usually make more than the minimum wage. Sandra was earning enough money to help her parents pay rent and ask her mother to stop working and watch over her daughter, with the aspiration of moving out to live with her partner and daughter someday.

Not all economic endeavours in this category are always as successful or economically profitable as these two examples. Workers are still confronted with considerable difficulties in making a decent living and achieving financial security. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, in research participants’ views and how they spoke about their work there was some sense of possibility, whether a real or imagined, of accumulating assets and investing in the future, albeit with a lot of patience and dedication. The frequent mention of patience as a strategy, rather than effort, reveals their perceived low control over external conditions and outcomes amidst systematic insecurity. Other times, the occupation represented a preferred trade-off such as more flexibility to balance childcare and family responsibilities, compared to alternative options to make a living. These might also include less respectable occupations such as a “webcammer” (erotic model/actress) but that yield significantly higher pay than other forms of informal work. Those working in sales considered that their occupation provided some job stability, stating that it was relatively easy to find employment if they lost their job, with shorter periods of unemployment between jobs.

The work logic and meaning of work associated with this category is one of some possibility of upward trajectory, with the need to get more skills or training to advance and earn more than a minimum salary to improve their living standards. It was common to work and study at the same time. Workers in this category often expressed some enjoyment and fulfilment at work, especially from learning new skills and knowledge that they valued, even if working conditions were not always ideal. Paid work was thus associated with aspirations to a better quality of life, a better future for their children, gaining security and stability, and

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<sup>19</sup> Although workers from the first category are more likely to qualify through SISBEN means-testing for certain social programmes, many don’t have access to social assistance and protection either.

some ability to plan or hope for improvements and progress. Whether that would be realised is a different question.

The image most expressed for women in this category of work was associated with ideas of entrepreneurial women, who can be as enterprising or even more than men nowadays, often accompanied by the perception that some men have become more “lazy” or “relaxed” than before. To support this image, interviewees gave examples of couples in their families or surroundings where a woman in a couple was the more motivated or ambitious one in finding ways to financially support the household, save, and invest. This partly comes from the idea that women are better savers and more responsible with money because of their responsibilities as household managers, and that some men are evading their economic provision responsibilities now that women are capable of financially supporting a household. Ana, the director of a cultural-educational foundation, discussed the women in her family she held as models: *“My uncles are very relaxed, they get ahead because of their wives, who are the ones who motivate them. For example, one of the women is a social worker, she saves a lot, she got the house, she got them some trucks to transport food and my uncle manages them.”*

### C. “To be a professional.”

*“In the company where I work, there are many women. I think there are more women than men, and the majority or all of them are professionals, engineers, lawyers. That’s very good, I think that is spectacular.”* – Juan, 43-year-old worker in technical support for a private company.

The third category of economic activity is composed of professional, technical, or clerical occupations. It was common in interviews for participants to express a strong aspiration to “be a professional” or for their children to be. These occupations represent a source of pride and status. University education is seen as the path to success, and I found that this aspiration was not gendered. These perceptions and aspirations align with findings from the WVS, where university education was in the great majority not considered to be more important for boys than for girls for Colombian respondents. Increased access to university education and vocational training is aided by public investments in education, with the provision of grants for students of low-income backgrounds through participatory budget allocations through the *Jóvenes en Acción* (Youth in Action) programme, and the availability of vocational training programmes through the National Training Service (SENA). Pedro, an

electrician supervisor in his late twenties recounted his work trajectory and how he viewed education and vocational training as central to his career progression:

*My brother helped me join my godfather's electricity company. I started working there out of necessity after my military service to provide for my 3-year-old daughter. I became fond of electricity. I thought "I can't keep earning minimum wage forever, I need to learn because I have a daughter." That's how I progressed, and nowadays I'm doing better, I'm already a supervisor, I have a professional license [from a vocational training centre]. I want to study electrical engineering [at university], but I was not able to this year because of the pandemic. In my job, I am a leader, as a supervisor. I earned this position a few years ago with all the knowledge I have acquired over the years.*

Most of those in the professional and technical work category in my samples were mid-level or low-level professionals, technicians, or clerks, with occupations such as laboratory assistant, receptionist, auxiliary accountant, nurse, and schoolteacher. These are "office jobs" or jobs in another esteemed workplace such as a laboratory, a hospital, or university, requiring technical or university degrees and providing additional benefits such as transport for nurses during the pandemic. This was the case of Elizabeth, a 30-year-old medical assistant from *comuna 6*. She used to work in a laboratory analysing samples and now works for Sura, a multinational insurance company founded in Medellín, after they accepted her CV. She works in the administrative department dealing with patients with private policies, providing them with information before they undergo medical tests.

These workers benefit from a more regular salary, above the minimum wage, even if many still work under informal and temporary contracts. With the proliferation of outsourcing, subcontracting and temporary work, employment contracts with formal businesses can include dimensions of informality (Pineda, 2019). Workers are hired on short-term contracts with fixed terms of several months up to a year, or for a specific project, that can be renewed regularly. In effect, workers perform the same jobs as a full-time employee but under substandard terms, with lower salaries, lack of social benefits or labour rights as the contracts effectively remove any recognition of a labour relation between parties, thwarting the workers' ability to negotiate improvement of their working conditions. Today, these "*contratos de prestación de servicios*" ("service provision contracts") have become ubiquitous in both the public and private sectors (Hoyos Pertuz, 2019).

In her mid-thirties, Cristina grew up in Belén, described how she came to be a psychologist and the different positions she has held since finishing her studies. After university, she found jobs through temporary contracts, but after her post-graduate studies in Madrid, she managed to enter a more stable job as a university teacher and conducts private

consultations as a complement. She nevertheless describes the forms of informality that characterise university work. She explained how she would effectively be paid nine months instead of twelve because her contracts were not renewed immediately. These types of contracts generate uncertainty and provide no guarantees, making it difficult to plan for the future.

Notions of what was considered a good job for professionals and technicians included a higher salary and good working conditions that could provide a more satisfying work-life balance, with regular and predictable work hours. It also included ideas of self-actualisation, fulfilment, personal growth and development. Some interviewees talked about their job as a passion or vocation. Their motivation to work, or to pursue their discipline was often framed in terms of personal desires and interests, revealing higher degrees of choice and agency and a greater ability to plan and think longer-term. The aspiration to “become a professional” was linked to the belief that it was the path towards higher standards of living and social mobility.

Paid work in this category is associated with new identities and work logics centred around the idea of a modern, educated worker. Educated women in lower-class neighbourhoods benefit from social respect that recognises their visible achievements and skills in the same way that educated men do, in ways that differ from the social respect women receive from being a proper housewife and adhering to gender norms. Educational and knowledge-based opportunities have introduced new sources of power and respect. Learning most often happens before starting their job, while they study for a technology or university degree. Skills and knowledge are then applied in their job, although many also had to work to pay during their university studies simultaneously, in non-professional jobs until they finished their studies. This produced considerably longer “waiting” times for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds to graduate from university or for young students who are also parents. Those who went through university spoke about university being a formative experience where they learned a different mindset, were presented with new ideas and interacted with people from different backgrounds, espousing liberal notions of modernity. For women, the modern educated professional and technical career has emerged as a pathway to greater equality and social respect based on new criteria than those that conferred social status to the housewife. However, these pathways aren’t accessible to everyone. This “professional” ideal and the life that is associated with it remains inaccessible to many who are excluded from the modern worker model.

This classification of jobs testifies to different types of vulnerabilities and informality in the local economy. These distinctions between work categories raise the question of what

forms of paid work constitute departures or continuities with past gender roles and contribute to transforming gender norms that chapter 7 will address.

## 6.5 Insecurities in the barrio: a history of violence and ‘the other economy’

Economic instability is one dimension of multiple insecurities affecting the life histories and everyday realities of residents in Medellín’s urban periphery. Political conflict, drug trafficking, violent state interventions, and criminal gang-related activities connected to the broader armed conflict have contributed to a long history of violence in the urban districts studied (Rozema, 2007). Violence in Medellín involves multiple actors and has become normalised in everyday life (Lacy & Riaño-Alcalá, 2006; Moser & McIlwaine, 2003). This has led to what scholars have theorised as “chronic violence” (Adams, 2017; Pearce, 2007) and “everyday forms of violence” (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004).

Since the 1950s, Medellín’s peripheral neighbourhoods have received migrants fleeing political violence in rural areas. In the late 1970s to early 1990s, Medellín’s homicide rates escalated when narco-trafficking took off as an industry as Pablo Escobar’s cartel exerted dominance over the illegal trade (Salazar & Jaramillo, 1992). The city experienced extreme forms of violence, including frequent terrorist attacks, bombings, kidnappings, and killings of police, lawyers, and academics by hired assassins (*sicarios*). After Pablo Escobar died in 1993, different armed factions fought to take control of neighbourhoods and drug trafficking routes. State military operations aimed at ousting urban guerrilla militias from *barrios* in the early 2000s created a further layer of violence. This urban warfare created countless civilian casualties and resulted in the defeat of guerrillas in the city, with various paramilitaries dividing control for the rule of the illicit economies (Rozema, 2007; Vélez Rendón, 2001). These intense and extreme forms of violence reached their peak in the 1990s. Steven, 34, recounts growing up in his neighbourhood in *comuna 6* during this time:

*Growing up in the 1990s, it was one of the most dangerous districts. There was a lot of crime [delicuencia], with shootouts, you couldn’t go out in the street to play peacefully because at any moment the gang here from Santander would face off the gangs from Paris, or because the gangs targeted you.*

Peace accords and negotiations between gangs in the late 2000s, with concerted dialogue between civil society and the municipal government, contributed to decreasing homicide rates (Moncada, 2016; Perez, 2019). With Mayor Fajardo (2004-2007) and subsequent governments’ “social urbanism” approach to counter violence and social exclusion, many neighbourhoods in Medellín’s urban periphery have seen improvements in



safety conditions when compared to the most violent years of conflict between armed gangs between the 1980 and early 2000s. Respondents spoke of changes in their neighbourhoods, citing how they can walk around safely without worry, with children playing in parks or street.

Nevertheless, violence has not disappeared, criminal groups continue violent and extortionary activities with little state opposition (Bedoya, 2010; Moncada, 2016; Sanín & Jaramillo, 2004).<sup>20</sup> Research participants spoke to the complex and contradictory ways violence and insecurity have evolved in their neighbourhoods. Johana, in her late thirties, described the changes in the comuna's built environment, which she contrasts with the way insecurity is perpetuated through the continual reproduction of criminality:

*There have been many physical changes in the streets, but at the level of society, with the neighbourhood combos [gangs], in that sense it hasn't changed, it is a continuous reproduction. I have known some combos my entire life. There will always be violence between the criminal combos, so I don't see that much has changed, but physically obviously now there are nicer houses, the roads are now paved, there is more comercio [local businesses].*

A multitude of criminal groups have a consolidated presence in peripheral neighbourhoods, where they administer the sales of drugs, collect "taxes" for "social protection" known as "*vacunas*", and engage in violent activities and killings (Abello-Colak & Guarneros-Meza, 2014; Blattman et al., 2021). Decreasing homicide rates is a consequence of agreements and truces between different criminal groups, creating a fragile equilibrium. New territorial disputes or shifting alliances can result in violent outbreaks, contributing to uncertainty and insecurity. Armed actors intervene in community life by regulating social conflict and imposing informal social rules (Dávila, 2018). They also exploit citizenship participation systems, provide services where they operate, and monopolise sales of drugs and local goods such as eggs, yoghurt, or arepas. Violence patterns largely depend on the district or neighbourhood, and even the street block, with some peripheral working-class neighbourhoods safer than others, depending on the prevailing distribution of power and control and agreements between gangs. This creates an ambivalent relationship between communities and local gangs, especially because many residents may know some of the

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<sup>20</sup> The rise in tourism is also creating complicated dynamics because of foreign tourists and digital nomads attracted to Medellín's sex industry and easily accessible drugs, which has intensified since the pandemic and rise in remote working. Armed groups take advantage of economic developments linked to tourism or infrastructure developments (see for example Naef 2022, 2023). Social leaders have observed that the investment in ports in Uraba and the construction of highways connecting them to the rest of the country has resulted in a surge in recruitment of young people in some neighbourhoods, with armed groups establishing a presence in the coastal area in the anticipation of increased economic activity and new trafficking routes (report from a meeting of social leaders, April 2021).

*muchachos*, lower-level gang members who exert community watch or other tasks for criminal groups, who may be relatives, former school classmates, or children a community mother cared for.

High and persistent levels of violence take many forms, some more visible than others, and take place in the home as much as in public spaces (Abello-Colak & Pearce, 2015; Cook et al., 2017). Throughout my fieldwork, I routinely heard of instances of forced disappearances, feminicides, increasing assassinations of social activists, intra-family violence, the use of the drug scopolamine for robberies, and state repression and violence against peaceful protesters, “*nos estan matando*” – “they are killing us” – was a popular slogan. There were also more symbolic forms of violence in the othering of the lower classes by the state and the wealthy elite or the erasure of the role and memory of local inhabitants in official discourses.

Violence is ubiquitous in life histories and how inhabitants perceive their environment. There was not a single interview where violence did not come up, either as a direct personal experience or as the background context in which one lives. All families in the research spoke to having some, often very close, link to violence in the past and in the present. Countless research participants spoke to the death of a close family member or having been displaced due to violence. Whether they consider their community as safe or not, violence is nevertheless the index or lens through which they see their *barrio*. Even for those referring to their neighbourhood as “wholesome” (*sano*), or “very calm” (*muy tranquilo*), violence is the main point of comparison.

These overlapping insecurities have profoundly impacted society, shaping local economies, culture, and social relations (Adams, 2017). The history of violence and state impunity has impacted neighbourhoods’ social fabric, leading to distrust of government institutions and outsiders to the community (Moser & McIlwaine, 2003). Residents have internalised behaviours to respond to local gangs’ control of the social order and surveillance tactics. Communities have developed implicit co-habitation norms and community rules of coexistence and individuals adopt strategies of minding one’s own business and rely on family members and trusted contacts for support. The fear of retaliation has resulted in a culture of silence, of not talking explicitly about what happens in the community: “*I don’t get involved with anyone*”, “*I keep to myself*”, “*I don’t ask questions*” are frequent comments when people describe their experience living in their neighbourhood. The infiltration of narco-trafficking in social life has influenced politics, local culture, aspirations, and beauty

standards, summarised by the idea of *narco-aesthetics* and *narco-culture* (Faciolince, 2008; Núñez & Carantón Sánchez, 2022; Rincón, 2013).

As Villareal (2015) suggests, violence can tear down the social fabric of societies while also creating new spaces for socialisation and mutual support. I observed this in Medellín where distrust and suspicion co-exist with strong networks of solidarity as the community has had to rely on their own mechanisms to respond to urban challenges. This was useful during the pandemic, but community organisations also had limited resources to sustain solidarity throughout prolonged lockdowns and restrictive measures. The neighbourhood and the street block are spaces that remain central to people's identity and meanings, for some residents, their viewpoints and everyday lives are very much bound by the *barrio* (Mesa, 2017), as several interview participants commented about their peers.

The subsequent chapters aim to understand the implications of the structural conditions outlined in this chapter for the gendered household division of labour, and how they shape normative understandings and social practices. This allows for a “contextualised understanding” (Simmons & Smith, 2017, p. 126) of norm processes by placing gender norms within the broader institutional, historical, and social context and seeking to understand the meaning and motivation behind adherence to such norms. This involves paying attention to how research participants make sense of the WVS statements and how their actions align more or less with the attitudes and norm perceptions they report in surveys and interviews.

## Chapter 7: Gender norms and paid work

### 7.1 Introduction

Expanding women's participation in income-generating activities and evolving household livelihood strategies represent significant changes to family practices in urban Colombia. Analysis of the WVS trends suggested an overall move towards gender attitudes that support women's participation in employment, business, and politics, while ideas about women earning more than their husbands, housewives and working mothers have not seen definitive changes. This chapter picks up on what these contrasting survey findings might show about gender norms around paid work in Medellín and what they miss out. To understand gender norms change, I ask to what extent women's increased engagement in paid work might have destabilised normative understandings of the male household provider and the subordinate housewife. What has changed and what has remained the same?

In this chapter, I explore whether and how women's labour force participation has acted as a driver of positive change in gender norms, refraining from the tendency to treat female labour force participation as an unproblematic category. The classification of jobs from the previous chapter highlighted the diversity of work characteristics and forms of precarity for popular classes in the local economy. Due to its high level of aggregation, the WVS cannot differentiate between paid work experiences for workers who are all classified as 'lower class'. By asking survey respondents directly about their reasons for their survey answers and more broadly about their views of women's work and paid work decisions, the chapter explores what impacts changing economic realities have had on paid work norms. It does so by examining what is valued about women's and men's economic activities. I uncover a heterogeneity of meanings associated with categorical survey variables which emerges due to the different ways work is interpreted. I analyse how perceptions related to certain forms of work and workers complicates the survey data collection process and our readings of WVS responses to statements about gender roles. Building on the distinction between attitudes and social norms noted in the methodological reflection, I interrogate to what extent the WVS variables can be used to construct valid measures of social norms.

Drawing on the social norms measurement literature (Bernhardt et al., 2018; Gauri et al., 2019), the household survey asked about personal attitudes, beliefs about what is typical, about community attitudes, and behavioural outcomes. Considering these social expectations reveals contrasts in what people report personally and what they expect socially. Survey

participants' interpretations of the WVS questions reveal nuances in their normative stances which impact their decision-making. Qualitative research exposes confusions and ambiguities over survey items and the limited adaptability of some concepts embedded in the research tools to the socio-economic conditions in low-income settings. This raises questions of validity of the WVS questions as measures of subjective interpretations of social norms but also more substantive questions about the interconnections between economic insecurity and gender norms.

In the context of the unsteady and flexible nature of work experiences, not all forms of paid work represent marked departures from past gender roles; this, I will argue, depends on objective and subjective dimensions that determine the quality of work and how that work is perceived and explained. Based on the mixed-methods research, the interpretation of WVS results in Chapter 5 overestimates the extent to which normative assumptions about women's work have changed and misses out how these are being contested. The WVS results fall short of exposing some of the sticking points in gender norms that contribute to persisting gender inequalities, such as persisting male provider identities, despite progress made in women's economic independence and autonomy. The chapter shows that aspects beyond individual participation in paid work are more significant in understanding evolving gender roles and whether they constitute continuities, adaptations, or marked departures from the past. Changing or persisting ideas about the rightful male provider may be more relevant for mapping progress than the WVS variable on women's right to a job for the Colombian context. This is partly because the WVS masks important differences in types of paid work and fails to engage with the insecurities and instabilities that shape paid work experiences in Medellín's urban periphery.

## 7.2 Social expectations and a discourse of equality

Above 80 percent of survey respondents appeared to support gender equality in labour markets and politics, and for women to earn as much as their spouses, with less than 20 percent of survey participants agreeing with gender inequitable statements. This reflects considerably higher support for gender equality than what is observed in behavioural variables. For example, only 13 percent of survey respondents stated that they believed that men should earn more than their partners, yet 79 percent of cohabitating men in the survey were earning more than their partners (for N=105 cohabitating couples). Generally, participants' perceptions of community attitudes were comparable to what other people

reported in the survey. Participants' views of how typical it is for women to earn more than their partners were comparable to what was reported in practice, but participants overestimated how many women in their neighbourhoods worked for pay outside the home, according to the survey statistics.

Figure 13: Normative beliefs and reported behaviours around paid work

| Personal attitudes   |                       | Behavioural outcomes   |      | Beliefs about what is typical                  |       | Community attitudes  |       |
|--|-----------------------|--|------|--|-------|--|-------|
| <i>Do you believe...</i>   | Agree, (%)<br>(N=262) | <i>What was reported</i>   | (%)  | <i>How many women in your neighbourhood...</i> | (%)** | <i>The people I care about in my environment think that...</i> | (%)** |
| university education is more important for a man than for a woman? | 3                     | Gender gap (women compared to men) with some university or tertiary education. | -0,5 |  |       |  |       |
| men make better political leaders than women?                      | 10                    | Male leaders in Medellin council*  | 77   |  |       |  |       |
| men should be the head of the household?                           | 28                    | Male headed households   | 40   |  |       |  |       |
| men have more right to a job than women?                           | 16                    | Women in the survey working for pay  | 51   | work outside the home for pay?                 | 59    |  |       |
| a man should earn more money than his partner?                     | 13                    | Men earning more than their spouses.   | 79   | do not earn more than their spouse?            | 60    | men should earn more than their wives                          | 22    |

Source: Primary household survey, apart for \*from CEPAL 2021. \*\* Percentages calculated based on a scale of 0 to 4.

In interviews, there also appeared to be a consensus in how research informants talked about the acceptability of women's work outside the home and in their businesses. Discourses around the importance of women's independence were common and suggested that these outcomes were socially valued or at least acknowledged. As the following quotes attest to, this discourse of change in women's roles was echoed across education levels, social class, and occupation status.

*About thirty years ago, women were very submissive, everything was what the man said. Now everything is like equal, women work and earn their money, thinking 'so that they don't humiliate me'. – Edilma, 45-year-old, primary school education, unemployed domestic worker and grandmother, estrato 1 (low-low class in Colombian system).*

*I think that when one is capable and feels skilled (capacitado), it is better to work so as not to depend on anyone. My daughter is independent, and I like that, her working on her own account. – Julio, 62-years-old, no primary school education, informal construction worker, estrato 2 (low class).*

*Most women work now. Before there was more machismo, they also had to be at home doing housework, taking care of the children while the man worked. Now there is more freedom, women don't have to depend on a man. That's good because they buy their own things, they do what they like. – Adrian, electrician, 34-years-old, technological degree, estrato 2.*

*The lifestyle has changed completely, I would say that the role of women as housewives, I think since the 80s to now, it has change around 90 percent. That's because women study to hold a position outside the home, it can be because of necessity, but it could also be from greater awareness that it is better to study and to receive a salary every eight days, that may be the motivation.* – Married father, 65, retired schoolteacher, estrato 3 (low-middle class).

This consensus points to the increasing acceptability and visibility of women's economic activities inside and outside the home. In many of these quotes, there is a focus on how women's dependency on their partners or fathers has changed as they have more options to make a living. Many research informants shared the perception that the relative balance of authority and power in households has shifted and that women's status in society has improved. Although respondents generally believed that men and women should have equal rights to a job, in practice, men were more likely to work, had greater access to financial resources, and continued to be the primary earners in couples, as the survey statistics attest. There is thus a gap between normative beliefs supporting equal access to paid work and continued gender differences in economic outcomes. The picture is further complicated when we look at quality rather than quantity of employment and the meanings associated with different economic activities.

### 7.3 Objective and subjective dimensions of job quality

#### 7.3.1 Different meanings of a “job”

The three categories of jobs described in chapter 6, of casual and precarious ‘*rebusque*’, middle-level occupations and small enterprises, and ‘profesional’ jobs concern the quality and experience of work rather than work status and participation *per se*. This categorisation draws attention to objective and subjective dimensions that influence how workers conceive of and experience their livelihood activities and the implications of these economic activities for their well-being, security, freedom, and autonomy. This highlights the multidimensional meaning of a “good job” and “decent work”, and that workers confronted with informal and precarious labour markets often have to trade off some dimensions over others.

This analysis distinguishes itself from others that commonly focus on a specific group of workers such as street vendors (Porrás-Santanilla, 2019) or women in corporate and managerial jobs (Martínez et al., 1995; Maxfield et al., 2008). Instead, it highlights the diversity of occupations within the same urban districts and socio-economic stratum. This diversity stems from contrasting trends with old and new forms of atypical employment

(Abramo, 2022), with the expansion of educational opportunities, including the SENA vocational training and publicly funded university education through Medellín's *Sapiencia* programme, and job opportunities with foreign businesses that can lead to more secure employment. This entails heterogeneous work experiences for women in low-income sectors.

Conventional occupational categories such as “elementary occupations”, “clerical support workers”, “service and sales workers” or “plant and machine operators” under the ILO classification, or distinctions between waged, contract-based or self-employment are not always a good proxy for the quality and work conditions of a job in the informal economy. For example, being a street vendor may offer more autonomy and a higher salary, even if classified as an ‘elementary occupation’ than a formal job at minimum wage and long work hours in the service sector or at a factory. Marty Chen’s pyramid of risks-earnings scale in the informal economy is partly relevant here (2005); where the type of work at the bottom of the pyramid – for unpaid family workers, industrial outworkers and casual informal workers – have the lower earnings and higher poverty risks, whereas small business employers and informal wage workers benefit from lower risks and higher earnings and are predominantly men. However, with new forms of vulnerable work and informal employment relations, casual and home-based work may yield greater economic returns than regular informal employment fixed at the minimum wage.

Workers frequently take up and leave income-generating activities for various reasons, i.e., alternating between periods of economic activity and inactivity or moving between formal and informal work. They may lose their job and have difficulty finding employment, resulting in periods of subemployment where they might have to engage in casual labour and *rebusque*. This period of unemployment can last several months or years, especially if the occupation requires physical labour and the worker is over a certain age. It was a common perception that older workers were discriminated against for manual labour jobs, making it more difficult to find a job. Many older respondents described moving to “independent work” because they weren’t being hired after a certain age. Women often have to move in and out of paid work to respond to evolving family care needs, if an elderly family member needs attention or in the years after having children before returning to the workforce. Discrimination against pregnant women, although illegal, is still widely practised (Ramírez-Bustamante, 2019), and long hours and inflexibility in formal employment often lead women to opt for informal work, like Sandra, who had her own beauty business. Others gained skills through informal work, learning their trade in small workshops or from relatives, ultimately leading them to get a job with a company and access formal benefits.



Some combine formal work with informal strategies such as small sales to supplement their income and protect against potential job losses.

The diversity of strategies to make a living in Medellín's popular sectors calls into question the meaning of "work" and the concept of a "job" in WVS statements. Indeed, it is unclear whether the WVS question about men's right to a job refers to formal employment with a contract or whether the person performs any income-generating activity. As Braun and Scott (1998) observe, it can also be ambiguous if the question is understood as asking about being employed or unemployed, which is different from making a voluntary choice to work. *To work* and *to have a job* are different in contexts with high levels of unemployment, subemployment, and informality.

The conception of a "job" as formal waged employment excludes a large part of the working population and livelihood activities carried out in Medellín. Non-formal and non-standard forms of work and combining multiple types of economic activities were the most predominant for workers in my samples.<sup>21</sup> This conception is also not pertinent to the shifting and unstable character of work histories. Answers to questions in the WVS are likely to differ by the respondents' social class and economic opportunities available; a member of the wealthy and elite class may not consider casual labour as a 'job', for example.

The diverse meanings and experiences of work in Colombia's informal economy create ambiguities in what counts as a "job" or "working for pay". Economic activities in the precarious work category were often not conceived by research participants as a job, whether women or men performed the work. They are conceived as *rebusque* or scrambling, the daily search for survival. This is reflected in the language used to describe these activities, such as "I help myself with...", as seen above. In many survey answers and interview discussions, respondents referred to themselves or a family member as "not working" if they were not in a formal job. In interviews, some people talked about their fathers or husbands as "unemployed" even though they were in informal construction work, when they were in situations of subemployment or lacking a stable job. In this context, having access to a well-regarded formal "job" was seen to depend on individuals' relative social position (e.g., age and university education) rather than solely on gender.

### 7.3.2 Different implications for gender norms

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<sup>21</sup> 59% of economically active survey respondents were in informal employment (i.e., informal employee, self-employment, casual labour, or domestic work).

The empirical findings demonstrate that women's entry into paid work is not uniform. The three images of working women exposed in chapter 6 – that of (i) the gutsy “*verraca*” woman, often a single mother, who works in low-paid and precarious forms of work to get her children ahead despite challenging circumstances, (ii) the enterprising woman, resourceful and industrious, who sets up her own small business or has climbed the ranks from saleswoman to become a store manager, often contrasted to men who are more “lazy” than before, and (iii) the ‘educated’ young woman with university education who has attained some ‘professional’ or clerical occupation – illustrate how different economic activities are associated with different perceptions of women's paid work roles. Different forms of engagement in productive work reflect greater departures or continuities with women's roles as housewives and the male breadwinner family model. Women's economic participation may be seen as a continuity to their domestic roles, a contemporary version of the housewife, or it can embody new roles, identities, and possibilities for women.

In the research, I found that local concepts of a “job” and “work” also have gendered dimensions that can influence interpretations of WVS statements. Women's economic work is sometimes made invisible, even when it provides for all, or a sizeable portion, of the family's income. When women's work is seen as an extension of the dedicated housewife role and subsumed under their domestic and caring obligations, it is sometimes not referred to as work. Respondents often discounted their grandmothers' and mothers' work on farms in rural areas, even when they participated in harvesting activities or cooked food for many workers. Participants often talked about their mothers and grandmothers as “being of the home” and taking care of their families when asked about their parents' occupations, but later in the discussion it became apparent that they did much more than housework and routine childcare. My interview with Mauricio, 57, made explicit this ambiguity, as he made the distinction between having a job, i.e., working for a company, and making a living to support one's family. Talking about his mother, he described her as being a housewife until she died: “*She separated from my father, but she never went back to work, she met another man and had two children, and she was always a housewife.*” After further probing, it became apparent that his mother had supported the family throughout her life through casual labour, demonstrating resourcefulness, and leaving all her children with some property:

*My mother never worked for a company, but after she separated from my father, she arrived in the neighbourhood and bought a plot of land, she started selling water because the plot was close to a bus terminal. She saw an opportunity, she started to sell water to the men washing cars out of two buckets that she took out in front of the house, she was able to start buying mud*

*bricks, lots of bricks, until, thanks to God, she left each one of us a house with that little job [trabajito].*

Women's paid work activities, especially those performed "on the side", are still sometimes conceived as an extension of the housewife and mother role, mainly intended for household management, and supporting their children. Around 20 percent of women in the phone survey and nearly 50 percent<sup>22</sup> in the household survey identified homemaking as their main occupation. Women identifying as housewives tend to be from older generations, although some younger women who were married or cohabitating with partners also expressed a preference for not working and for a male breadwinner model as the organising principle of the household division of labour.

This does not mean that all those identifying as "housewives" do not engage in income-earning activities; many do in the form of home-based sales or flexible part-time work. 20 percent of women who reported "household chores" as their main occupation also reported working in the past 3 months. Nevertheless, these activities are consistent with past roles and activities, regarded as expansions of the role of housewives and women being "of the home," and are not often associated with radically new identities and aspirations than their mothers or grandmothers. Selling home-made goods occasionally to "help themselves", usually to supplement the money their husband or family might give them, constitutes a qualitatively different experience than for those in more regular or formal work or a productive self-employment business. This distinction breaks down, however, in the case of Mauricio's mother, whose "little job" in fact supported her family and allowed her to accumulate assets, but was nevertheless not perceived as 'work', at least by her child. Mauricio, in the language he used, reinforces normative understandings of the mother's role as a housewife dedicated to her children. Something also about the nature of the work, as casual labour performed on the street, also contributes to the intangibility of this form of work.

The significance of the housewife label also emerged in the woman's group I facilitated where all women marked "*ama de casa*" (housewife) as their occupation in the registration sheets, even if many were economically active, including a young mother who worked as a home-based garment outworker with a dream of becoming a clothing designer

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<sup>22</sup> The high percentage of women identifying "household chores" as their main occupation may reflect persisting cultural and practical significance of the housewife label, as well as a possible sampling bias (women who don't regularly work outside the home were more likely to be at home and available to answer the survey). Social norms that confer status and moral superiority to housewives can influence survey responses to "main activity" questions (Langsten & Salen 2008).

and the group's administrator who was formally employed by the community organisation in an administrative job.

Although women today have access to more diverse forms of work than before,<sup>23</sup> the first category of precarious informal work does not always constitute a radical departure from the past housewife role in terms of ideologies and implications for security, capabilities, and empowerment. It may provide a degree of financial autonomy and less dependence on male family members to cover basic needs, but in the context of poverty, economic necessity and the possibility of men evading economic responsibilities, it did not often appear to yield *immediate* security, comfort, fulfillment, or "substantive" freedoms (Sen, 2005). It doesn't often directly reshape norms around domestic roles in the family but may exert indirect pressure in the long run.<sup>24</sup>

Other forms of engagement with paid work involve new identities by redefining women's relation to paid work. They provide possibilities for developing interests and aspirations beyond the family and greater economic freedom as a basis for making life decisions. They reflect positive, meaningful, and strategic choices, albeit still bounded by structural constraints and women's social position. They change social perceptions, demonstrating that women can be just as competent as men, contributing to women's skills and capabilities being recognised, and were a source of respect. A father discussed with pride his daughter's work trajectory: *"My daughter is a supervisor in a toy store downtown. Two months ago, they made her a supervisor, she's been there for a year now, she started as a salesperson and now look how far she is going."* These forms of participation lead to a greater visibility of women as workers, with identities detached from, although still limited by, their duties to the family. Bernardo, 67, made this association between the increased visibility in women's productive activities and the recognition of their skills and competences: *"Nowadays it's different, because I see that many women work, if you go to any public office, or a private company, in stores, there are many women working now, they defend themselves, in terms of intelligence and everything, I think that women develop even more strength than men."*

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<sup>23</sup> Earlier ethnographies that it was very uncommon for women to run their own tienda (Bohman 1984).

<sup>24</sup> In chapter 9, I analyse when women decide to negotiate the household division of unpaid labour.

### 7.3.3 Conclusion: Ambiguities in the WVS questions about work

These variegated meanings and diverse work experiences matter for normative change. In the local economy at the urban margins, what counts as work is shaped by occupational and gender dimensions. Some economic activities outside of formal or contract-based work were excluded from popular conceptions of “work” and some mothers’ productive and entrepreneurial efforts were subsumed under the housewife role. There is not an easy dichotomy between productive and social reproductive activities in urban Colombian households, despite the unit of production not always being family-based.

The conception of a job as a paid position of regular employment excludes a wide range of activities that household members undertake to earn money to sustain their families, buy food and basic household necessities. Taking the meaning of a job to only include formal or full-time employment erases the experiences, activities, and economic contributions of a large portion of the population. This contributes to the undervaluing and rendering invisible women’s economic roles and contributions to the household. Focusing only on formal employment limits the possibilities of gender norms change to societies transitioning to ‘proper jobs’ of ‘modern’ advanced industrialised economies, mirroring narratives of economic progress that are not accurate reflections of development trajectories in many parts of the world (Ferguson & Li, 2018). This impoverishes our ability to capture processes of gender norms change, such as the possibility of gender norms changing as women’s (informal) work becomes more valued and seen as more tangible, subjective dimensions of how work and workers are valued and perceived. It fails to capture many of the livelihood strategies that workers employ to make a living and the important differences in the extent to which they constitute dignified work, even if outside of the formal economy, open space for gender norms to be rethought and negotiated (as will be explored in chapter 9), and create new possibilities for gender justice and social mobility. In this context, the WVS questions are ambiguous and not geared towards the high levels of informality in the urban peripheries. Building on this insight, I explore in the next sections how the mixed-methods data uncovers complexities in gender norms and their relation to paid work and household provision.

## 7.4 Interpreting WVS questions

The household survey included qualitative open-ended questions, where respondents provided a brief explanation for why they agreed or disagreed with the WVS statements. This provided richer data than can usually be obtained in surveys, shedding light on respondents’

reasons for their responses. In interviews, I asked respondents about their answers to these survey questions to understand their interpretations of normative statements. This provides insights into deeper gender ideologies than shallow responses elicited in a survey, and into how these are applied in decision-making processes. The mixed-methods comparison reveals that researchers should be cautious in interpreting reports of gender egalitarian beliefs in surveys as progressive change in social norms without further consideration and attention to context. I find confusions in how people understood the questions being asked, and that they have different reasons for reporting apparent support for gender equality. Respondents' understandings of attitudinal statements can differ from the meaning intended by the researcher, despite surveyors' efforts at clarifying what they were asking.

#### 7.4.1 What is the case versus what ought to be

I observed a confusion between *what is the case* and *what ought to be*, the distinction was not always clear in respondents' explanations. Some seemed to answer the WVS questions in terms of "what is the case" and not "what should", despite language emphasising to the latter. Some people interviewed explained their answers to normative statements referring to the opportunities they perceived to be available and to gender discrimination they have witnessed in the workforce. For example, Johana, a single mother in her late thirties, who works as a saleswoman but was unemployed during the pandemic, explained why she had agreed that men have more right to a job when jobs are scarce:

*[I answered that men have more right to a job] because of what I see, what is reflected in society, not so much because of what I think but because of the machismo that is strong. Us women are very verracas [badass]. There are many women who do heavy work and things that only men did before, so I would say that [men have better access to jobs] not because they are more capable but because of the machismo and selfishness during hiring. Men have more opportunities because they are men.*

Johana thus explains that she answered the question about men's right to a job because of the discrimination and inequalities she discerns in labour markets. She makes it clear that she does not think that men *should* have priority to a job and dismisses the idea that more men work because they are more competent, by pointing to examples of women who are as capable of handling tough jobs. Johana's answer to this WVS statement reflects her view of the biases she expects in hiring practices and that there are more opportunities for men to find employment.

Others who had reported support for women's right to a job in surveys, nevertheless perceived, like Johana, that it was more likely for men to find a job and suggested that this was why men were still given priority to exert paid work roles in their families. Ana, a social leader in her late twenties, explained how, in her perception, economic motivations influenced the family's division of labour:

*I think the issue of work has a lot of influence on how they organise themselves, it influences who will stay more time with the children. In young couples, I don't feel like they value more that the child's care should be the woman's responsibility, but that women's more active participation [in childcare] ends up being for work-related reasons. For example, in cases where he has more possibilities to bring money home, because of the type of work he has, whereas she might have more unstable work, with much lower pay.*

Although this confusion can be due to survey respondents not comprehending the questions as intended, it also reveals that the distinction between 'what is the case' and 'what ought to be' may not always be clear-cut.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that at least some survey respondents in the sample were answering WVS statements considering the lived realities and structural constraints they experienced rather than their gender attitudes exclusively.

This is problematic because the distinction between empirical and normative expectations – between perceptions of what is typical, and perceptions of what is valued – is front and centre in the social norms literature (Bicchieri 2006, UNICEF 2015, Cialdini et al. 1990, Lapinsky and Rimal 2005). There might not be as clear a distinction between these two concepts as assumed in social norms theory, especially in the case of gender norms central to the social organisation of families and individuals' core gender identities. Gender scholars have theorised about the co-constitution of "what is" and ideas of "what should be" that takes place through the routine reiterations of small acts that conform to and are shaped by gender norms (Butler 1999 West & Zimmerman 1987). They emphasise the cumulative effects of repeated practices, everyday interactions and gender performances that can become habitual, internalised, part of one's identity where normative gender expectations about what is natural and appropriate can shape behaviour in "self-fulfilling ways" (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p.118).

This confusion also testifies to how informants make decisions about paid work and what they viewed as possible. Social actors, situated and grounded in their local context, do not always make decisions based on high-order aspirations and gender theories, and may

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<sup>25</sup> Eriksson and colleagues (2014) find evidence that in psychological experiments participants often mixed up or automatically inferred what is moral from what is common, and vice versa, without making an explicit distinction in their minds. This may also be the case in the cognition of WVS responses, where respondents may conflate whether the question is asking about what is common or what is normatively desirable.

adapt their decisions and beliefs to social and economic realities. The question the researcher is interested in may not be as relevant to their own concerns (Martinez-Restrepo et al., 2017). Because of low-quality paid jobs and additional factors such as violence and insecurity or inadequate childcare services, there are disadvantages and costs to engaging in paid work that factor in their employment decisions.

In chapter 5, I noted the ambiguity of the statement *‘being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay’* and whether it reflects more “traditional” attitudes, with an attachment to a separate spheres model, or respect for women’s freedom of choice to work or to dedicate herself to the household. Most interpretations of this WVS question take disagreement with the statement as evidence for egalitarian attitudes, assuming then that work inside the home is less meaningful or fulfilling than work outside the home. This may not be the case where precarious informal work is the only alternative. In these situations, the choice takes place between not working and working under difficult and precarious conditions. It might also not be the case when working outside the home is likely to mean carrying out the same tasks in someone else’s home and for someone else’s family or rich customers, especially when these involve hierarchical class relations. In the research context, many women’s preferences to work are shaped by the limited alternatives available and for mothers of young children and adolescents, a need for flexibility that is not met in formal jobs with long work hours and commuting times. In these situations, the decision and preference to be a housewife or secondary earner may be less about the moral valuation of this role but reflect concrete constraints.

Low pay and high transportation costs may mean that paying for someone to watch over their children is not financially feasible when earning less than the minimum salary. The issue of childcare costs was salient in interview discussion about paid work decisions. Many families rely on relatives to help with childcare, especially a grandmother or aunt. In some instances, the parents paid their relatives at a lower rate than they would someone external to the family. Kelly, a 29-year-old mother of three working as an independent manicurist, discussed how practical considerations about childcare costs factor into her work decisions:

Kelly: *With my youngest child, I started working when he was 6 months old, my mom lived close to us, we paid her to look after them. I worked for two years when he was younger because my mother was close by, if she hadn’t been there, I wouldn’t have been able to.*

Sophie: *Were there community mothers or did you not like that, did those kinds of services exist?*



Kelly: *Yes there were community mothers but, how can I explain, we needed someone who would be very attentive<sup>26</sup> because he was a baby, it was more reliable to leave the children with my mother. Also, for economic issues, because there wasn't enough money to offer someone else, a family member is more economical.*

Some women also suggested that staying at home and doing household chores is less taxing than having to work under exploitative and exhausting conditions, or for the same housework or caregiving tasks as in one's family. In these situations, 'not working' may be the preferred choice and reflects relatively greater resources, such as a higher household income with several economic providers. Some women expressed a preference not to work if their husband or family could afford it, considering how tiring combining paid work and domestic chores can be, others stopped when they had the possibility to do so. It was common for family members to tell the mother that she could stop working and "rest" when she was older, as they could now take care of her financially or so they could ask her to take care of the grandchildren, better and for less than someone external they had to pay. The decision of being a housewife or working for pay, and survey responses to WVS statements about that decision, may thus be partly the result of a rational calculus and weighing opportunities and constraints (that are themselves partly shaped by gender norms), rather than reflecting personal attitudes about which role is more appropriate. This highlights the complex entanglement between ideas about what ought to be, what is viewed as possible and realistic, and economic needs, which cannot always be easily separated.

I also find that Colombia's history of violence impacts people's strategies to care for their children. Although preference for women, especially mothers, to care for children is partly cultural, as women staying at home to care for children was the default option in the past, this is reinforced by conditions of insecurity in Medellín's *barrios*. These realities mean that, contrary to other contexts where there may be a norm for mothers to stay with young children until a certain age, in certain Eastern European countries until the age of three for example (Saxonberg & Maříková, 2023), after which women resume employment outside the home, there is deep concern in Medellín to protect and watch over *adolescent* children, in addition to caring for young children, because of the presence of gangs and insecurity dynamics described in chapter 6, around the "other economy" of criminal and illicit activities. This disrupts even further women's work trajectories and creates a greater disadvantage for women to accumulate assets and resources over their lifetimes.

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<sup>26</sup> "muy pendiente de él"

Women choose occupations that allow them to be home when their children are back from school. Mothers often expressed a preference for flexible, part-time, home-based work, or work located in their own neighbourhood. Kelly shares what her ideal job would be: *“I have always dreamed of having my own business because of my children, to be able to watch over them.”* Margara also laid out what she perceives as ideal work arrangements for mothers, explaining the drawbacks of working full-time: *“the ideal would be if mothers didn’t have to work the normal 8 hours. There are many difficulties [to working 8 hours a day], so many things get neglected because it’s not like before when the mother would leave the child alone if she had to go work and the child handled themselves just fine, there were other values before. The environment was very different, more wholesome (más sano), there was less evil/wickedness (maldad).”*

This creates a complex dilemma for mothers, especially for those with few decent economic alternatives who also have to provide for elder relatives in addition to their children. They are faced with the difficult choice between going to work to support their household financially and leaving their children alone, exposing them to risks in the *barrio*, or staying at home to watch over their children, keep them safe, but not being able to provide for their material well-being. Lorena, a representative of the syndicate for Afro-Colombian domestic workers (UTRASD), related her cousin’s predicament, whose employer was requiring her to come to work during the pandemic to get paid: *“She has an 11-year-old daughter. To leave her alone in the house, you know how those barrios are in the city. What happens with that girl? If she goes to the street, she will find ill-intentioned people, sex workers, the world of drug addiction. The risks a daughter of a working mother is exposed to... My cousin tells me “I pay rent and utilities; I have to go to work.””*

Given these circumstances, paid work outside the home may not be the preferable option. Decisions for the mother to stay at home have to be understood as “coping and survival strategies” (Rivera & Mejía, 2022), a form of “situated agency” (Hume & Wilding, 2020) that responds to the context of insecurity. It also has to be understood within the economic opportunities available, and the costs that low-paid and exploitative forms of work outside the home may entail, such as transportation fees, childcare costs, and the impact on workers’ physical and mental well-being. This may lead to complex and contradictory strategies, where women may hold both a desire for economic independence, equal rights to work, and protecting their children from violence.

The reason for agreeing with the WVS statement that *“children of working mothers suffer”* has to be understood within this context and might also shape survey responses in

other informal and insecure urban settlements around the world, compared to middle-class Europeans or members of the Colombian wealthy class. These answers do not always reflect conservative views or essentialist ideas of women's roles, but limited options and a practical response to lived realities. They have to be interpreted with adequate attention to this insecurity context where not meeting care needs can have serious consequences. Decision-making in these urban environments is better explained with a feminist conception of agency as a process that is conditioned by and negotiated with socio-economic realities (Folbre, 1994; Kabeer, 1994; Ortner, 2006).

Women's preference to stay at home to care for their children and the fear of sexual abuse in private spaces and childcare institutions limit their strategies to renegotiate the unequal division of labour. Furthermore, women are often blamed for the neglect of their child's education, if their daughter becomes pregnant, or sons engage in criminal activities, rather than the structural challenges that constrain youth aspirations and social mobility, or fathers' absence. In many instances, respondents, especially older adults, attributed children's bad choices and the broader insecurity situation to bad parenting and a lack of values, discipline, or moral education. People talked of neglect (*descuidado*) and leniency (*alcahuetería*) of mothers. Even if they claimed to support women's right to work, some survey respondents pointed to the negative consequences of women working, in what they perceive as a crisis of care and parental neglect of responsibilities that used to be carried out by a stay-at-home housewife.

*"It is very good for both the mother and the father to work, but I think there is a consequence that is suffocating society. The father and the mother work all day, but the children stay in the care of another person, who isn't the mother ... So young people nowadays begin to go out a lot on the street, they start to pick up vices, they are a little neglected, and that is why there is so much delinquency in children."* – Steven, 34-year-old father.

Rarely is the state conceptualised as responsible for care provision. Violence is normalised and expected to be reproduced, as such most research participants regard childcare as pertaining to the domain of the family. This sheds light on some of the dynamics reinforcing the feminisation of care responsibilities, rather than viewing persisting care preferences and norms as fixed or "stalled", as found in the literature on the evolution of the household division of labour (England, 2010; Friedman, 2015; Sullivan et al., 2018).

These dynamics must be understood in light of the state's weak institutional capacity and failure to establish security in neighbourhoods or to provide adequate childcare services. These conditions are critical to consider when interpreting WVS trends. They show here how violence and insecurity contribute to the further entrenchment of motherhood norms, which

inform how people think about how to protect children from violence, by making it more costly for mothers to work outside the home. Seeing how violence and insecurity are intertwined with persisting ideals of the female caregiver calls for distinct policies and interventions, acting on structural conditions that limit women's choices, rather than information campaigns, community deliberation or correcting people's misperceived beliefs about others in their community that are viewed as best practices to change social norms in international development (Bursztyn et al., 2020; Cislighi et al., 2016; Mackie, Moneti, & Shakya, 2015; Tankard & Paluck, 2016).

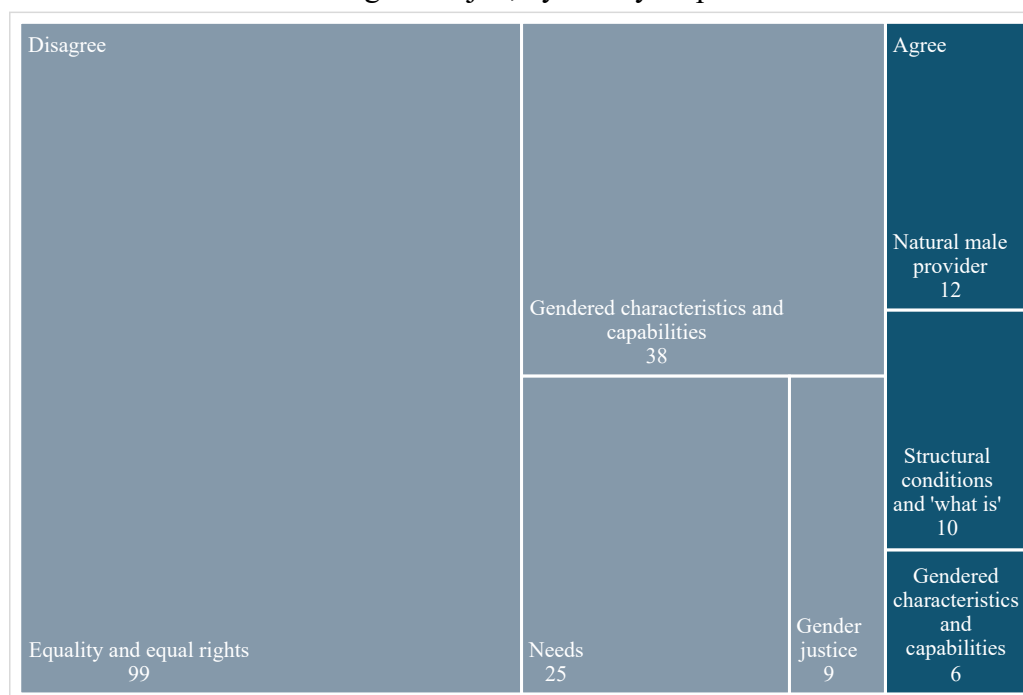
This provides evidence of context-specific factors that shape household arrangements, allowing for a more complete explanation than those based on standard survey variables. In addition to issues of clarity and validity of the WVS statements, asking about degrees of agreement or disagreement with fixed statements imposes a static and dichotomous conception of gender attitudes (e.g., either women should be a housewife, or they should work) that doesn't capture these complex interactions. The interrelations between lived experiences, observed realities, and normative values is a theme that will come up throughout the thesis. I argue that this is a feature of social norms which structure patterns at multiple levels in society, including organisational constraints and individual interpretations of these structures.

#### 7.4.2 Reasons and justifications of survey answers

The percentage of the population agreeing with WVS statements has been used as an indicator to track gender norms (OECD, 2021; UNDP, 2020). However, research participants' explanations for their answers to survey questions help uncover the multiplicity of meanings embodied in what is assumed to be a dominant consensus. These different meanings reflected different logics and ideologies towards gender roles. This was informative for understanding what ideas, grounds, and intentions are drawn upon to drive or resist normative change. Participants provided different justifications for disagreeing with the statement that "men have more right to a job": some constructed women's engagement in paid work as a necessity, others as an individual right (e.g., to economic independence), or as part of a more transformative project to shift gender norms and power relations. The WVS statement is about men having more of a right to a job *when jobs are scarce*. During the pandemic and in the context of Colombian peripheral neighbourhoods, where jobs are most often assumed to be scarce, respondents often interpreted this as a statement about whether

they believed women have equal rights to engage in paid work or if men should in principle be given priority as a primary breadwinner.

Figure 14. Distribution of reasons for agreeing and disagreeing with survey question about men's right to a job, by survey response



Source: Author, own household survey. Number of survey respondents by reason given.

Those who believed that men had more right to a job referred to structural conditions, assumptions about natural capabilities, and the naturalised status of men's provider roles to justify their survey answers. Ten (out of 28) noted that it is easier for men to find jobs than for women, pointing to structural characteristics of the labour market, to employer discrimination, and to a culture of machismo. This is another example of how people are describing 'how things are' when answering these questions, i.e., that men appear to have more right to the jobs that are available, rather than how it should be, i.e. that men *should* be given priority in recruitment or *should* be the primary providers in the family, "*because that's what you see the most, but it shouldn't be like that*" as one survey respondent explained their answer. Six others appealed to assumed gendered characteristics that they claimed made men more qualified or more competent for paid work. These included the idea that men are stronger, noting that some jobs are too physically demanding for women. Others claimed that men are more motivated than women. Finally, twelve referred to men's natural role as providers, claiming that it was their responsibility as heads of households and economic providers.

Interestingly, some of the arguments to justify prioritising men's economic activities were reversed by those defending women's right to a job. A first line of justification for women's access to paid work centered around the idea of needs and necessity (for 15% of those who had disagreed that men have more right to a job). Some argued that women have the same needs as men to earn an income. Many noted that it is no longer possible for families to live on a single wage, because of the changing nature of economic opportunities and rising costs of living, explaining that the minimum salary doesn't provide enough to meet basic necessities. This indicates that past norms about masculinity, with the assumption of a single male breadwinner, is no longer fit for purpose because of changing external circumstances. However, these norms may be adapted to changing economic pressures to allow for women's greater involvement in household economic provision without calling into question the primacy of male provider identities, by modifying gender norms: from prescriptions that 'women should stay at home' to 'women have equal rights to work'. Informal institutional change in this instance may have adjusted gender norms from a male breadwinner and female housewife to the idea of a primary male provider and secondary female earner, or a sole female household head providing for her family, without displacing normative assumptions of male economic provision.

These explanations support women's access to paid work while not necessarily calling into question the broader division of household gender roles. Women's entry into paid work is often viewed as temporary or secondary, or as a form of "collaboration" with the husband or male family members who remain the primary breadwinners. Others argued that because of women's roles as household managers, they are more responsible and better knowledgeable about household needs, and therefore better positioned to know how to distribute the household income. Some further observed that the high incidence of single mothers and female-headed households meant that women have legitimate necessities and responsibilities that should grant them access to an income.

58 percent of answers defending women's access to a job centred around rights-based explanations, equality, and 22 percent on ideas of merit and abilities. Several research participants mentioned the importance of women having their own incomes for independence and autonomy, framing it as an individual right. Respondents appealed to gender characteristics and qualities of women in the opposite way as those who defended men's greater entitlement to jobs. They asserted that women are more "*verracas*" (badass) or

intelligent than men or affirmed that women are equally capable.<sup>27</sup> These justifications aimed to shift social perceptions about who is capable of carrying out paid work to support equal access to economic opportunities. Some also argued that women are equally or more educated than men and that women have proven that they can carry out all types of jobs and roles. These drew on observations of visible trends in Colombian society, where women have surpassed men in educational attainment (Irregui et al. 2020) and the entry of women into paid work on a mass scale has provided examples of women in high-status and respectable jobs.

Finally, a small minority (5%) went further and attached women's work to a broader feminist project linked to individual and collective empowerment.<sup>28</sup> Their reasons to justify their survey answers centred around social justice explanations, explicitly referring to ideas of equity. Some stated that women's paid work should be given priority because of existing discrimination against women in labour markets, or that this was necessary to end *machismo*. These support ideas of affirmative action to correct structural inequalities and a patriarchal culture. Some also believed that women's increased economic activities were a result of their individual and collective struggles for equality. This contrasts with explanations based on economic necessity, as it explicitly recognises that women's paid work constitutes shifts from past gender norms and is part of a vision to improve women's position in society.

Explanations about the rise in women's paid work and in dual-earning couples thus centred around several themes. Some respondents attributed the expansion of women's income-generating activities to women's increased confidence and self-esteem, and rising awareness of women's own self-worth and the importance of women being independent. Justifications were thus based on more practical motives, if they are seen as a survival or coping strategy to economic challenges, or were framed around rights-based conceptions of what women are entitled to, to improve women's place in society, and around a gender justice agenda.

These observations suggest that there is not one consensual normative stance towards women's economic activities. These diverging views about women's right to a job are not clearly conveyed in WVS results, which is an issue because these diverging views might provide evidence of a norm being contested, rather than a norm that has changed. Research participants' explanations for their survey answers reveal a multiplicity of gender logics,

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<sup>27</sup> Stereotypical male characteristics of strength were used to justify gender differences in employment access, intelligence and training were most often used to justify equal access to jobs.

<sup>28</sup> Only 3% in the open-ended survey questions, although there were more of these justifications in interviews.

rather than a uniform consensus about women's decision to work for pay. Support for gender equality for practical reasons should be distinguished from support motivated by ideas of justice and fairness that would entail different normative ambitions, although in practice these may be combined.<sup>29</sup> The data reveals that the relationship between changing practices and changing norms depends on how the change in practices is explained and its consequences understood. The first explanation may represent an adaptation to changing economic realities without calling into question gender relations in the family or wider society (Ashwin & Isupova, 2018). Constructing normative beliefs as a binary or categorical concept measured by an agree-disagree Likert scale conceals the fact that multiple cultural resources are drawn upon to challenge or resist change in entrenched gender norms, which are important for interventions and or policies to consider.

#### 7.4.3 Equal attitudes, unequal practices

Survey respondents in Medellín expressed support for equality around spousal earnings when the question around spousal earnings was phrased more explicitly as a normative statement, asking if *men should earn more than their* partner: 87% of respondents disagreed with this statement.<sup>30</sup> These survey answers contrast with qualitative findings where I find persisting ideas of men as primary breadwinners, despite the diversity in household economic provision arrangements. Abstract and generalised egalitarian principles reported in the surveys were subject to conditionalities in how they could be applied in practice. This reveals continued gendered expectations around gender roles in the family, notably around who is seen as the legitimate or main provider. Definitions of gender roles have adapted to changing conditions while preserving male status and privileges, and female domestic obligations: *"I think that nowadays the [economic] obligation belongs to both [the man and the woman], because if one person works alone in a household, there is never enough money (el dinero no alcanza), both have to work... But I think that if a man decides to establish a home it is because he is the one who has to carry the responsibility."* – Celina, 47, divorced, single mother.

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<sup>29</sup> Women taking jobs out of necessity may nevertheless change social norms indirectly, since seeing women working will become more habitual, although this also depends on the nature of work as argued in the first section of this chapter. In chapter 9, I explore when and to what extent women's work becoming more acceptable may lead to gender norms change in the division of unpaid work.

<sup>30</sup> There was a wider discrepancy between these answers and the WVS results than for the variables about the right to a job and political leaders which were formulated in the same way. This gives some credence to the suggestion in chapter 5 that this variable likely captures respondents' own experiences and observations of their social context in the WVS formulation.



For many men interviewed, the male provider role remained a central part of their identity, in how they discussed their role in the family, their decisions to start working to help their parents or become ‘independent’, the responsibilities that accompanied important changes in their lives, such as when they moved in with a partner, and their conception of fatherhood: *“My thinking was that the responsibility is for the man to prove himself, to demonstrate that he is a responsible person and has to look after his family, so I had to answer for her and for my kids, that I worked and she would take care of them, that was the most essential thing, that’s how I saw it.”* - Santiago, 32, father, unemployed during the pandemic.

The WVS questions ask respondents to take an explicit position for or against a statement. Asking about these normative understandings in interviews reveals that there are more ambiguities in how respondents approach these ideals. Although they may report egalitarian attitudes around women’s earnings in the abstract, they are in fact often conditional on men retaining their breadwinner status and women keeping their domestic and caregiving obligations. When pressed in interviews, some male participants revealed that they still conceived of their job as the priority, even though they portrayed an image of equality in their couple. My interaction with Adrian, 34, is illuminating in this regard:

Sophie: *You said in the survey that you disagreed that men have more right to a job than women, could you talk a little bit about why you disagree?*

Adrian: *ah no, well [laughter], as far as that is concerned, around the opportunities I would say that it should be for both, but... let’s say that if there is an opportunity to work, I don’t know if this is some machismo maybe, I mean I am in agreement that the opportunity should be for both, but in that case I would like to have the responsibility to have the job in that moment, so that for one [laugh] she doesn’t have to expose herself outside<sup>31</sup> and also for the issue of the boy because, in truth, even if sometimes children are very attached to you, the mother is primordial during that time.*

The idea of women earning more than their partner still provoked tensions and male insecurities, *“if it is more the woman who works, yes it can create problems because the man will feel attacked, he will feel displaced, because the man is very proud, he is not going to like it”* (Margara, 42). Discussions with interviewees around this topic seemed to touch on core masculine identities and vulnerabilities, to a limit beyond which change was resisted. In discussing whether women earning more than their husbands can cause problems, some informants referred to exceptional circumstances that would justify women earning more but revealed that they otherwise conceived that men should be the main household providers.

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<sup>31</sup> This was during the pandemic.

*“I think that if you have a partner, you have to support each other in all circumstances and men are almost always the ones who work more and contribute more to the household. But I think that if in some situation or life circumstance he can’t work and you have to collaborate with something, that seems very normal to me.”* - Daniela, 33, independent manicurist.

*“Pablo: Yes, I know many cases [where the wife earns more than the husband]. If that is really because there is only employment for the woman and not for the man, I don’t see a problem.*

*Sophie: ah ok, if they have to, but otherwise...*

*Pablo: As men yes, it should be him.”*

Many women interviewed also often continued to be seen and see themselves as “secondary” providers when they were cohabiting with a partner. This demonstrates again how people interpret and talk about changing practices matters for whether norms change and how they are communicated. It is well-documented in the literature that some women hide or downplay their economic contributions to present an appearance of a primary male earner, while expanding their scope of activities (Rao 2012). Beyond what people actually do and how that might differ from past practices, what is seen or visible to others is also relevant to institutional continuity and change. What people feel compelled to obscure, hide, or emphasise can be revealing of social norms. In the Colombian context of the *barrio*, where neighbours live close together and “keep tabs” on each other’s situations, where extended family members meet regularly and support each other in times of need, in situations of male unemployment or when both partners are in jobs known to procure the legal minimum wage, it can be more difficult to hide situations where women are earning the same or more than their partners. Many people interviewed could speak about several cases in their surroundings or in their families where they knew of women who earned more than their partners at a certain point in time.

Across the research, I found that women often chose forms of work that would not threaten normative understandings of gender roles in their household. Lucy, a mother of two boys in a stable marriage who works part-time as a community mother explained that she did not want to work longer hours. She preferred to be her family’s secondary earner because her husband, as the primary earner, was responsible for the bulk of household expenses and had never asked her to contribute. Her earnings provided more financial autonomy and contributed to their household’s well-being, allowing them to buy additional goods such as nicer shoes for family members. She perceived her work as a way of “collaborating” with her husband. If she earned more, she would have to carry more of the economic responsibilities: *“I also have my own way of collaborating with him, with things around the house, with my*

*expenses, which we have also taken advantage of a lot [laughs]... It is our way of life and that also takes certain responsibilities away from me. I think that if I earned the same as him or more, it would be different he would say to me "I can't just do it alone" [i.e., pay the bills], I think the situation would be different."*

In practice, many households no longer depend on the sole income of a male breadwinner. As table 15 illustrates, the surveys revealed a diversity of income provision arrangements: while some households followed the traditional male breadwinner-female housewife model, others involved multiple economic providers, such as a father and his adult daughter as the household's main income earners, or relied on income from outside of the household, from support from relatives, for example. Nevertheless, the influence of gender norms remains perceptible: only two households reported a woman in paid work while her male partner was not working.

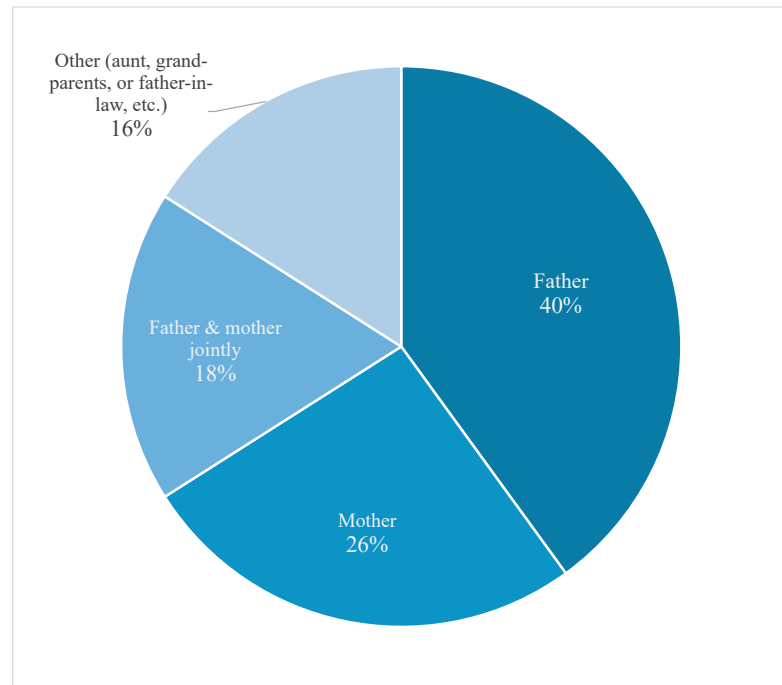
Figure 15. Distribution of household income provision arrangements.

| Household Provision Arrangement  | Percentage (N=197) |
|--|--------------------|
| Male provider – female housewife   | 27% (54)           |
| Dual-earner household  | 26% (51)           |
| Female headed household<br><i>Women and/or adult children are the primary economic providers in households headed by women</i> | 26% (51)           |
| Extended household with multiple earners   | 9% (18)            |
| Female provider – male economically inactive   | 1% (2)             |
| Other ( <i>e.g., living alone, elderly couples supported by children</i> ).  | 11% (21)           |

*Sources:* own survey.

Nevertheless, men in the sampled households appeared to take on a greater share of economic provision responsibilities, as figure 16 shows. Survey data also suggests that men in cohabitating couples still tend to earn more than their spouses.

Figure 16. Person responsible for child costs in households with children under 12 (N=110)



Source: Author, own survey.

14 percent of women who were cohabiting with their partner earned more than their partners. Some survey respondents reasoned that earnings should be according to who is more “prepared,” i.e., based on education, and based on the worker’s specialisation, seeing it as legitimate that women who are “*very professional*” should earn more. Even in situations where it was seen as legitimate for women to earn more than their husbands because of the respect earned from higher education and high-status jobs, women nevertheless had to find ways to make their partner feel comfortable, such as presenting their income as a common fund “*she always made me feel that [the money] was neither hers nor mine, but that it belonged to both of us.*” (Mauro, 28). Although Mauro’s wife adopts a strategy that appeases the threat her higher-earning status may present to her husband’s masculine identity, she does not hide her economic activities but advances more collaborative principles for decision-making practices about household expenses. As will be alluded to in chapter 9, the idea that the house or children “belongs to both of us” was also a strategy some women used to advocate for men’s greater involvement in housework and childcare. Several interviewed participants referred to these collaborative practices, where household members combined

what everyone earned to cover household expenses, which appeared to have become more common than in the past.

The acceptability and right of women to work for pay also remains conditional on them fulfilling their roles as mothers. Although women are generally no longer held to the role of the subservient wife, there remains considerable social pressure to fulfill their motherhood role. Gender norms assigning responsibilities in the family framed women's paid work decisions and preferences. Women who did not work or worked part-time listed care and household tasks as the primary reason for not being in full-time employment or paid work. Only one man mentioned household chores as a reason for not working, and none selected childcare responsibilities. As shown in figure 17, men's employment decisions are limited by economic constraints, whereas women's paid work decisions are framed by economic and gender role constraints.

Figure 17a. Reasons for not engaging in paid work, by gender

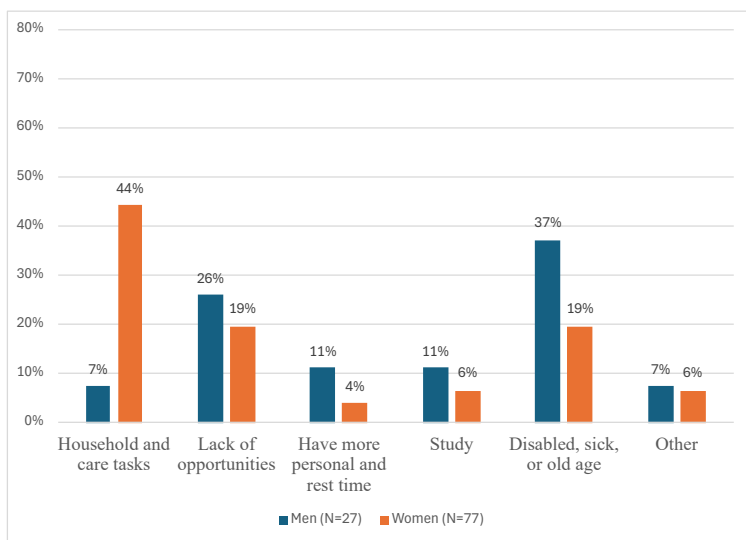
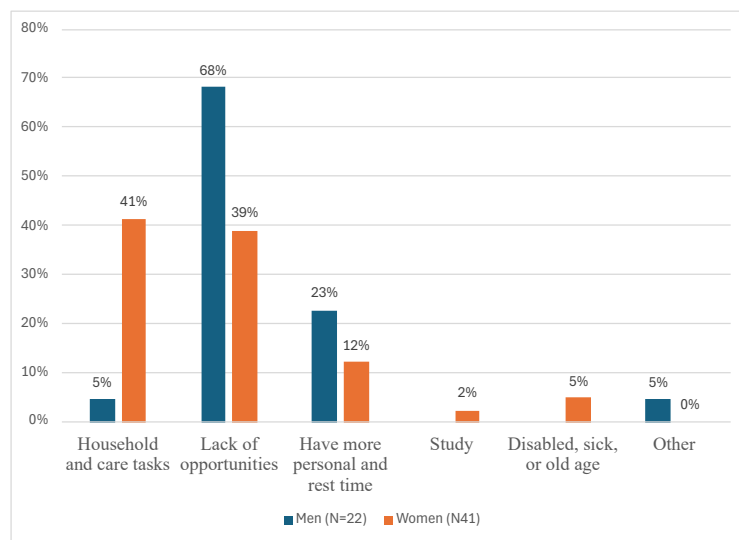


Figure 17b. Reasons for not working full-time, by gender



Source: own household survey.

This also coincides with differences in how men and women discussed their work histories. Interviewed women's work trajectories were characterised by far more interruptions, most often due to considerable time out of paid work when they had young children. Almost universally, women were the ones to adapt their work decisions to family needs and care responsibilities. A parental effect has largely replaced the marriage effect in determining women's work trajectories. Motherhood was one of the most significant

constraints to women's participation in full-time paid work outside the home, whether or not women were married or cohabiting with a partner.

Some men spoke with pride about their daughters' or wives' careers. For older men, it was more common for them to express admiration for their daughters when she had received a promotion as a store manager, had her own small business, or had a job that required technical or university education. This is partly because if their wives were working it was most often in informal work as a domestic servant or community mother which was seen as something that they did out of economic necessity, as it was rare for older women in the sample to have had opportunities to be educated beyond primary or secondary school and to have access to administrative or technical jobs.

However, some young men in dual-earning couples were rethinking their identities as what Reid (2018) coins as "breadsharers". They shared a vision of the couple as a partnership rather than male authority and female subservience, either working together to develop their own business or being as equally invested in each other's work trajectories. This was the case for Mauro, a former security guard who married his boss, an engineer: *"For me I had to be the main earner because I had a macho mentality. As a man you think 'I am going to dedicate myself to earning money and she will cook, sweep, and mop.' Because we come from a society that thinks like that. But now, I don't think that way, I think that it's about forming a good working team."*

These men accorded importance to their partner's development of their own educational and career aspirations. Several couples explained how they worked together to generate livelihoods while also allowing both partners to pursue their aspirations, such as finishing their studies. This led a couple to decide that the wife would be the primary breadwinner, while the man pursued further studies, with the hope of improving his employment opportunities, before she started the same software course when he finished. These men pointed to the benefits of having a partner, someone to talk to, instead of a "servant". Juan felt that he could have more interesting conversations with his partner who also worked than if she were a housewife, which made them more "united:" *"We both share time together in the evening after work, it's not monotonous like before (in the past), we have different experiences, 'how did it go at work?', 'I had a lot of work, it went badly, it was normal...'. So, to me life as a couple seems like we have become more united because before the person came home and the mother was with the kid all day, what experience was she going to have to share with you?"* However, this idea of partnership did not always extend to the unpaid division of household labour, the resilience of which I explore in the next chapter.

When confronted with the option to agree or disagree with a normative statement, respondents may express abstract support for gender equality when in fact these gender definitions are being negotiated and adapted to changing activities in practice, without always implying a radical shift in underlying normative understandings. In the research context, the acceptability of women's paid work is conditioned on their fulfilment of the motherhood role, and on the continued status and identities of the primary male breadwinner. Although respondents might in principle agree on equal rights to a job and that women can earn as much as men, in practice decisions about who should work and whether to be a housewife involve other considerations, including deeper gender ideologies and practical concerns that sometimes take precedence in contexts of economic insecurity. These 'practical' concerns can provide a rationale for violating norms, the extent to which these contribute to changing gender norms more permanently on how these processes are negotiated, questions the remaining parts of the thesis turns to.

## 7.5 Conclusion

The research findings problematise simplistic understandings of what WVS questions are measuring, highlighting discrepancies between what people are reporting, what they take into account when answering these questions, how the reported beliefs translate into practices and outcomes, and how they are interpreted by researchers. This highlights two issues relevant to the research aims: the first relates to the complexities of how gender norms are transformed or adapted to a changing political and economic context, in ways that may undermine or preserve gender inequalities, and secondly, how these complexities do or do not get picked up in data aiming to operationalise gender norms and track their change.

I uncovered several limitations in using the WVS to evaluate how gender norms are changing in the Colombian context. I argued that the concepts of a "job" and of a "housewife" are ambiguous in the informal and popular economy where social reproductive and productive work are highly intertwined. Mixed-methods data uncovered confusions in how sampled survey respondents understood the WVS questions which matter for social norms theorising. Findings in this chapter and the next ones support evidence that aspects of gender norms are being contested. The questions used in the WVS to evaluate progress in gender equality around economic participation are interpreted in different ways in urban Colombia. Respondents gave different reasons for supporting women's paid work, some more practical, others showing a commitment to gender justice and equal rights. Responses to

close-ended attitudinal survey questions cannot differentiate between norm having changed and norms being contested, possibly in ways that continue to support the vested interests of more powerful groups, which will have distinct implications for gender inequalities. These point to limitations in the WVS around the extent to which the dataset can on its own tell us whether and how gender norms are changing, and what effects changing practices have on gender norms. The following chapters turn to what the WVS misses about the dynamics of gender norms supporting gendered divisions of labour and how they might be changing.

Furthermore, as has been established by previous studies (Hochschild, 1989), the mixed methods expose how abstract egalitarian attitudes in principle are not applied unconditionally in practice: conditionalities are placed on these beliefs in decision-making processes because of persisting breadwinner ideologies and constraints related to the feminisation of childcare responsibilities. These complexities reveal the workings of gender norms at multiple levels and how they do not operate in a vacuum, but are enacted in a complex, situated social reality. How egalitarian attitudes reported in surveys get applied in people's lives, and what conditionalities are assigned to these generalised attitudes, create more diversity in practice than would be expected if we assume that attitudes translate directly to practices. The experiences of working women and men show that meso-level organisational aspects beyond individual participation in paid work are more significant in understanding evolving gender roles and whether they constitute transformations from the past. The fact that women are working more may have an indirect influence on changing norms. However, these processes are far from automatic, as will be argued in chapter 9 on family negotiations.

This raises caution against interpreting WVS responses uncritically, calling into question the validity of the WVS variables as social norms constructs when interpreted in isolation. What percentage of the population agreed or disagreed with a statement may not always be evidence of a fixed social norm. In urban Colombia social norms are being subject to social contestation over meanings and ideas around gender justice and fairness. The reality is more complex than the picture of progress depicted in the WVS. Changes in social norms regarding the acceptability and visibility of women's paid work have led to gains for women, notably increasing economic independence and in some households collaborative decision-making practices that have undermined patriarchal control and authority, leading to more collaborative rather than authoritarian household relations. As chapter 9 will show, this has shifted the balance of power in family relations, but not always in the ways that bargaining models may predict, as other studies have also confirmed increasing joint household headship and shared decision-making around household expenses (e.g., Farah-Quijano, 2013). As



Pineda et al. note (2019, 67), “these changes are not generalized but show further diversification of multiple arrangements that exist in the different family groups”. The increasing incidence of female-headed households has also created distinct pressures and possibilities for men’s involvement in the family, which will be taken up in the following chapters.

Nevertheless, paid work has ambivalent effects for women, as it does not always translate to greater economic security and well-being, especially when it infringes on their leisure time and rest. I argue that the quality, subjective motivation and experience of paid work, along with the meanings and interpretations attached to that work, are more relevant to assessing normative change than participation *per se*, as is the idea of who is the “rightful provider” in shaping women’s economic empowerment. The absence of direct cultural reservations against women’s work outside the home or entrepreneurial activity makes visible other constraints to women’s access to paid work, including employer discrimination, low-quality working conditions, male breadwinner identities and privileges, and most starkly the gender division of unpaid labour. In the next chapter, I analyse this resilience in the division of unpaid work.

## Chapter 8: Gender norms and unpaid work

### 8.1 Introduction

Attention to changes in men's roles and their relationship to the domestic sphere is missing in the WVS and many gender norms studies. This omission reproduces a tendency in the literature to evaluate progress based on the extent to which women conform to traditionally 'male' norms. It also disregards a rich literature on men's participation and non-participation in unpaid work in the home, and the gender dynamics underlying the reconfiguration of male practices of caregiving and changing family structures (Brandth & Kvande, 2018; Brickell, 2011; Elliott, 2016; Kato-Wallace et al., 2014).

Studies have contributed to more nuanced understandings of the ambiguous, contradictory, and uneven relationship between changing male practices and ideal masculine norms, where new caring practices may be redefined to align with 'masculine' values of "hard-work", "responsibility" or "outdoor activity (Bagaporo, 2025; Hoang & Yeoh, 2011; L. A. Rost, 2021; Teerawichitchainan et al., 2010). Others have observed disparities between men and women's reports of male household members' contributions (Geist, 2019) or that men may do more domestic and care work than they admit, sometimes conducting this work in secret to avoid their neighbours' and families' judgments (Alméras, 2000; Gamburd, 2000). Nevertheless, the "variegated landscapes of male caregiving across the globe" remain underexplored (Boyer et al., 2017, p. 92), highlighting a need to further examine how men's absence or participation is perceived and justified to uncover how gender norms are evolving.

In the rest of the empirical analysis, I turn to aspects of the household division of labour that are missing from the WVS. The previous chapter found a consensus across social classes and education levels about changes in the acceptability of women's economic activities and increased women's economic independence. However, the increase in female labour force participation has occurred in a context of multiple forms of precarity and continued low male participation in unpaid work in the home. In this chapter, I examine men's involvement in unpaid work, an important factor in explaining women's attitudes to paid work. Research on men's household participation during the COVID-19 pandemic reveals mixed and context-specific impacts on the division of labour (Craig & Churchill, 2021; İlkaracan & Memiş, 2021; Rojas-Navarro et al., 2022; Seck et al., 2021; Seiz, 2021). A common finding across studies is that while men's contributions to unpaid work increased during the pandemic, especially during lockdowns, gender gaps persisted or widened. Women continued to

shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid work, with school closures having a particularly detrimental effect on women's economic livelihoods across Latin America (Tribin et al., 2023).

In this chapter, I explore men's participation in quantitative terms and analyse how their presence or absence in unpaid work is justified and understood both during and outside of the pandemic, as a way to interrogate underlying gender norms. I followed a similar approach taken for gender norms about paid work. I integrated survey items in the household survey that mirrored the WVS statements to assess personal attitudes about men's roles in the home. I added survey items measuring social expectations, including perceptions about what is typical, what others believe, and expectations of social approval or disapproval for men who take on caring roles in their families, and perceptions of the extent to which men's participation in unpaid work has changed in the past decades. I then asked the survey respondents I interviewed about their answers and the decision-making processes around housework and care provision, placing these within their broader life histories. I find that high levels of agreement with abstract egalitarian principles in surveys map onto inconsistent outcomes. Exploring variations in male responsibilities in different households and the justifications and identities associated with these diverse roles provides insights into the extent to which normative understandings of masculinity have changed or persisted in recent generations.

## 8.2 Mismatch between personal beliefs and social expectations

I contextualise the qualitative findings below using survey data on gender norms from Medellín's comuna 6 district.

Figure 18: Normative beliefs around men's contribution to housework and childcare

| Personal attitudes  |                       | Beliefs about what is typical                       |       | Community attitudes  |       |
|---|-----------------------|---|-------|--|-------|
| <i>Do you believe...</i>  | Agree, (%)<br>(N=262) | <i>How many men in your neighbourhood...</i>        | (%)** | <i>The people I care about in my environment think that...</i>                       | (%)** |
| <i>changing nappies, bathing and feeding children should be women's responsibility?</i> | 12                    |   |       |  |       |
| <i>men should do at least one hour of housework a day?</i>                              | 88                    | <i>do at least an hour of housework a day?</i>      | 26    |  |       |
| <i>men should take on equal responsibilities in housework?</i>                          | 77                    | <i>take on equal responsibilities in housework?</i> | 24    | <i>men should take responsibility for housework?</i>                                 | 52    |
| <i>fathers should spend at least one hour a day taking care of their children?</i>      | 89                    | <i>do at least an hour of housework a day?</i>      | 37    |  |       |
| <i>fathers should take on equal childcare responsibilities?</i>                         | 81                    | <i>take on equal childcare responsibilities?</i>    | 27    | <i>men should take responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children?</i> | 61    |

Source: Primary household survey. \*\* Percentages calculated based on a scale of 0 to 4.

When comparing participants' attitudes in the survey with their beliefs about community members' attitudes, respondents appear to underestimate community members' support for gender equality in the home. Although around 80 percent of respondents agreed with statements that men should take on equal unpaid responsibilities, when asked what they think community members believe, respondents on average thought half of community members believe that men should participate equally in housework and that many believe that men should participate equally in care responsibilities.<sup>32</sup> This points to the likely influence of community attitudes on men's participation in unpaid household work. The primary surveys could not go more into detail about how community members' attitudes might differ by gender and other characteristics, and whose perceived attitudes carry more weight. This was subsequently explored in qualitative interviews and group discussions. Chapter 9 explores social pressures that contribute to maintaining unequal gender norms and how processes of norms change require navigating and responding to these.

This observed gap between personal beliefs and perceptions of community attitudes is often interpreted as evidence for "misperceived social norms", as the review of norms studies highlighted. This interpretation explains the persistence of unequal gender norms because individuals privately support greater gender equality, but wrongly assume that others are less supportive of gender equality. However, looking into survey respondents' explanations for their answers suggests that the gap might be explained by respondents over-reporting their personal support towards gender equality, because of social desirability bias, because men's

<sup>32</sup> I also asked questions about whether they believed that men should do at least one hour a day of domestic chores and whether fathers should spend at least one hour a day on childcare, with similar results.

participation in domestic life was taboo in the past, leading to low expectations, and of different conceptions of what is considered an “equal” contribution. This suggests that survey respondents’ personal attitudes might not be accurately reflected in the survey results and may be closer to the perceived community attitudes reported in the survey.

When asked about what they thought was typical, respondents believed that some men share domestic or care tasks equally in their community, which is relatively accurate to what the survey data suggests and what I found in interviews after further probing. Egalitarian attitudes reported in the survey contrast with continued gaps in time use and high levels of feminisation of responsibilities of unpaid care work in practice (Appendix 3).

Primary survey statistics suggest that despite an increase in acceptability of men performing such tasks, women continue to carry out the majority of unpaid work within the home. Men report participating in household and childcare activities in the past week (60% to 80% of men depending on the task), but when asked how much time they actually spent on these tasks in the past 24 hours, significant gender gaps in the time use reported emerged. On average, women reported spending around an hour more than men daily on cleaning and cooking activities, over an hour a day more on daily childcare tasks and helping children with homework, and over three hours more than men on supervisory activities. Time spent supervising children reflects broader responsibilities and obligations. Child supervision activities are often conducted simultaneously to other activities (Folbre 2006), and significant gender gaps reflect women’s decisions to stay at home with their children during the day, as full-time carers or working in home-based or part-time employment. The wider gender gaps in unpaid work are not counterbalanced by commensurate gender gaps in paid work, resulting in women working 3 hours more on average per day in total, as estimated in the survey sample.

At the same time, perceptions of fairness of household arrangements are generally high, as measured by whether survey participants considered that they do their fair share in the home.<sup>33</sup> 62 percent of respondents considered that they did their fair share of domestic tasks and 68 percent for childcare; there were no significant differences between women and men’s responses. 52 percent of cohabiting women who took on primary domestic responsibilities did not wish for greater participation from their partner.

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<sup>33</sup> The language used for this survey question in the Spanish translation is whether they consider that “I do my part” (*lo que me corresponde*), which is how the question is formulated in national surveys in Colombia.

The chapter explores these ‘statistical puzzles’, refuting the appearance of widespread support for equality that emerges from survey data. I suggest that a growing diversity in men’s participation in the household may partly explain these ambivalent statistical findings. In interviews, research informants put forth conflicting interpretations of change. Social perceptions partly depend on one’s own social position and experience; individuals can have different perceptions of what is “normal” or typical, depending on their upbringing, family situations, and social interactions.

Although views were mixed, when asked about their perception of the direction of change, 66 percent of respondents believed that men’s housework and parenting had increased a little or a lot in the past three to five decades. Many of those interviewed spoke of a weakening of sanctions against men’s home participation in urban Colombia, which has resulted in more variations in household arrangements. Some respondents reported that it was more common to see fathers in hospital clinics accompanying their children to medical appointments, something they rarely saw in their childhood. Research informants contrasted what people used to say with what happens today to demonstrate that they don’t hear as many negative comments from family members against men and boys taking part in housework: *“in those times, because there was so much machismo, the older brother couldn’t do anything in the house, because sweeping, mopping, those were women’s tasks, the thinking was that it degraded the man, to pick up a broom and all that. We were the ones who had to get up early from four in the morning to help my mother.”* Bernarda, 64, recalled of her childhood. Contrasting with Bernarda’s youth, Mateo, 25, discussed the situation today: *“It has changed, at least now a man can pick up a broom [laughs], before it was very difficult, it was only women’s work, sweeping, mopping, washing the dishes, nowadays we have to as well. I talk with my friends who are already cohabitating with their partners, their wives, and they tell me ‘We take turns washing the dishes or cleaning the house, she does it on certain days, I do it on other days.’ That’s also the agreement we reached with my sister [with whom he was living], and it’s the right thing to do for our co-existence.”*

Some men expressed that they do not think that sweeping, for example, takes away from their manhood. That some men mentioned that they didn’t think doing housework threatens their virility is both revealing of the negative social sanctions that are still in place, but also of the reassessment of this association between masculinity and absence from the domestic sphere.

In this chapter, I map levels of male involvement in unpaid work – from complete absence to exceptional cases where men take on a larger share of domestic and care

responsibilities – illustrating the “heterogeneity of change” (Puyana et al. 2003, p.55). To understand normative stances, I explore how men and women justify men’s non-participation in unpaid work and women’s primary responsibilities in families where women continue to be responsible for household management. I also present cases where families are making efforts to enact equality and exceptional cases where men take on a greater share of domestic responsibilities, and how household members talk about these arrangements.

The qualitative data shows a multiplicity of interpretations of social norms which reveal different understandings of equality. These include ‘different but proportional’ contributions to different spheres, where providing for the household income exempts the breadwinner from participation in household tasks, equality as ‘everyone participates’ but not necessarily an equal amount, equality as sharing, taking turns, or equality as reciprocity. Perceptions of men’s level of participation within the home were also influenced by very low levels of male participation in the past, rather than being compared to a theoretical and outer standard of equal time spent on unpaid household activities. These different understandings of equality implied different demands on men’s participation in the home.

Compared to the frequent under-reporting of women’s economic activities found in the previous chapter, I find a tendency for both women and men to over-report men’s participation in unpaid work within the home. This runs counter to studies that have found that men tend to hide their participation in the home. In the previous chapter, we noted how some discourses downplayed changing practices related to women’s paid work in ways that protect men’s identities as providers, whereas for unpaid work, discourses in interviews appeared to exaggerate changing practices to give an appearance of greater change than has actually happened. It is likely that some men and families also downplay male contributions in the home, especially with certain groups (e.g., men with their male friends or colleagues), but this did not come through in the interviews.

Even if social desirability bias is playing a role, the fact that respondents felt the need to overemphasise men’s participation in the home could be indicative of a change in what they view as expected of men. Men and women in different household arrangements drew on various justifications, such as the idea of “help” or “support”, that do not reflect unconditional equality, bringing out an interesting parallel between the idea of “help” in paid and unpaid activities. Egalitarian attitudes reported in surveys do not reflect a consensus about egalitarian household models. The chapter thus spells out different forms of justifications associated with different levels of male contribution within the home.

The analysis underscores the distinction between participation and responsibility: greater variation in men's participation in unpaid work has not led to a significant redistribution of unpaid responsibilities overall, and hence to a significant shift in gender norms, but efforts to challenge norms do exist and offer lessons and entry points for effecting societal change. The experience of interviewing household members about men's relationship to the domestic sphere and caregiving highlighted degrees of discomfort and emotional reactions to the topic. This demonstrates the ambiguity and uncertainty that underpin the path towards domestic equality.

### 8.3 Variations in male participation in unpaid work

Although levels of men's participation within the home appeared to vary according to family composition, household structures and women's participation outside the home, the small sample size did not allow for drawing robust conclusions as to how much these influence men's time use in unpaid work.

Household composition and size influence the extent to which household responsibilities are distributed between members. In extended families, more household members are available to work and generate income, and others to take on domestic and care work on a full-time basis. This can discourage men from having to take on greater responsibilities in these households, compared to dual-earning nuclear ones. For childcare, having family members living close by influenced parents' workloads and mothers' ability to pursue full-time employment outside the home. Having to work and at the same time care for their children, single-parent households were more likely to be time poor or have to resort to leaving their children at home alone, without supervision, if no family member lived close by.

Women's participation in paid work outside the home by no means guaranteed their partners' meaningful involvement in the home. This chapter and the next will explore situations where women's paid work enabled them to negotiate greater male support. However, apart from one exceptional case, no men in the sample shared household tasks if their partner was not working. Women working outside the home or having their own business appear as necessary but by no means sufficient conditions for renegotiating the household division of labour.

There also appeared to be a generational dimension to variations in men's participation in the home. Discussions of sharing arrangements largely came from younger



couples in the sample. Survey data on household participation also reveals a minimal increase in men's participation in the household compared to past generations. Fathers' participation in cooking, cleaning, and childcare activities was greater for the youngest (18-39 years) and middle-aged (40-64 years old) groups compared to respondents born in the 1940s and 1950s. The survey data indicates changes in the socialisation of boys and girls, with a greater involvement of sons in domestic chores and fewer responsibilities for girls compared to the past. I observed a modest convergence in girls' and boys' participation in cooking and cleaning in their childhood over time, according to respondents' self-reports. With rising levels of education and smaller families, older daughters are less likely to stop their studies to care for their younger siblings than in the past. Boys are asked to be more involved in housework and many daughters are treated to some extent more like sons were in the past: being granted the privileges of studying and leisure time that used to be reserved for their brothers, although gender gaps in time use for children remain (DANE, 2021; Ochoa et al., 2015).<sup>34</sup>

### 8.3.1 Complete absence

Some men are not involved in any form of housework or caregiving. In interviews, one in five households was characterised by male absence from unpaid work. During the Covid pandemic, 10 percent of men in the phone survey reported no participation in any of the three domestic activities considered (cleaning, cooking, or washing dishes) in the past week, compared to 3 percent of women surveyed. This section describes explanations and attitudes by both men and women to male absence in the home. Several dynamics upheld men's exemption from unpaid domestic activities. These included (i) the naturalisation of past customs and normative ideals, (ii) beliefs about natural gendered abilities, and (iii) the emphasis on the male breadwinner status to justify one's "fair share".

Demands and expectations around men's obligations towards their families, including for economic provision, appeared largely conditional on co-habitation. Men are not usually held to account socially when they don't live with their families.<sup>35</sup> Some men were involved

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<sup>34</sup> In Colombia's 2020-2021 Time Use Survey, it was estimated that boys aged 10-17 spent on average 1 hour and 46 minutes daily on unpaid activities, compared to girls the same age spending 3 hours a day. Gender gaps increase considerably for the 18-29 age group, where young men spend 2 hours and 51 minutes on unpaid activities in the home, compared to 9 hours and 51 minutes for young women.

<sup>35</sup> Although there exist legal provisions for non-cohabiting fathers to pay for child support in Colombia, a significant portion of single mothers do not receive child support. Cuesta and Meyer (2014) calculate that only 35,7% of single mothers received child support in 2013 (Cuesta, Guarín and Eickmeyer 2023). Many single

in household and childcare activities with the woman and children they were currently living with but not with their other children. This was the case of William, 35 years-old from Bucaramanga, another Colombian city, a former military official who lives with his wife and her two daughters and had never lived with his own children. Sandra also described the lack of involvement of her daughter's father: *"Yes, [the father] lives two blocks away. My mom brings my daughter to the other grandmother, so he is there, the father is there by default."*

Men cohabitating with their families may also be absent from the domestic sphere. Some women described how their husbands or sons only came home to eat and sleep. Lorena and Brenda, a 30-year-old daughter and 46-year-old mother, discussed living with Lorena's husband.

*"My husband is one of those who comes here, I give him his food in his room, he doesn't ask the children how they are, what they did. On Sundays he has to rest, so the normal routine continues, he's not going to wash the plate where he ate, no, and even less so would he say: 'I'll help you so that you can finish early' ... He says: 'no, I'm tired.' ... He just decides about the expenses, he comes home, you'll see him enter and he goes to lock himself up. Until the next morning at 4am when he gets up to go to work." Lorena reported. Her mother interjected: "That man, he's gone absent."<sup>36</sup>*

Although they mentioned thinking about the possibility of leaving him, this seemed more a matter of complaining about the husband than having any concrete plans to do anything about it. Other research informants gave their own explanations for why women put up with these situations, demonstrating that these are fairly common, attributing it to women's economic or 'emotional' dependence. As migrant women from the coast and Afro-Colombian region of Antioquia, who had been in precarious employment all their life – Brenda had had to leave her children behind for the greater part of their lives to move to Medellín to work as a live-in domestic worker – Lorena's husband's income may have provided them with some minimal stability.

Less drastic forms of non-participation in household obligations were portrayed by a typical image of men who come home, are served dinner, and go watch TV, which was repeatedly alluded to in the research. This category is also epitomized in families where women prepare meals in advance and leave food containers ready for their husband or father if they have to leave the house for a prolonged period of time, for example to visit relatives in a nearby village or if they are going to go out with friends during the day.

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mothers in my research did not pursue legal demands against the fathers because they didn't believe it was effective, because of the costs of pursuing legal action, or the father's limited earnings. Others had legal arrangements for child support but did not always receive payments from the father.

<sup>36</sup> *"ya ese hombre, se perdió"*

Men's absence from domestic and care work is buttressed by the force of past customs. These serve as cultural resources that men draw upon to justify their non-participation. Ideas of long-established gender roles can take on a naturalised character that doesn't leave room for questioning. Interviewed participants regularly framed their discussions about past household arrangements by referring to a separate spheres model with the *street/house* distinction. *"I believe that our culture is machista, that's what we were taught, that's what they taught our mothers and our grandmothers, that we are the ones in the house, who have to put up with a man, and I still see cases like these."* (Leidy, 39). Cultural definitions take on a prescriptive character even though they may be less rigid in practice (Chiappari, 2001): *"I say that when a man proposes marriage to a woman, the woman is of the home, and the man is of the street"* (Bernarda 64-year-old housewife). The idea that "the man sustains the woman, the woman serves the man",<sup>37</sup> still holds weight and frames acceptable behaviours and gender roles, as I heard this language used repeatedly throughout the research process. Dina, 54, complained that *"men older than 40, they expect a woman to serve them, to take care of them. If they are separated, it's with the mother, if they are married to a woman, they expect her to serve them."*

Several interviewees noted that they never saw men cleaning, cooking, or washing clothes in their childhoods, as noted in chapter 6 it was a strong taboo, along with gestures of affection towards their children, it was considered demeaning and threatening to male virility, authority, and sexuality (Puyana et al., 2003). *"My mother-in-law used to say that men had no reason to do anything in the kitchen, since that's what women were for, to be in the house."* Johanna, 26. These fixed patterns and strong social sanctions contribute to naturalising domestic and caregiving roles as feminine. Some people interviewed drew on these models of the past, claiming the legitimacy of past norms. In households where men do not participate at all in unpaid work, the assumption that women are responsible for unpaid household responsibilities often had the quality of *doxa*, an unquestioned belief (Bourdieu, 1977). My research assistants and I found that even the question of whether a man should participate in household chores, cooking, or caring for children appeared unintelligible to some research informants, albeit only a small minority of older men. This arose during survey pre-tests when a man simply couldn't comprehend the question when asked if he had participated in any domestic activities in the past week.

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<sup>37</sup> *"el hombre mantiene a la mujer, la mujer atiende al hombre."*

This naturalisation was also indicated through laughter at survey questions about who participates in housework. Complete absence was communicated in humorous sentences such as “he can’t even make an *arepa*” that express not only men’s total absence from cooking responsibilities but are also used in a mocking way to describe men’s inability to cook anything for themselves: “hm hm, *he can’t even make rice, he says that he would burn aguapanela (sugar cane juice)*”. Some women reacted to the questions about who is responsible for cooking or cleaning with a short laugh, conveying that the answer was obvious, as some of my survey enumerators interpreted. Being the main caregiver and homemaker was not seen as a choice. Likewise, asking their husbands to participate in chores was not always regarded as an option: even if some women negotiated with their children for more assistance, their partners were out of bounds, it simply was not conceivable.

Several respondents referred to “*machistas mothers*” when talking about their mothers, mother-in-law, or aunts, to describe how some women don’t let their sons help with housework or cooking. Some women also continued to identify with, or at least carry out, the role of “serving the man”, through the continued use of language and practice of “dispatching” or sending off their husbands (*despachar al marido*) when describing their routine activities. This involves women waking up very early to prepare breakfast and lunch for him to bring to work, sometimes also helping him choose his clothes. Resistance came directly from men as well. I heard from male respondents a diverse range of justifications and excuses for not being involved in household responsibilities, that it wasn’t their role or their place, or using the fact that they are busy working, or asserting that women do it better, have more patience for those kinds of activities. Lorena recounted her husband’s outright refusals when I asked her if she asked her husband to participate in household chores, “*I do*” she says, “*and he is like ‘no,no,no’, and that’s it, ‘no, I’m tired’ he says, so then I don’t even ask him, it’s better.*”

Beliefs about gendered skills and abilities also supported men’s non-participation, where participants appealed to women’s “natural” qualities as caregivers and homemakers, as found in the literature. Several interviewees asserted that “as women, yes, we are better” when speaking about carrying out domestic chores. They justified women’s superior ability to carry out housework with ideas that the “woman is always more active for those domestic chores”, that they are more “agile” in thinking about what needs to be done, or that they have “more accuracy and precision when it comes to everything to do with the home.” Attributes of perfectionism and rigour were also put forward. Some women explained their commitment to housework due to a compulsion or even ‘obsession’ with order: “*If I see a fly over there,*

*right then I have to start to clean. I really like tidiness and cleanliness. I always have that drive.”* (Flora, 37). William, encountered above, explained *“For me, what happens is that, obviously I am speaking for my own case, while it takes me all day to do housework, she does it in half the time. She’s like more multifunctional, she can cook, take care of the girl, and do the cleaning all at the same time, while I can’t, if I go out of the kitchen then the lunch will get burnt. She is more efficient,<sup>38</sup> the truth is she gets a lot more done.”*

Women were also presented as natural caregivers because of their assumed patience, being more “delicate” and “caring”, better listeners, and more responsible and experienced. This was compared to men who were thought to be more “aggressive”, or “uncomplicated”. *“Sometimes as men we don’t have patience for children, so I say that men should participate but they shouldn’t do too much because we will see aggressions, the father will say ‘you have to be macho’, ‘you have to behave like this’, that’s where you see a lot of machismo, a lot of oppression.”* Steven, 20 and single, asserted.

Finally, men and women emphasised the male breadwinner status to justify men’s non-participation. Even if respondents answered that they believe that men should participate equally in the household, the idea of equality applied here was one of appropriate contribution and perceived “fair share” rather than identical time spent on household tasks or an even split of unpaid responsibilities. The breadwinner status was seen as an “equal contribution” to the household, complementary to the primary homemaker’s, even if she was also working for an income. This conception of fair share reveals a more subtle distinction in how these respondents interpreted their survey answers to the statement that “men should participate equally.”

Normative justifications based on past norms had the greatest force in situations of female economic dependence, especially when paired with what was perceived as a “responsible man”. Some women expressed that they felt lucky to have a “responsible” man, even if they were also working and had to take on primary responsibilities in the home. These justifications also have to be considered in the context of high risks of sexual abuse and violence against women, which have been on the rise in recent years (Geldres et al., 2013) and in ‘Medellín Como Vamos’ 2020. This impinges on bargaining dynamics, explored in-depth in Chapter 9.

Past as well as contemporary forces drive this category of male absence from domestic life. The relative decline of the sole male family breadwinner model has introduced

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<sup>38</sup> *“le rinde más”*

tensions to the material basis of male entitlement to housework and caregiving exemptions as women have gained access to their own incomes. Yet, the rise of female-headed households and single mothers' ability to economically sustain a household also contributes to men's absence in many households. Terms like "*tranquilos*" (easy-going), "*relajados*" (relaxed), *conchudos* (unashamed) or "*consentidos*" (spoiled or pampered) were used to suggest men's unwillingness to help in household chores or childcare. Nevertheless, it appeared that cases of complete absence were less typical than in the past. The idea of what kind of partner is available and possible informs the perception of one's 'fallback position'. If women start expecting more egalitarian partners, it becomes more difficult for men to find new partners who are willing to perform household labour for them if they leave a relationship. While the weight of past histories still matters, they may hold less sway as many men can no longer justify complete absence due to changing circumstances and increased social awareness.

### 8.3.2 Occasional, minimal, and limited participation

This second category is the most varied but also the most common, with half of households in the interview and household survey samples. Men's participation remains, for the most part, sporadic or restricted to tasks that take less time, such as washing dishes compared to cleaning the house, as has been well-documented in the literature (Craig & Brown, 2017; Craig & Churchill, 2021; Offer & Schneider, 2011). These arrangements were often described with discourses of equality, but once probed, it became clear that it was far from equal. Most common in this category are cohabitating couples or extended families where there is a primary male breadwinner, or several main breadwinners including adult children or other family members, and a woman who is either a housewife or working part-time, from home, or under more flexible terms. This category also includes non-cohabitating fathers, where the father is nevertheless involved in some parenting and might supervise the child on an occasional basis.<sup>39</sup>

Despite using language such as "*everything is equal*", "*everything is shared equally*" or "*he does a lot in the house*", probing revealed that respondents were referring to a subset of domestic and care activities, usually activities that were less onerous or could be done occasionally such as washing the dishes but not cooking daily lunches, or playing with children in the park on week-ends compared to dealing with unexpected late night school matters that needed immediate attention, or that men do a lot conditional on *when they have*

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<sup>39</sup> I encountered only one instance of equal shared custody during my fieldwork.

*some free time* (which might not be very often). This observation of men doing domestic and care work only when needed has been well-documented in studies in the United States, India, Mexico and Cambodia (Brickell, 2011, p. 1362; Gutmann, 1996; Kamp Dush et al., 2018; Luke et al., 2003).

Sergio, who had declared in the phone survey that they had “set chores” explained in the interview: “*Yes there are set chores, let’s say Tuesday cleaning, I wash the dishes, more so that’s when I have the time, the señora scolds me, she troubles me a lot for that.*” In some instances, when a woman said of her husband that “*he helps me a lot*”, she meant that ‘he helps sometimes when he is back home from work or on his days off’. Men and women also spoke of male participation as something that a man does “*when he has to*”:

Sophie: *And does your husband participate as well, or is it more your job?*

Natalia: *He also does! When he has to, he has to.*

Sophie: *And when does he do it?*

Natalia: *When the children say “daddy, you cook so well”, he makes delicious homemade cakes, they rise so well. When I make one, I can tell you, it stays flat like a wafer [oblea], it didn’t rise at all, and I say “eh Ave Maria, this isn’t my art” [laughs].*

In several interviews, men or women overstated male involvement in the household using the language of full equality. This became apparent in their descriptions of their routines, men’s (in)ability to provide details about their own participation in household activities, and when asked directly about when household tasks were performed. These revealed that the division of domestic and care work is seldom shared equally, and that one or several women are most likely taking on the larger share of cleaning, cooking, and childcare activities, as well as the mental duty of tracking and monitoring household needs and how to meet them.

These implicit assumptions, exclusions, and conditionalities revealed that some domains are taken for granted as women’s work in the home. It also reveals what is expected of the typical alternatives of a male partner who does ‘nothing’, where women might be grateful for a man who does anything. Equality becomes a vague term, an empty signifier, that can refer to everything and anything. Each respondent interviewed works with their own understanding of equality and to what activities and spaces “equality” should be applied, with others that are taken for granted as gendered and unchangeable. The discourse of equality and of change also reflects the very low standards placed on male participation; any involvement is conceived as a considerable contribution.

The descriptive statistics testify to the gendered segregation of household tasks, with some tasks more gendered than others. Grocery shopping appears relatively gender-neutral in survey statistics and in participants' accounts in interviews. What might not be as apparent in the survey results is that women tend to shop more frequently in stores in their neighbourhood for basic household necessities, whereas purchases that require travelling to the centre of town are more frequently performed by men. Gardening also appeared to be relatively gender-neutral, like other outdoor 'domestic' tasks that undertaken by men, such as driving or household construction in both paid and unpaid forms. Other tasks appear more highly gendered: cooking and washing clothes require greater commitment, skills, and planning to complete these tasks, compared to sweeping a room quickly or washing dishes. Cooking daily meals rarely came up as an activity performed by male household members. In the survey sample, women alone were responsible for cooking in 85 percent of households. Men who spend most days outside for work are not expected to contribute much to routine household activities although they might help with repairs, miscellaneous errands, or cleaning and playing with children on their day off. This concurs with research highlighting gender differences in participation based on the nature of the activity, particularly between tasks that are routine, tedious, stressful, or depleting and those that are occasional or less demanding (Chopra & Zambelli, 2017; Luke et al., 2003; Milkie et al., 2021; Teerawichitchainan et al., 2010).

Some men consciously use their paid work as an excuse not to be involved in household tasks, others who work long hours or have long commutes and work six days a week might not have the possibility, even if they are dedicated to their family. This was the case for the father of informant who had a lengthy two-hour commute. A woodworker in a factory in a neighbouring municipality, he left the house at 4am every day and would come home around 9 or 10pm. Nevertheless, the Sunday I met him, he was spending the day repairing wooden doors for their house, he had built most of the furniture for their house and told me how before the pandemic he used to spend a portion of his Sundays playing cards with his elderly father who was unwell. The mother was a social leader who took care of her grandchild and oversaw his virtual classes, even though her son was unemployed. She indicated in a survey pre-test that she did more than her fair share in caregiving.

When non-cohabiting fathers talked about what they do with their children, it mostly revolved around playing with them, taking them out for the day, or calling them from time to



time and less about the daily care or helping with homework.<sup>40</sup> However, some men also expressed regret for not spending time with their children as they were growing up. Sergio, 59 and re-married, described what fatherhood meant to him: *“For me being a father means a lot, there are no words to express how important it is, even though I had them only for a time. The paternal presence is super important; even though I was not present with them, it was difficult because even if you want to be with the children, when there is a separation, there’s another side. But despite everything, I was always there for them, on the phone, when I could, I visited them for a moment, so they knew I existed, that I was there to give them advice, or help economically, affectively.”*

When discussing parenthood and his relationship with his children, Sergio emphasised parental presence and providing economic and emotional support. Other fathers echoed this conception of their role as setting a good example, giving advice or guiding their children in choosing a career path. In contrast, many women, when describing their interactions with their children, frequently detailed the books they bought for their children, their efforts to teach their children English, or how overwhelmed they felt adjusting to school closures during the pandemic. Although both notions of fatherhood and motherhood seemed to centre on supporting their children, fathers’ perceptions of their roles were consistent with activities more removed from the day-to-day compared to mothers.

Men also occasionally took on household tasks to give the primary homemaker “a break.” Members of the women’s group shared pictures and stories through WhatsApp of how their families celebrated Mothers’ day during lockdown. Their sons and husbands cooked lunch for them and cleaned the house, declaring that this was their day off, that they shouldn’t do any housework. In households making new arrangements during the pandemic, I found that this was often temporary. Many had returned to past practices after the first lockdown, once economic activities resumed. The household survey statistics collected a year into the pandemic (February and March 2021) attest to an incremental rise in men’s contributions, but women were nevertheless more likely to report greater unpaid workloads since the pandemic began, with 69 percent of women compared to 47 percent of men reporting an increase in time spent on caregiving.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Although some hypothesised at the beginning of the Covid pandemic that fathers may contribute to helping with home-schooling during lockdowns (Alon et al. 2020), this was not usually the case in Medellín. Mothers or grandmothers spent a considerable amount of time helping children in virtual classes and doing homework to adapt to long school closures.

<sup>41</sup> Complete or partial school closures were still taking place in early 2021.

Men also tend to talk about their involvement in household tasks as doing the activities that they enjoy or when they have nothing else to do, whereas women tend to talk about household tasks as something they have to do. During the pandemic, some men explained their participation in housework on account of boredom, such as Jorge: *“In this quarantine, you have to [participate], because the boredom is horrible, so you have to do something to avoid being bored of everything.”* Changes in sons and daughters’ participation during the quarantine were sometimes more permanent: some women recounted how they became aware that they could ask their children to take on some domestic responsibilities during the pandemic.

In Medellín’s households, there is greater resistance for husbands to take up housework than for sons. Women more easily ask their sons to contribute than their husbands. These point to differences in mother-child and husband-wife (or cohabitating partners) relations where the vulnerabilities and masculinities associated with sexually intimate relationships create additional opposition to men’s involvement in unpaid work. This pattern is similar to Kabeer’s finding that wives face greater challenges to entering paid work outside the home than daughters, in reviewing case studies from developing countries (Kabeer, 2013). This suggests that gender identity within marriage has a sexual component that differs from the gender identity associated with parenthood. Gender norms of masculinity within the family vary depending on specific relationships, between brothers and sisters, mothers and sons, or husbands and wives.

Not all unpaid activities contributing to household needs and well-being can be captured by survey time use questions (Esquivel et al., 2008; Mueller, 2018). Ethnographic observation identified tasks not captured by surveys and that respondents themselves might not think about in interviews, perhaps not considering them as part of housework, such as boiling water to have drinkable water for the next day. Some unpaid tasks are not always performed daily or weekly, but are nevertheless central to household members’ lives, giving them the ability to sustain livelihoods or overcome a family health crisis. These include time spent waiting in lines to access a variety of services or at the bank to retrieve one’s bi-monthly wages (the *quincena*),<sup>42</sup> accompanying family members to medical appointments which can take an entire morning or full day, commuting times to get to work, going to a community centre or a neighbour’s house to pick up medicine, or having to go to the police

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<sup>42</sup> Every 15th of the month, driving around the city, there are long lines of people in the street or in supermarkets outside of banks.

station to report problems with neighbours the night before. An activity that might take a few minutes for residents of wealthier neighbourhoods entails more time for inhabitants of peripheral neighbourhoods. Many of these unpaid activities involve travel within the city, to another district, as neighbourhoods high up the hillside lack infrastructure and services such as pharmacies or ATMs. Furthermore, commuting to and from work can take more than an hour and is not counted as paid work (Montoya, 2019). Some men who had a motorcycle would pick up their wives from work in the evenings if they worked in the city's economic centres and wealthy neighbourhoods to bring them home from work.

Caring for sick or elderly family members can also involve weeks or months of disruptions. These lead to interruptions in caregivers' workday, limiting the ability of those who perform these unpaid tasks to sustain an informal job, prepare for their studies, or take time for themselves. For many in the women's group, the two hours on Saturday were the only time in their week that they could dedicate to their own enjoyment, which they associated with "self-care" activities. Their changing availabilities to participate for two hours on Saturdays were often connected to changing care loads, missing out because they had to assist their parents who were undergoing surgery, supervising their grandchildren when the mother went out to work, or caring for a family member who was sick or disabled. Maria Clara, for example, did not have the time to join the WhatsApp workshops on Saturdays for several months because she had to care for her mother-in-law who was hospitalised and then homebound. Most respondents might not conceptualise these activities as unpaid work, and indeed they often remain unmentioned in interviews and surveys. This makes it difficult to give a precise estimate of the time spent on housework and does not capture fully the experience of having to be "on call" or on standby if needed for any cooking, cleaning, or household management at any time of day.

In the WhatsApp group, women gave insights into how their families were adapting to the lockdown conditions. Some were feeling substantial strain having to attend to all their family members who were at home, demanding coffee, breakfast, snacks at different times of day, while they also had to prepare lunch and clean the house. Others were enjoying more time with their family and described the activities they did together in the evenings playing *parques*, a board game. The WhatsApp group attested to the fluctuating nature of care loads over more than a year. Some of these fluctuations were related to the evolving nature of the Covid pandemic (Oxfam, 2020; Rojas-Navarro et al., 2022), while others reflected broader uncertainties and life contingencies, manifestations of the insecurity pervasive in urban peripheral neighbourhoods. Compared to the seasonality of paid and unpaid workloads

recognised in agrarian contexts (Barrientos and Perrons 1999, Johnston et al. 2018), these variations were unpredictable.

Time use data does not capture subjective perceptions of participating in unpaid work. Many respondents still conceived men's participation in the domestic sphere as "help", it is often framed as "*helping out*", "*collaborating with their wives*", or doing something nice for them. In a particularly revealing case, Diego expressed that he doesn't mind "*putting the dress on*" (*ponerse la falda*), when he has to: "*My father was also very aware of this, and that housework was not only for women. Machismo has always existed, but I personally don't consider myself machista, because I believe that household chores should be shared, because, as I said, when I have to wear the skirt, I put it on.*"

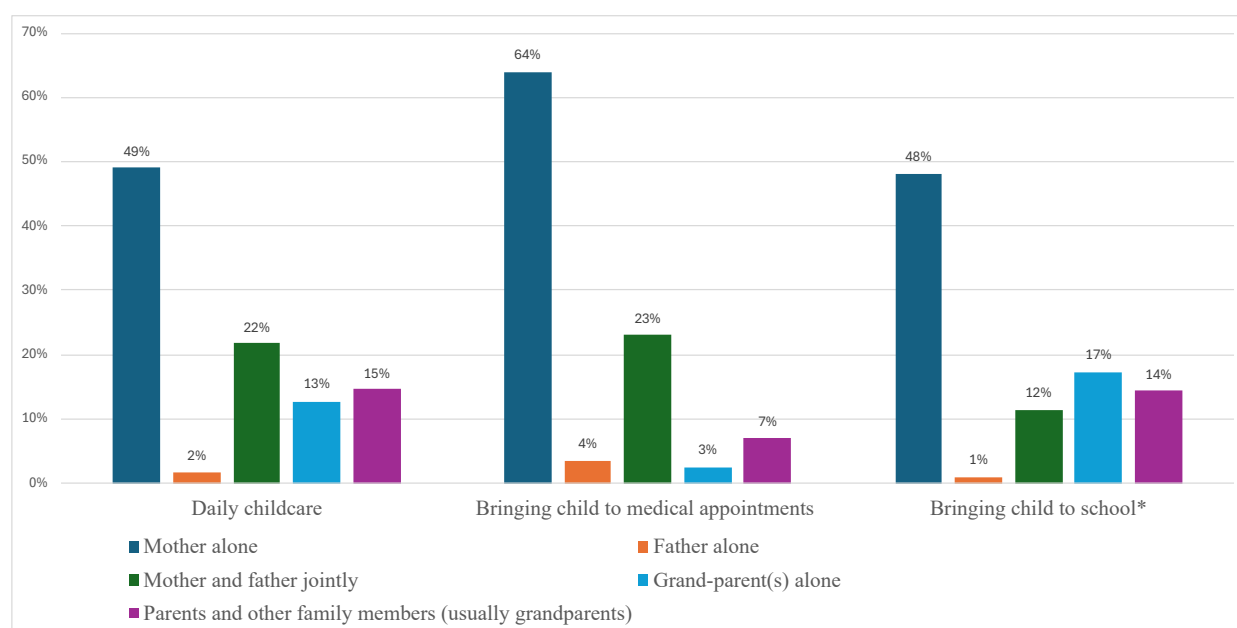
These distinct ways of talking about household responsibilities reveal different conceptions of "equality". The assertion that "everything is equal" conceals gender assumptions about appropriate roles. Although men in the surveys reported *participating* in various unpaid household tasks in the past week, survey statistics show a stark difference at the 1% significance level between levels of feminisation of unpaid *responsibilities*, captured by the percentage of households where only women were listed as responsible for a given unpaid activity. The data also shows that grandmothers provide critical childcare support to families, as has been emphasised elsewhere (Cantillon et al., 2021; Zegers & Reynolds, 2022).

Figure 19. Gender breakdown of responsibility for domestic and childcare tasks in the households surveyed

|                                       | Only men | Only women | Men and women |
|---------------------------------------|----------|------------|---------------|
| Housework                             | 12,2%    | 76,0%      | 11,8%         |
| Cooking                               | 11,6%    | 85,3%      | 3,1%          |
| Childcare                             | 3,6%     | 61,8%      | 34,6%         |
| Bringing kids to medical appointments | 4,0%     | 70,0%      | 26,0%         |
| Bringing kids to school               | 5,3%     | 72,6%      | 22,1%         |

Source: Author own survey. Percentages represent the proportion of households surveyed where only men, only women, or both were responsible for domestic and childcare tasks.

Figure 19. Responsibility for childcare tasks in households with children under 12 (N=110)



Source: Author own survey. \*Does not add to 100% because some reported “children go to school on their own”.

Divergences in men’s and women’s accounts of men’s participation in the home are informative of gendered expectations and power dynamics (Ambler et al., 2021). Women were more likely to report sole responsibilities for housework activities, whereas men tend to report that they are either solely responsible or that the responsibility is shared. For childcare activities, women were more likely to report the mother alone as responsible for those activities, and men were more likely to report that it was either the mother or that the responsibility was shared between the mother and the father. Very few women or men reported the father as solely responsible for childcare activities, including bringing them to medical appointments or to school. Men thus seem to overreport their participation in domestic responsibilities, compared to women’s reports of male participation, but men’s and women’s survey answers converge in their reporting of sparse male-only childcare responsibilities.

This distinction between participation and responsibility relates to gender norms. Responsibility has repercussions beyond the execution of tasks. The normative idea of who is responsible can influence the subjective experience of participating in that activity, which usually carries a mental tax. It partly defines the status of each family member. It also defines who, in times of a crisis or change in the family’s circumstances, will have to absorb that shock, adapt their schedules, and reorganise other obligations; whose participation is most

sensitive to changes. This will affect who contributes additional hours in times of need, in lockdowns, or when a sick family member needs care.

This distinction helps to understand changes and continuities at different levels; at the level of performing tasks on the one hand (i.e., practices) and at the level of gender norms on the other. Survey statistics suggest that there has been an increase in acceptance of men performing household tasks but less of a change at a higher level of responsibilities and status. This implies the persistence of women's "double day" and multiple obligations that have been reinforced by increases in women's paid activities. This is reflected by the fact that women were much more likely than men to discuss the strategies they have developed to balance their household responsibilities with paid work or studying. Women who participate in paid work often have to leave housework to their older children or leave "*everything ready*" the night before or early in the morning. Men's strategy to balance work and childcare responsibilities was usually to rely on female family members for support.

These observations also connect to bargaining dynamics, where one's fallback position is based on what people think happens in the community (which was measured in the survey). If men can find a new partner who does all the housework, their bargaining power is greater than if most women 'out there' expect men to participate in the home. The increasing incidence of female-headed households may send a message that women are no longer willing to accept what they did in the past. Relatedly, exaggerating what men 'do' in the home might be based on assumptions about what other men do, and women feeling that they should be grateful for having a man who helps and is not violent.

### 8.3.3 Shared (but not always equal)

There was a non-negligible subset of men in the research sample who were taking on more meaningful roles in family life. They aimed to share unpaid tasks, although it might not mean that these responsibilities were shared equally. This was more common in dual-earner households and in younger couples. There were also instances of unemployed sons who assisted their mothers, but usually they took on a secondary role. Juan David, a recovering drug addict, 24, living in Belén with his parents, participated in household chores with his mother Margara. She was a commercial advisor who distributed products from shop to shop with her motorcycle and was taking classes in business administration at university. When she resumed her studies at 42, after her kids were grown up (her youngest was 15), she mobilised her two sons to contribute to the house cleaning, "it's a matter of getting

organised.”<sup>43</sup> Juan David had held small jobs at a hotel in Medellín, doing a mix of repairs and cleaning but had been unemployed since the business had gone bankrupt. He had moved back from Cali, where he finished high school to be far from the streets of Medellín and decided to be involved in household chores to show his parents that he had changed. He cleaned the house, folded laundry, mopped floors, and ran errands outside the home. Margara, nevertheless, was the one to cook, which meant that she had to get up early to prepare meals before she left for work after which she attended university classes in the evenings. Cooking, she conceived, was a way of expressing love towards her husband and sons: *“I’m the one who cooks because I like cooking for them, it’s like giving them love, taking care of them, they love it when I cook for them.”*

18 households in the 77 interviews implemented some form of sharing arrangements; some divisions were more like 65-35 rather than 50-50, but they represented a more substantial collaboration for men. According to survey participants’ reports, I estimate that 15-20 percent of men in the phone survey shared domestic chores and childcare activities. Shared arrangements of household labour took different forms: (i) “taking turns” (*turnarse*) in executing household chores, (ii) a separation of activities and responsibilities, or (iii) the family performed household tasks together.<sup>44</sup>

Taking turns was a way of dividing unpaid responsibilities according to changing schedules and availabilities. Some dual-earning couples operated under the principle that “the first one home does the cooking.” Others were home at different times due to their jobs. Wilson, a 51-year-old construction worker married to a live-in domestic worker, did all the cooking and cleaning for himself, together with his son, while his wife was away during the week. Cristina, a psychologist and university teacher, described how she and her husband divide tasks. *“Here, at home everything is negotiated, including the distribution of chores. Who cooks, who straightens up the house, who cleans, all that gets distributed. So “today, it’s your turn”, “tomorrow, it’s my turn” and so on.”*

Others separated responsibilities according to strengths, abilities, and preferences. Household members had defined spheres of responsibilities, and attempted to divide these fairly and efficiently, assuring, for example, that there was an equal division of “unpleasant” tasks assigned to each household member. I interviewed Juan while he was supervising his 5-year-old son on a Saturday morning, and his wife worked from home for her customer

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<sup>43</sup> I interviewed Juan David and Margara separately.

<sup>44</sup> These ways of sharing responsibilities have also been identified in the literature, see for example Deutsch’s “Halving it All: How Equality Shared Parenting Works” (2007).

service job. He described how they took turns for childcare activities, working around their work schedules: *“Our life as a couple, we share practically everything between the two of us. When she is working, I stay all day with the children, entertaining them, the expenses are shared equally half-half. Neither of us burdens the other, both of us make the decisions, everything is shared.”* For domestic chores, on the other hand, they had a clear separation of tasks. Camila, during a short work break, explained their system to me: *“It is very even, very fair. The only thing is that he doesn’t cook, but that is compensated for with something else. From the beginning he told me ‘I don’t cook’, so I said ‘ah ok, and I don’t wash toilets’ – he doesn’t cook, and I don’t wash the toilets, that’s the fairest deal [laughter]. The only thing he did half learn while I was pregnant was rice, because rice was a nuisance [because of the smell]. He knows basic things, how to make rice, how to make sugarcane juice but for a meal like a Sancocho, something more elaborate, he has tried but it’s not his forte, but at least he’s been willing to learn.”* They thus conveyed that their division was based on an even distribution of less enjoyable tasks, and according to their different skills. Nevertheless, cooking takes more time and needs to be done more often than toilet cleaning.

Other families had set times or days when they did all the housework together. Dore, 33, recounted how they “made it a custom” to clean the house together on Sundays when she was living with her ex-husband, so that “it was known” that it had to be done that day. When Cristina discussed her day-to-day during lockdowns, she also detailed how they aligned their schedules with her husband and stepson to spend time together, working at the same time, doing exercise early in the morning, eating lunch together, and watching television as a family at the end of the workday.

In these accounts, there was a conscious effort for men to take on a greater share of unpaid family responsibilities, often with an explicit recognition that this constituted a called-for change from the past. The sharing ethos often included other aspects in addition to dividing household tasks such as more collaborative models of decision-making and rethinking family relationships, with mutual support and shared aspirations as guiding principles. Mauro, 28, expressed this changing way of thinking: *“I think that nowadays we are changing that mentality of being machista, and we are more focused on satisfying each other, in creating an enjoyable space, a space within the home where all those living there feel comfortable.”*

These men were involved in thinking about how to raise their children, going into detail about how they were raising their children, spelling out their philosophy, and



demonstrating their mental commitment to parenting. They explicitly talked about their thought processes about their family's trajectory and their fears, worries, and aspirations for their children. This differed from other men whose notion of fatherhood was restricted to authority, setting a good example, or giving advice, as encountered above. Steven's decision-making around his career development explicitly factored in his son, and he was prepared to make compromises to be present in his child's life: *"when I think about how to progress (evolucionar), I want to study engineering, but at the moment I don't have the time because most of my time is dedicated to my son, but I also want to improve our quality of life, to have more comforts, when you have studies you work less, earn more, and have more time for your family."*

Because of the number of households headed by women, some male partners take on an active role in raising their partner's children. Mauro shared his experience as a partner who took on caregiving responsibilities:

*I loved my partner, I wanted to be with her, if she comes with a child, then, I have to be with the child. I was working as a security guard, my wife was an environmental engineer. I almost always worked the night shift. I said to her: "you can be with the child at night, and I can come home from work in the morning and take care of the child." I would finish the security shift at six in the morning, I would arrive at home around seven, and from there on the odyssey would begin, that entire dad odyssey of preparing the baby's bottles, making breakfast and lunch, cooking, changing nappies, changing and washing clothes, the whole process of being a dad, and at six or seven at night I would go back to work.*

Mauro's narrative underlines a personal transformation that was, in his view, motivated by his love for his wife, who had higher education and professional status, and from interactions with his mother-in-law, who introduced him to different perspectives about gender roles. Their arrangement spelt out here calls to mind the "alternating-shift" couples with blue-collar workers identified in Deutsch (2000) and in Presser's work (1994). The couple later decided to open a family business together when they had their own child so they could spend more time watching over the children.

In sharing households, many put forward a vision of a couple as a partnership rather than male authority and female subservience, to form "a good working team" as Mauro articulated. Men assuming new responsibilities emphasised the positive benefits they and their families gained from their increased support and presence for their children. Juan believed that sending their son to day-care while they both worked was better, compared with his own experience of staying at home with his mother in his childhood *"The kid has opened up a lot, he's not shy, he interacts with everyone. To me it's an advantage."*

His wife Camila also touched on the negative implications of fathers' absence or lack of affection that they wanted to correct, a common motivation I found for those setting new fatherhood expectations. Her father was killed when she was a child; she had always aspired for her children to grow up with an involved father. As Camila account underline, negative experiences can act as motivations to change. This observation departs from a focus on exposure and intergenerational transmission mechanisms and will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 9.

Although these men and women explicitly referred to a need for new models of masculinity, there was also a lot of questioning around what those models should look like. While these men aspired to greater involvement in their children's education, I found considerable ambiguity in searching for new masculine roles. Young fathers described wanting to be more present for their children, in contrast to their grandfathers or fathers, but that they didn't know how to do so. Camilo, 24, expressed this uncertainty: *"I think that is something that is perhaps lacking in schools, in universities, because they don't prepare us for that, or at least I tell you personally, nobody prepared me to be a father."*

Mauro's solution was to take inspiration from his mother, as he never had a dad:

*When my daughter was born, I love my daughter, but I would say "now what do I do as a dad? What is the dad's role, the father used to reprimand or punish, what do I do?" And since I didn't have those bases because I never had a father, I turned to my mother, she would talk to me, she guided me, that's what I am going to do with my daughter.*

The idea that men in dual-earning couples should be required to contribute to housework seemed to garner a certain legitimacy in interviewees' accounts, rather than disapproval for breaking norms. Many research participants expressed the view that it appeared "normal" to them that a couple shares unpaid work if both work outside the home. Shared arrangements were more common in families where women had higher levels of education, with post-secondary vocational or university studies. However, this was by no means a determining factor. The instability of labour markets can also lead to unconventional household arrangements and was at times as an enabling factor for couples to share responsibilities. Several men who had more unstable jobs than their wives decided to be more significantly involved in raising their children. A common denominator was male partners' willingness to question their roles and adapt their behaviours from what they had seen in the past.

This analysis provides insight into how gender norms have evolved or persisted in urban Colombia. Progressive change towards gender-equitable roles is accompanied by a

great deal of ambiguity and questioning as young men and women search for alternative roles for fathers and male partners in the absence of models of caring masculinities. Dominant models of change such as punctuated equilibrium models do not adequately capture these processes. Instead, the emergence of a new norm often involves uncertainty and requires social deliberation to shape new possibilities. In this context, the enactment of new ways of parenting among men does not follow the same pattern as women's entry into the labour force, where a critical mass leads to a new equilibrium (Evans, 2019). Rather, it suffers from limited referents of caring masculinities in the *barrio* and wider society where imageries of violent masculinities prevail (Aïdi & Fabry, 2022; Baird, 2018; Romero Sánchez & Romero Sánchez, 2019). Here, ambiguity reflects the complexity of creating institutional alternatives, rather than contesting existing rules as suggested by historical institutionalism (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, p.11; Streeck and Thelen, 2005, p.31). The hesitations surrounding male participation highlight the difficulty of establishing new norms. "Equilibrium solutions" have to be socially designed, tested, invented. As Mackay (2014, p.550) argues, this "newness and processes of institutionalization" during moments of uncertainty which represent windows of opportunity for "institutional innovation" should be investigated and understood.

The search for new norms of masculinity in intimate and fatherhood relations within the home co-exists with notions of men as helpers or as providers who are largely absent from domestic life. This dynamic has created more alternatives for masculine roles. The empirical data suggests a move away from a norm of complete absence towards limited involvement by men. Notions of sharing and equality are gaining legitimacy in certain situations, reflecting processes of institutional and normative "layering" (Walyen, 2017). This uncertainty, vagueness, and co-existence of various alternatives are not easily captured by trends from Likert scale attitudinal questions.

#### 8.3.4 Primary male involvement

Finally, there were a few instances where men assumed primary unpaid responsibilities, deviating from prescribed gender norms by staying at home and taking on a larger share of parenting and housework than female household members, while other household members worked. Analysing exceptional cases provides valuable insights into social norms and perceptions of what constitutes typical behaviour (Pearce, 2002). Exploring the language individuals use to articulate their experiences of breaking away from dominant masculinity norms can further our understanding of how society conceives of men's

relationship with the domestic sphere. For instance, during an initial visit to a neighbourhood, a social leader pointed out a household where the father cared for his disabled daughter during the day. She suggested that this arrangement might stem from a loss of authority and that he was being “manipulated” or “ordered around” by his wife. At the same time, exceptional cases may serve as examples, expanding the boundaries of socially acceptable roles for men.

In none of the exceptional cases encountered during fieldwork did men actively choose to be primary homemakers or stay-at-home parents. These non-traditional arrangements arose because of external circumstances that were out of their control several were occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, these men were exceptional in that they decided to take on these responsibilities and adapt to the situation. With high levels of unemployment, especially from Covid-associated job losses, some men remained unemployed whilst women had a stable job or were able to find casual work.

This was the case for Aleja and Santiago, parents of two young boys, three and ten years old. Although Santiago had been the family’s main breadwinner, he was unable to find work in the construction industry during the pandemic. The couple had been receiving the “solidarity income” (*ingreso solidario*), monthly government cash transfers implemented during the pandemic (160,000 pesos, approximately £32). A month earlier, Aleja had found informal work as a photographer for a model and her clothing business and worked outside of the home from 9am to 5.30pm from Monday to Saturday. Santiago stayed home with his sons as schools were still closed, he cooked and did some cleaning during the day and went to pick up Aleja after work. They usually woke up and “organise everything together” before Aleja went to work, so that he could focus on the kids.

The experience of unemployment and pandemic lockdowns had made Santiago re-evaluate gender roles. When his wife had their first child, he didn’t want her to work outside the home. Aleja would “dispatch him”, stay home with the children and wait for him to come home. She used to do catalogue sales to complement their income. In speaking about unemployment, what he found most difficult was not being able to pay their debts, to “answer for that”, but as far as family life was concerned, he viewed that it had changed for the better, “everything is different now”. A sense of unity and consensus emerged from the interview. They presented solidarity and a united front, together against difficulties and doing what they can for their family. They framed it as a difficult situation they were going through, just like they had had to live separately for a year at their respective parents’ homes to save enough to build their own home once their first son was born, after living together for two years and

paying rent. He nevertheless described the current situation as Aleja “is helping me” and it appeared that this would likely be a temporary solution if he was able to find a stable job.

It was a big change that he now does domestic chores without having to be asked, she doesn’t have to direct him to do anything: *“the first one to get to the kitchen prepares breakfast, if you are in the house, you clean up, so we share a lot.”* When they started as a couple, he *“didn’t do anything, she was the one dedicated to the house”*, she laughed in the background when he recounted this. During the pandemic, dividing tasks had “become a routine”. Santiago explained how he had changed: *“I am not capable of not getting up and not helping her for housework, so we try to share the work (los oficios) between the two of us.”* In describing how they share housework, they said that *“we now support each other regarding the home”*.

For Santiago, unemployment was experienced negatively because of his inability to carry out his economic provider role. He did not appear to associate his participation in unpaid work at home as a threat to his masculine identity. He situated his new contribution to housework and child supervision as part of his obligations towards his family and identified the positive side of wanting his wife to be relaxed and calm. While his provider identity remained unquestioned, he changed his relation to the domestic sphere. Santiago had a clear desire to uphold his “family responsibility”, an aspiration that had been central in the moral education he received from his parents in his upbringing. *“Thanks to God, I have showed them [that I am responsible] because we have our home, we practically have it all, it’s not in abundance but we have it.”*

Dedication to his family was also a big part of Carlos’ story, who was 56 and living with his wife and three adult children. His wife held a stable position as a secretary at a local school and his son worked in early childhood education, they both were able to keep their jobs during the pandemic. Carlos’ temporary contract for a maintenance job at his wife’s school had not been renewed because he suffered from physical pains. Carlos talked about how “uncomfortable” it was to be unemployed and economically dependent on his wife and adult children because he *“felt like a burden to them”*, not having his own money to buy a coffee, an ice cream, or pay for bus fares to go downtown. Household expenses were pooled and divided according to each family member’s earnings, but Carlos managed the bills and house payments. Although many men in his situation would nevertheless refuse to cook or be involved in a significant matter in domestic tasks, he described his learning trajectory:

*With this confinement at home, I had to take over the kitchen, so I am the cook, because it’s unthinkable that they are working, how can I just stay seated, waiting for my wife to cook? So,*

*I took over. I didn't really know how to cook, so I asked a cousin, my sister: "how do I make this and that soup?", and they would explain it to me. Afterwards, I thought, "Well I am silly, what is YouTube for?!". So, I took to YouTube, I picked up little things, how to make plantain soup, and they would explain everything, so I would go get the ingredients, and that's how I learned. Now every day I make different soups, and my wife and children are happy because I am making delicious food. Here I am at home as the cook and being somewhat useful. One week I left [to visit a relative] and they suffered at home because they didn't have time to make lunch, the work I am doing is also needed! [laughs].*

Carlos' nervous laughter as he reflects on his contribution in the home reveals some of the cognitive effort in coming to terms with the situation. In this situation laughter seemed a way to defuse the tensions from the situation of having to be the house cook, even though he asserted "that doesn't take away one's manhood." He framed his cooking as a contribution, from which he could demonstrate usefulness in the family. This is distinct to how women usually talked about cooking, as an obligation they took for granted, a duty towards their family regardless of circumstances. That being said, Carlos always presented the decision to start cooking as his own and, like Santiago, noted that it would be "unthinkable" to let his wife do everything in the home while he was unemployed. Compared to other men encountered in the research, these were very much exceptions to the rule.

These findings contribute to research on men who became primary caregivers during the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the tensions this shift creates for men's identities and the implications for (in)egalitarian household arrangements (Castrillo et al., 2021; Hupkau & Petrongolo, 2020). It remains unclear how durable Carlos and Santiago's contribution to unpaid work would be once they are able to resume an economic activity. Nevertheless, their willingness to take on responsibilities without resentment towards their wives suggests that they may be more open to dividing home responsibilities in the future. In contrast, Bernardo stood out in the research for his long-term dedication to his children, assuming primary responsibility for the bulk of domestic and childcare activities on a more permanent basis. Originally from Medellín, he had raised his children alone in Venezuela, working night shifts as a security guard at his kid's school after his wife had left them at a hotel when they were very young. *"It was my responsibility. I didn't even get another woman, I didn't impose them a stepmother or anything. I am a guy who doesn't drink liquor or anything like that, it was "my kids – my house – my kids – my house" and looking after them."*

He was now 77, caring for his grandchildren while living with his daughter and her husband who were working in small workshops in the district. Bernardo did favours around the neighbourhood for "a little work" putting up bricks, carrying sandbags, fixing power cables or selling incense on the streets when his daughter was home from work. He cooked for the

family, preparing lunch for them to bring to work, and walked his grandchildren to and from school. He woke up at five in the morning to prepare coffee and breakfast for everyone in the kitchen that he tidies in the evenings to “leave everything ready.” He not only described in detail his domestic routines, he also knew the particularities of each household member’s tastes and preferences “my daughter doesn’t drink coffee”, “the boy drinks *sugarcane juice* with milk and an *arepa*” and he knew from memory the children’s school classes timetables.

In talking about these roles Bernardo did not have to make any mental adjustments, compared to the two other men, he recounted his activities matter-of-factly. He said that neighbours in their enclosed street have asked him who he was in relation to the children, that they see him hanging clothes outside, or sweeping and taking out the trash, but that “now they know, I’m the one who runs the home, who looks out for the children.” Reflecting back on his life experience with some emotion in his voice, he told me: “*my mom, before she died, she said to me: ‘I congratulate you because you raised your children on your own.’*<sup>45</sup> *And here they are today, both professionals and I love them very much.*”

#### 8.4 The limited and multifaceted nature of change

What explains the discrepancies between egalitarian discourses, underestimations of community attitudes, and continuing gender differences in practices? Social norms studies have focused on “misperceived norms” as an explanation for unequal gender outcomes (Burzstyn et al., 2018; Gauri et al., 2019). However, the mismatch observed in survey data at the beginning of this chapter could be the result of other dynamics such as interactional constraints and power differentials that require more than just information updating to “correct” beliefs about what others think or do. Gender norms also involve power asymmetries and diverging interpretations and expectations, even when family members may have the intention of equality, as Hochschild’s “family myth” concept exemplifies. Hochschild (1989) also showed that what a person reports or believes about gender is not always consistent with how they divide the “second shift”. There are often contradictions between what someone thinks, feels and does when it relates to gender identities and norms.

I found that even when survey enumerators were careful to provide clear guidance about what was being asked, respondents qualified these statements based on different situations in interviews, such as men should participate equally in the household *when they*

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<sup>45</sup> “*Sacó esos muchachos pa’lante solo*”

*have the time*. Here, we see that multiple normative understandings inform the attitudes expressed in survey responses. The theoretical link between attitudes and norms is not as straightforward as assumed in WVS studies. In a view of gender norms as contested and maintained by power relations rather than a self-enforcing expectation maintains an equilibrium, a lack of consensus and different individual interpretations of social norms are an inherent feature of how they operate, to be expected.

I heard frequently during the research that “all men are machistas, *but I am not*”. This mechanism may be at play when research participants answer survey questions about their personal gender values.<sup>46</sup> Despite a common language, I find different understandings of equality in different types of household arrangements. Equality was at times understood as a complementary contribution based on distinct gender roles, where breadwinning responsibilities justified exemption from housework. Others talked about it being more “equal” because they viewed that men “help out” or collaborate –and often only in certain tasks – which reflects low expectations placed on men’s household contribution. Conceptions of “equality as sharing” were related to ideas of equality as balance, co-responsibility, partnership, and mutual support. This suggests that survey measures of gender attitudes may not accurately reflect the intentions and gender norms that the research tools were designed to represent.

The chapter shows how norm change is not straightforward or easily measurable, it can be characterised by degrees of ambiguity and discomfort. Some research participants remained vague in talking about men’s domestic roles, especially when discussing their own family, but were very comfortable bringing up general “*machismo*” dynamics. When the discussion turned to specifics about their household, the survey enumerators and I perceived some discomfort or laughter. This unease to speak about the domestic sphere gave way to challenges in recruiting men for the study. This sometimes led to comical situations, such as a male respondent asking if he should put his daughter on the line when I asked him about how they organise domestic activities during a phone interview. Once in-person research activities could be resumed, it was hard to interview men alone, they were rarely at home alone and often asked for their wife to be present in scheduling an interview with me. These

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<sup>46</sup> Psychological studies have suggested that people are relatively accurate in their evaluation of others but tend to see themselves in a more optimistic light. Research has identified biases in how we rate ourselves in comparison to others, related to our own attractiveness, qualities, or abilities, such as the “better-than-average effect” (Epley et al. 2008, Yarosh 2019, Zell et al. 2020, Van Yperen and Buunk 1991).



methodological experiences, the challenges and situations they gave rise to can sometimes be more indicative of gender norms than what was said explicitly in interviews and surveys.

The comical situations, ambiguities, and different discursive uses of “equality” highlight the messiness of norm change where there is no clear social-cultural blueprint, challenging the idea of a ‘tipping point’ and ‘equilibrium’ view of norm persistence and change (Young 2015, Mackie 1996). The unease and contradictions that pervaded throughout the research process may stem from an aversion to change, with strategies to deflect considerations that men should be more involved in the household but may also be an indication of questioning and searching for equitable alternatives, and of increasing social pressure for men to adopt more engaged family roles. Norm persistence and change was characterised by tensions between generations and between women and men because of diverging expectations and aspirations.

The role of laughter and what it says about social norms is illustrative. Laughter and humour used in a variety of situations expressed different normative stances. Laughter in Carlos’ case was a ‘defuser’, other times it reflected the taken-for-granted nature of the household division of labour. Laughter and mockery as a form of covert everyday protest to an unfair situation. Laughter also communicated what is considered natural or unnatural, when housewives laughed at the question about “who does the household chores in your home”, or when wives’ laughter could be heard behind the telephone when men were being surveyed about their domestic participation. A man interviewed recounted how he went “crazy” one evening during lockdown with nothing to do and started sweeping and mopping out of “despair” and “boredom” and his daughters, laughing at the scene, secretly filmed him to share on social media. But there was also Camila’s laughter about having gotten “the fairest deal” or Mauro’s laughter when describing taking on parenting for his wife’s child. Leonardo, the *rebusque* worker, explained in an amusing way that he started cooking during the lockdown: “*During the quarantine I was full on, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, this chubby guy (el gordito) did it all.*” In all these cases, expressions of laughter are evocative of how people relate to gender norms.

This underscores the value of mixed methods rather than relying on ‘cold’ surveys to study gender norms, to get to the emotional reactions and subtle non-verbal cues that can convey how people relate to the concepts studied.

## 8.5 Conclusion

The chapter explored men's changing roles in the home, frequently omitted in gender norms studies. WVS-type questions are used to measure gender norms, but seldomly ask about men and women's justifications for male (non-)participation. The qualitative findings show that these are incomplete measures of individuals' 'true' beliefs, pointing to the need to recognise that normative understandings can be ambivalent, contradicting or accommodating. Different understandings of and levels of support for equality lie behind the same survey response. Richer and more nuanced qualitative data highlights the absence of strong consensus in gender beliefs despite 80 percent of sampled individuals reporting support for men's participation in the home. The lack of attention to men's changing roles in academic research and policies, in comparison to the attention given to measuring female labour force participation and its determinants, may play a part in the slow change in men's home participation, among other factors. Asking only about women's roles reinforces the idea that women should or can be expected to change. The question of redistributing household tasks is sidelined in conceptions of development and progress based on the WVS measures.

The chapter highlights the limited and ambiguous nature of change in men's participation in unpaid work. It adds to a growing body of research on reconfigurations of gender roles engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-term implications of these changes for gender equality (Seck et al., 2021; Wojnicka & Kubisa, 2024), while situating these within broader processes of gender norms continuity and change over the past decades. It offers qualitative insights which give a sense of how men's unpaid work has evolved during the health crisis and over time, beyond quantitative time use measures. Interview accounts suggest some relaxing of gender norms which have led to more diversity despite persisting inequalities. Past gender norms dictating men's complete absence from the domestic sphere where their participation in cooking and cleaning was a strong taboo persist but have become less relevant or defensible compared to the 1950s. Likewise, the notion that men should collaborate in the home in situations where women work outside the home has grown in legitimacy, although the most prevalent understandings of men's involvement in unpaid activities in the research was one of "helping". This is comparable to women's contributions to household being framed as "collaboration" in Chapter 7 and underscores how new practices and informal institutions can be interpreted to fit with prevailing norms.

Interpreting survey results about norm perceptions and attitudes as informational asymmetries and misperceived norms takes social structures and meanings as fixed. It fails to capture the nuances and subtle distinctions that survey respondents make when they answer survey questions. This ambiguity and diversity can also be used as a resource for activism

and change strategies. In contrast to changes in gender norms around paid work that offer women material gains and greater autonomy, for men, increasing their contribution in household activities can present costs in purely material terms. In this situation, changes in symbolic resources, such as redefining “good fathers” and “good husbands” beyond economic provision, in addition to greater social pressure, may be required for men to abide by gender equitable norms. Amplifying the experiences of the men who felt proud of sharing responsibilities in their families can highlight what men stand to gain through these new identities.

The next chapter expands on these tensions arising from distinct perceptions and meanings of equality. It examines the strategies through which men and women have negotiated, contested, and resisted change in families and in intergenerational interactions. As such, it explores constraints and challenges in enacting family practices that go against deep-seated gender norms that go beyond ideas of misperceived beliefs.

## Chapter 9: How norms change and are reproduced

### 9.1 Introduction

The chapter aims to make sense of the manifold and contradictory ways women, men, and families have adapted to women's entry into paid work and broader urbanisation patterns described in the previous chapters and the personal family histories inscribed within these broader histories.

A comparison of older and younger generations' life histories reveals a narrower range of possibilities and stricter norms in Antioquia's past. As outlined in previous chapters, the period from 1950 to 2020 was marked by great upheaval and transformation. The decades from 1960 - 1980, 1980 - 2000, and 2000 - 2020 each represent distinct phases in Medellín's development trajectory. From early urbanisation processes, when peripheral neighbourhoods began to form due to a massive influx of rural migrants fleeing *La Violencia*, and limited increases in women's education and labour force participation among young single women, Medellín retained a parochial character. The 1980s marked a shift as industrial decline gave way to an export-led economic model, alongside the devastating rise in narco-trafficking dominated by Pablo Escobar's cartel. This spiralled into decades of extreme violence and armed conflict which lasted until the early 2000s. Since 1985, Colombia has undergone a rapid "catch-up" compared to other Latin American countries, displaying one of the steepest rises in female labour force participation. Economic growth from the commodity boom of the early 2000s, a rise in tourism, and investments in education and human development have contributed to a "modern" yet highly unequal society integrated into the world economy, reliant on extractive industries and the service and knowledge sectors, with a sizeable informal economy.

These events traverse the lives and family trajectories of distinct generations of research participants, shaping their childhoods and the expectations and opportunities they grew up with (Appendix 4). Older generations lived the greater part of their young lives in the rural countryside in large families. Most stopped school early, started working young, often around 11- to 13-years-old, and left their parents' home as young adults, especially if they were one of the oldest siblings. They describe being involved in strenuous physical labour around the farm, for agricultural or domestic activities. In contrast, a large portion of the youngest generations have grown up in a city with fewer siblings, some participated in youth groups through a community organisation or their local Church, and have studied until

high school or beyond, through a technological degree, a certified course at the SENA, or starting university at one of the city's public universities. At the same time, this generation has grown up in a complicated social environment due to gang presence and violence in their neighbourhoods. Youth pregnancies, marital dissolution, and high housing and living costs also compel young people to stay or return to live with their parents.

Although there remains a core division of labour today, it appears to be more flexible, with greater variability for younger generations, as described in chapters 7 and 8. This chapter considers behavioural changes at the family level and how these emerge within these new circumstances. Gender norms, as collectively shared understandings, structure ideologies and shape how people interact with broader social structures, defining boundaries of negotiations. What happens when people break from these? In Medellín's society in flux, some adhere to norms, and others, for various reasons that I show, are reinterpreting and questioning these collective understandings.

Picking up from theoretical literature that emphasises social interactions within the household as sites of change (Agarwal, 1997; Deutsch, 2007), I engage with the dynamic nature of social norms and their long-term endogeneity, investigating how gender norms are themselves subject to negotiation in intrahousehold bargaining processes. The chapter uncovers the "hidden power dynamics" (Tichenor, 2005, p. 196) of stability and change beyond what people report in surveys. This calls for a broader perspective on voice, exit, everyday resistance, and strategising than what statistical and quantitative models offer.

This connects to research on women's strategies to negotiate context-specific "rules of the game" and what factors constrain or enable them to obtain more favourable outcomes (Kandiyoti, 1988). A large body of literature has studied women's negotiations to access paid work outside the home in developing countries (Kabeer, 2000; Ong, 2010; Safa, 1995). These negotiations often rest on compromises where they promise to uphold their domestic responsibilities or adapt their work arrangements and aspirations around housekeeping and caregiving (Kabeer, 2007). Intergenerational dimensions emerge here, also encountered in previous chapters with men wanting to be different kinds of fathers than their predecessors, where these 'bargains' and compromises earlier generations made might have led their children to question the fairness of these arrangements and decide they wanted something different for themselves. How, then, do men and women negotiate resilient gender norms around unpaid family responsibilities?

The chapter begins by analysing perceptions of changing household relations following women's increased economic autonomy. It then analyses how men and women,

many already encountered in the previous chapters, negotiate change, paying attention to how they expand or work within the boundaries of collective gender norms. These negotiations are affected by the weight of past histories and the recent turmoil to rural and small city parochial ways of life of the early twentieth century. Crucially, the chapter finds that because of the cultural significance of ‘the united family,’ processes of norm change also occur in the extended family and community and in the choice of partners in a context where the nuclear family is not the dominant model. I also call attention to emotional and affective dimensions of family norms that impede stronger negotiations and more radical change. The concluding section examines how these multiple accounts of negotiating within families advance our understanding of how norms change, looking back at the different depictions of change in the literature.

## 9.2 Shifting balance of power and women driving change

Conceptualising social norms as maintained by power relations rather than as equilibria upheld by self-fulfilling expectations means we can study how gender norms are maintained or transformed following changes in the external environment that shift the balance of power between social actors (Waylen, 2014). Although many women have entered paid work out of economic necessity, labour market instability has undermined male claims to authority in the home. Many research participants viewed that women have more options to leave abusive relationships and assert their rights, although obstacles remain. The high incidence of single mothers and social assistance programmes targeting female-headed households have meant that women are less dependent on men, they don’t have to remain in partnerships or form new ones when one dissolves, even if this may entail greater economic hardship. Women’s choices to exit partnerships and sustain their families present an important challenge to men’s basis of authority and control, as Johana relates:

*It doesn’t matter to us now whether the man is there or not, because we can sustain a home. I had to support my daughters, to work and fight for rent, for utilities. This stigma has ended because as women we are very verracas, so that [male] figure we had of the brave throne, like the superhero, all those things are over. Women are now very independent; we no longer tolerate mistreatment.*

Women have more legal options and community support to defy abuse or demand that non-cohabiting fathers provide child support. Many women were aware of their rights and the possibility of making a legal complaint. However, in peripheral neighbourhoods, these options are rarely used because of fear of violent backlash and lack of faith in legal claims’

efficacy. Where there is weak state protection, where criminal organisations may resolve neighbourhood disputes and punish crimes, and where leaving the neighbourhood is not possible because they don't have the economic resources or social support, legal action is often not seen as a viable option. Nevertheless, a sense emerged that women's position in the household and society has improved. Participants frequently drew an explicit and direct association between having a personal income and authority in the household. Cristina called attention to this "power game" and how women's access to an income opens space for negotiations:

*For the roles in the family, there is a power game, whoever has money, has more power. So, when the man is the one who brings money home, it is as if he enjoys some privileges, and when this power is more balanced, when both people have this possibility, then the conditions change because it has to be negotiated more.*

Many referred to women being more respected and valued than before, "before women didn't have that right to give their opinion", Laura recalled. Carlos shared this view: *"I say that machismo has gone down because before men were over the women, women had to be like slaves, although some men still are that way, I think that majority of us are different, women themselves no longer accept that either."*

Some men also associated women's increased earnings capacities with a relative loss of power over their wives and daughters. Alberto, a retired industrial mechanic, complained: *"In my time, women weren't allowed to work, it was like a law of life, as a woman, it is to have children and take care of them, no more. Now women have a lot of freedom, as a father, you can't forbid your daughter to go work, no way that she will accept that... Since the woman works and receives money, she can do what she wants, even if you don't want her to, because she is in charge."*

The rise of dual-earning families and female-headed households has created tensions in applying old ways of organising families, work, and caregiving. As practices change, gender norms must be reinterpreted, whether to reinforce male privileges or demand greater contribution and co-responsibility within the home. Because of traditional *macho* norms inscribing patriarchal power over women as an expression of masculine identity, men engaging in unpaid work (and women engaging in paid work) may be seen as a loss of power or virility. In examining men's tactics around the household division of labour, I find both strategies of 'patriarchal opposition' to protect masculine privileges, and others of reframing masculinities in ways that value more involved fathers and supportive partners.

Nevertheless, interviewees commonly expressed the idea that it is up to women to drive change. Some attributed a lack of change in household gender relations because “of women’s passivity”, reasoning that “if women are too permissive, nothing will change.” Some men also reflected that in the face of changes in women’s identities, men have had to “adapt”. George, a former M-19 guerrilla member, reflected on these changing mentalities as men have “come to understand” that they also have to participate in housework: *“there are some men who don’t do [housework], because us men we are still machista, in dealing with these changing conditions.”*

Feminist studies have shown how women accommodate their discourses to downplay their involvement in productive activities, extending the notion of the domestic sphere to the farm or neighbourhood to appease male insecurities and covertly expand their sphere of influence without disrupting gender norms. In contrast, some men proclaim greater equality in both practices and norms to get away with less than their fair share of household responsibilities. In interviews, some men used discourses of equality to deflect the topic of the domestic division of labour, evading questions about their participation. Some overstated what they do, presenting themselves as helpful and available for housework, but meant that they were available to do repairs or minor fixes around the house to help.

Men also used vague language to not explicitly admit that they were less involved in household chores, drawing on the occasional episode where they did participate to give the idea that they participated more frequently than they do. Interviewing Lina and Ramon together, he had claimed in the survey that he sometimes cooked, and she, surprised, asked when that had ever happened. It became apparent that he was referring to a time when they had broken up, and he invited her for a *Sancocho*, *“But since he is here with me, he does nothing, not even rice or anything”*, Lina asserted. Ramon also side-tracked the issue of his absence from the household, even on Sundays, to reprimand Lina for not resting, minimising the efforts that housework involves and portraying it as less burdensome work than his job as a gardener. Colombian men have the weight of culture that supports their absence from home duties. The fact that some men felt compelled to overclaim their participation may thus be evidence of subtle changes in normative expectations with growing pressure for men to contribute more in the home.

Some excuses that they are “lazy for those kinds of things” (*me da pereza*) can be interpreted as an implicit refusal to change, an easy way out. A woman’s son refused to help because it “was too stressful.” Making excuses as a form of deflection, especially the appeal to breadwinning privileges, breaks down when one considers examples of unemployed or



retired men who still do not contribute to household activities, whereas working women continue to take on the larger share of housekeeping and childcare. Interestingly one of the two men interviewed who self-proclaimed as “machista” recognised this inequality, but this didn’t seem to motivate him to lend a greater hand in the household: *“For women and domestic work, she works so hard and you don’t see what she does, on the other hand what I have worked, you can see that I did it, I bought a plot of land. Women’s work is harder.”<sup>47</sup> She gets up at 6am, she works, how many hours? To six in the evening, twelve hours, and on the other hand men work eight, nine hours.”*

Men might feign incompetence or claim inability to cook or to do chores well, “I am just not good for those things”, or as Ramon who “doesn’t put as much effort” as his wife, masking an unwillingness to learn. “Staying quiet” can be an implicit form of refusal and avoidance. Descriptions of men in the family as quiet or reserved (*callados*) were common. Mothers were portrayed as strict and authoritarian, fathers as kind or lenient. This disguises the fact that women’s sphere of authority is limited to bringing up children and managing the household, by contrast these “quiet” fathers benefit from greater freedom to withdraw from the household. This brings to light the asymmetric range of freedoms and choices between family members, determining who can opt-out of domestic chores. Unequal gender norms entrench power differences in that they provide greater or less ‘room for manoeuvre’, a greater “amount of discretion” (Waylen, 2014, p.217). Men are not judged harshly for leaving their families. In contrast, working mothers continue to be evaluated on whether they are “good mothers.”

Conceptions of social norms as shared expectations (Bicchieri, 2006, 2017) conceal these power dynamics and the various ways social actors engage with norms, which act as forces of gradual and long-term change. The chapter illustrates the great deal of “play” in how gender norms are reinterpreted, enforced and challenged (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009; Pearse et al., 2016; Waylen, 2014). This ‘play’ exploits the ambiguities and gaps between normative ideals and changing practical realities. Compared to how research participants describe the past, there is greater leeway to bend norms, work around them, or create new opportunities.

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<sup>47</sup> *es más fuerte.*

## 9.3 Negotiating change

### 9.3.1 Forms of 'loyalty'

Although the household division of unpaid labour appears resilient to change, it is not universally accepted. Family members are not only passive actors obeying norms, they find ways to work around them or comply with them to pursue other goals within the possibilities delimited by economic and social constraints, which is why some women prefer to comply with gender norms that exempt men from domestic responsibilities because they are with a “responsible man” or “aren’t lacking anything”, or because they believe their children be educated by the mother instead of someone external to the family.

Women complained to family members, usually other women, and to me as the interviewer, to express dissatisfaction with unequal terms. The use of mockery and name-calling, labelling men as “machistas”, “lazy”, “shameless”, or “useless”, can be read as symbolic forms of rejecting powerlessness, in situations where one has little control. Ana reflected on the reproduction of gender roles during family reunions, where her aunts remained responsible for organising the meals. Even though her aunts complain every year, Ana pointed out that despite minimal efforts to include some of the nephews, they never ask their brothers.

Although these actions may not provide practical advantages, they may guard against a sense of inferiority. Lorena and Brenda, the mother and daughter encountered in chapter 8, amusingly described how they had gotten Lorena’s husband to participate in the survey. They deliberately asked him to participate so that he would be forced to acknowledge that he did not contribute in the home. They laughed at the husband’s hesitations to answer questions, pausing before admitting that he didn’t do any housework under the watchful eyes of his 9-year-old son, who recounted the scene to his mother. Between bouts of laughter, they remembered this small victory, making fun of the husband who proudly proclaimed “look at what I won” after he received the succulent plant and cereal bar, compensation for participating in the survey interview, when it was their mischievous doing. Lorena’s 7-year-old daughter who was playing outside during our interview came in as we were talking and stated, “*my father doesn’t even know how to make aguapanela.*”<sup>48</sup> This scheming and mocking were a way for these women to symbolically regain some power over the husband on whom they depended economically and who made Lorena feel like a “servant.” This only

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<sup>48</sup> Popular drink in Colombia made of three simple ingredients: water, unrefined cane sugar, and lime juice.

makes sense however if he recognises that he *should* do more, which is evidence of changing normative pressures for men to be involved in some cooking and cleaning. I found it telling that the young children seemed aware of the power dynamics.

Women challenged gender relations implicitly, within socially acceptable boundaries, and without risking relationship breakdown. These strategies resemble to James Scott's (1985) "weapons of the weak" employed by landless peasants against wealthy landowners in the context of expanding state presence and capitalist agrarian development. Scott sees these individual tactics such as gossiping, popular derision, avoidance and foot-dragging, as a way for the poor to defend their interests and symbolically resist ideological domination, without openly challenging the state and the wealthy class. These "back-stage" dynamics constitute ideological struggles over dignity and justice, and material struggles over land, income, or work (Scott, 1987, p. 27). Critiques have questioned whether these actions should be viewed as defiance or part of the workings of systems of domination (Gutmann, 1993; Kandiyoti, 1998; Mitchell, 1990). "Symbolic resistance", without the ability to change, may serve as much as perpetuating logics of inequality.

Some women seemed to accept the status quo, without having a choice. Mery complained about "*machistas*" men who don't participate in the household, but when the topic turned to her household, she did not apply that critical perspective:

*There are men who are macho, who believe that because they are men they can't wash up, clean the kitchen, or even mop, but there are others who are sensible, we can't say that they are all the same... Here from the beginning, I was really the one who did everything in the house because he also worked. On the days I went to work, I arrived early to do everything, I organised the house, I made the food, if there were clothes to wash I washed them, and that has always been the routine.*

Some expressed reluctant acceptance of a situation they cannot change. Originally from a coastal town, Diana had always worked informally braiding tourists' hair on the beach since she was 8. She lamented having to stay at home with her infant son and 8-year-old daughter since the pandemic, "*I just don't get used to not working*" and not having an income. She talked about it being her partner's decision and one she did not contest. She viewed it as sacrificing her savings and putting on hold her aspiration of finishing her studies, which was why she came to Medellín. However, in her previous relationship with the father of her eldest daughter, she had experienced abuse and physical violence. Her current partner treated her well in comparison, "*he doesn't deny me anything*".

Luz, a widow, reflected on the time with her husband, comparing her experience in her marriage with the one in her childhood. Even though she had conflictive relations with her husband, she nevertheless felt “like a queen” for the freedom she experienced:

*Like a queen because in my [childhood] home they were always very strict, there wasn't a lot of food, there was never any money. I couldn't go out of the house because of the chores, my grandmother wouldn't let me go out. So, I got married, I was able to relax. Yes, with a lot of domestic chores, with two young kids so close together, but I ate what I wanted, I did what I wanted, he never forbade me to go out, he never hit me, he wasn't one of those drunkards, he never came home without money for groceries. And now that he is gone, even more so that I am like a queen. Indeed, I am the master of my own life [laughs].*

Diana and Luz accepted their situation, which they viewed as the best option given their past experiences and lack of alternatives. Diana was looking to see if she could start a phone credit business at home and hoped to start remote classes in a few years. Luz had participated in community workshops where she gained the self-esteem to ask her husband to treat her better, sometimes leading to quarrels between them.

Women employed ‘strategies of endurance’ to tolerate unequal situations. Lucy was “waiting for her husband to take the initiative” to contribute at home, which seemed unlikely. Some commented how women had to “*aguantar*” (endure, suffer through) both as a strategy and a social norm about appropriate traits for women linked to ideas of motherhood and wifely sacrifice, patience, and altruism. Some described themselves as “*alcahuete*” (being too lenient) to describe how they endured their family members’ unpleasant behaviour, such as Bernarda who referred to her husband staying out late at night, getting drunk, but that he was a “good drunkard”:

*There was ‘alcahueteria’ on my part. Who sent him to get that drunk? He went out of work around 6pm Thursdays and Fridays and he came home around 1 or 2am. He was a very manageable drunk, very polite, never a bad word. Do you think that I would make a fuss? I only told him “Tomorrow don't come home so late, so that I can go to bed early, because I get nervous”. He would say ‘yes’ but the next day it would be the same. So, I would spend my time alone with the children here, I raised them, when the children misbehaved, I would tell him and he would correct them, there always was respect.*

These strategies of ‘endurance’ are ways of operating *despite* the system. These are not only symbolic struggles: with high levels of gender-based violence, women face threats of abuse (Medellín Como Vamos 2020). Some don't negotiate to “avoid fights” and tense relations. They are also expressions of reluctant acceptance under conditions of dependence, strategies where they don't have the tools or the social position to change. Women still find ways to attend a workshop, wait to leave the relationship or pursue their interests once their children are older. In contrast to class conflict underwriting relations in village life, not all

these actions operated within conflictual relations, there was greater overlap between deference and shared interests. Diana collaborated with her husband to set up a vegetable-selling business during the pandemic. Although this collaboration took place under unequal terms, it was also defined by relations of affection. These acts thus also reveal the limits of change and the continued naturalisation of roles despite performative protest. The women did not challenge gender norms, even though they expressed discontent. In the case of unpaid work, “outward conformity” entails having to take on the bulk of housework and child supervision, which differs from downplaying economic activities to create a front of domesticity and male breadwinning.

Covert actions do not always involve the complete rejection of established norms. They might reveal discontent with situations of dependence, mistreatment, and subjugation that is compatible with agreeing with separate gender roles in the family. However, through these strategies, women often set new minimal claims, reflecting a changing sense of entitlement in how they wish to be treated and what they will accept. Overwhelmingly in the research sample, women were vocal about not wanting to be a “slave” or a “servant”. In a workshop on self-care facilitated by the Women Secretariat, women distinguished between being a “slave” to their family and being dedicated to their families. This distinction also came up during interviews. What counted as being a “slave” in the household was not clearly defined, but the women drew a line between feeling subservient and being valued in their homes, even if in their socially ascribed roles. Women’s stances and what they decide to tolerate depends partly on the resources and options they have available, but this is not simply a matter of economic calculation, it also connects to deep beliefs and motivations around justice and self-worth, their conceptions of rights, obligations, and reciprocity, and how these coincide with ideas of what is possible.

Some women accepted domestic and caring responsibilities in their households because they viewed it as a second-best option, providing some comfort, security, or social respect. Others tolerated it because of limited choices, like internal migrants with no family members in Medellín. As we will see in the following sections, many also tried to effect change with the resources at their disposal, by choosing to exit an unsatisfactory relationship or exercise voice and agency in different ways.

### 9.3.2 Exercising ‘voice’

The actions considered up until now reflect indirect strategies to cope with or work around normative boundaries. In the remaining analysis, I explore more direct avenues for negotiating greater contribution from household members or leaving partnerships as a direct vote of no confidence. Exercising ‘voice’ in the Colombian context, considered here, can be a powerful act by women who feel strong, comfortable, and secure enough to take on “machismo” in the home.

Some women asked directly for help, although this approach had its limitations in how much support they could elicit from family members: *“With respect to the cooking, making lunch, and all that, I am always on duty, but nevertheless I do try on weekends, at least on Sundays, to see if I can borrow a little goodwill for someone to go into the kitchen [laughs]. My husband does it, my son does it as well.”* Maria, mother of two. As Maria notes, this strategy involves appealing to a moral economy of compassion, kindness, and sympathy from household members. These tactics were not always successful; they could lead to confrontational exchanges, and mainly achieved minimal contributions, such as occasional participation on rest days.

There were also small-scale, modest but frequent complaints, scolding, and passive-aggressive remarks to get men and children to participate. Some women made offhand remarks about a dirty kitchen, a bed that was not made. Men and sons complained that women “throw a tantrum”, “make a fuss.”<sup>49</sup> These introduced tensions in household relationships and reinforced a biased cultural stereotype of the “annoying” wife, who creates drama and bothers other household members with their nagging and complaining. The issue, however, has more to do with men not “noticing” what needs to be done, that household management is left to women who have to shoulder the mental efforts of monitoring needs, than with women being “difficult.” Just like altruism (Brickell & Chant, 2010), the stereotype of the annoying mother or girlfriend/wife is less of an inherent or cultural female trait and instead the result of structural and interactional constraints; in this case, men’s lack of involvement in unpaid household work and having no other means to get them change their behaviour. The stereotype of the annoying woman and men’s passive responses can be used to delegitimise or dismiss women’s demands, instead of taking up one’s fair share.

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<sup>49</sup> “*Echar cantaleta*” or “*hacer pataleta*”.

Household members also described reaching “agreements” through dialogue, assigning responsibilities and chores, delegating tasks, or establishing a rotating system. This way of negotiating happened a lot during the pandemic, where household members decided to pitch in and reorganise household labour while everyone was at home, although this was usually temporary. Although these processes are portrayed as taking decisions together, in many instances, with some exceptions, they were still regarded as men doing a “favour” to women. Agreements also don’t guarantee compliance. Women still had to remind their family members of the agreements made on regularly, introducing further emotional and mental strain.

Women often compromised on what they were asking for. A mother who wanted her son to take responsibility for housework ended up conceding that he could do his own “part”, like organising his room or picking up his clothes, and that she would do “all the rest.” Women had to make concessions to what they were intending to change. These conciliatory strategies align with the cultural ideal of “the united family.” Maintaining family harmony may take precedence over achieving gender equality. This tension generates a dilemma: unequal gender norms create a socially constructed opposition between family unity and equality. Furthermore, experiences of violence and norms of “keeping up appearances” in the neighbourhood have produced a culture of silence and keeping to oneself, which limits bargaining processes by encouraging non-confrontation. In the face of these challenges, women often employ conciliatory, accommodating, and pleading strategies to bend outcomes in their favour.

Women in stronger social and economic positions took more forceful stances to advocate for a fairer division of labour, unwilling to make concessions. These women resorted to strategies of withholding, explicit refusals and threat-making. Mothers resorted to punishments, like taking away their son’s phone. Some withheld domestic services, refusing to do what a man can do himself or to cook or clean if he was evading his other responsibilities. Sandra’s mother refused to wash her husband’s laundry when he came back too dirty from work; after wearing all his regular clothes he was obliged to wash his work clothes by himself. She also forced him to wash the dishes and his lunchbox: *“if you don’t wash the dishes, I won’t feed you tomorrow.”* Sandra recalled: *“he would complain but he would wash the dishes. She implemented that [strategy] a long time ago so now my dad comes home and washes his lunchbox. I don’t hear him resisting it as much, it’s automatic.”*

Lina’s mother decided not to cook for her husband when he stopped providing his share of the household income. *“There was a time when my dad got very degenerate,*

*drinking liquor, he stopped bringing food, my mom had to fight hard to cover for the food and clothes.”* The mother worked at a university, and the father in construction. They both were responsible for the household expenses, the mother for the children’s clothes, the father for the food. *“When it was night-time and he was soon to arrive, she would turn the pots upside down, give us food early and wouldn’t give him food. He would get mad, but he learned his lesson and he started to be more sensible again, he bought a lot of food, stopped drinking, bringing us a lot of meat [laughter], and they started to live better together.”*

Others withheld parenting responsibilities to compel the father to become more involved. Margara threatened that if the father didn’t help out, the child would be neglected. He eventually “got accustomed to it” she said:

*My husband wouldn't even wash a toilet, he had to get used to it, with all my ranting [laughs] I'm quite insistent. It never seemed fair to me that a man does not take the initiative to bring a child to medical appointments, or to cook. I would tell him “You have to take him to a medical appointment, if you don't, he won't go to any medical appointment”, “you have to go to the school meeting, otherwise it will look like he doesn't have a father or a mother”. He would say that he didn't have time, that he wasn't going to do it. I told him: “you have to go, children don't only belong to the mother, we both have children together, so we both have to do things equally.” He got used to it.*

Margara used emotional leverage, such as the threat of the child’s neglect, alongside setting principles of equality and fairness. She redefined a popular saying that “the children belong to the mother”<sup>50</sup> to claim that “the children belong to both parents” to demand a more equitable redistribution of household tasks. Others withheld love and companionship, living effectively separate lives, even sleeping in separate rooms. However, in many of these cases, women still cooked and provided domestic services for their ex-partners.

Scott noted the “backward-looking” orientation of peasant rebellions, which he viewed as reactions to the erosion of rights that used to be secure in the past (Scott, 1976, pp. 10–11), where peasants felt that they were losing something they once had. Some of the strategies detailed here consisted in ‘backward-looking’ negotiations when men were defaulting on their past obligations and women were at risk of losing male support. Other times, these were ‘forward-looking’ strategies, where women tried to introduce new principles of fairness or get men to take on unpaid tasks such as attending parent school meetings. These women stood up for themselves to set the terms of their relationship. While Scott focuses on resistance to recover interests assured in past customs and to avoid further losses; changing gender norms requires introducing new claims.

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<sup>50</sup> *Los hijos son de la mamá.*



Others described how they engaged in longer-term awareness-raising to change men's ideas of their obligations to the home. With "patience" and "perseverance" they hoped that their partner or children would eventually learn new obligations. Marcela describes the long-term processes of everyday bargaining that eventually led to her ex-husband "having to get used to it".

*I always justified that machismo in this day and age is out and if we both contribute, we both are parents, we both help each other. At the beginning he would say "look, the table is dirty", I would tell him "Clean it, it is very easy". Either he gets stressed because he sees the dirty table, or he cleans it because it is also his table, you also eat there, and your children eat there. He learned that way. For the care of our daughter, there were days when I had to work and he was on a different schedule, so he could get the girl ready for school and take her to school, comb her hair, he had to learn those things.*

Gina, who was raising her two sons to be co-responsible in their home, described how she had had to educate her partner. She had separated from her children's father a few years back, after he had been violent towards her while the boys were away. Her current partner, whom she knew from a previous job at a high school and who loved and admired her, had recently moved in with them during the pandemic.

*He comes from a very traditional family where he completely had the role of the child who is cared for. For him it has been a huge process, learning to be responsible for himself. For me it has been a process of a lot of patience, but I have seen it change, and I feel calm and satisfied with the process, I feel that there are some things that still need to be structured, obviously, I told him "my love, here in this house we both work, we are both providers [laughs], we both have to do the same things, we both have to organise the house, wash clothes, cook", we are going through the process and we are doing well [laughs]."*

These two women appealed to principles of mutual obligations, arguing with their partners that household and parenting norms no longer had a basis in male breadwinning privileges as they both contributed to the household income. Changes in paid work practices allowed them to contend that the past norm of female homemaking is no longer valid. They used the affective power from having a partner who was devoted to them to push for change.

In negotiating paid work decisions, women can draw on the economic benefits of multiple incomes to make the case for their right to access paid work. This is harder in the case of unpaid work, as it often involves men giving up time for leisure or productive employment to tend to the home. Some pointed out that 'norms have changed' and hence household arrangements should be updated. Others used peer comparisons (Nyman et al., 2018), pointing to egalitarian men in their surroundings as examples to follow to get their partner more involved. They also drew on the perceived legitimacy of demanding greater male participation in dual-earning families, as many in the research expressed.

Several aimed to generate a sense of ownership and belonging, by defending that “the house belongs to everyone” (*la casa es de todos*), that it should thus be regarded as everyone having obligations in the home. Marcela described dealing with her “machista” aunt who doesn’t let her sons participate in domestic chores: “*I tell her, ‘Aunty, but they eat here, so why can’t they wash dishes?’*.” These actions evoke processes of “undoing gender” identified by Deutsch (2007), where other principles such as fairness or partnership rather than gender are used to divide responsibilities. These constitute forward-looking acts of reinterpreting and building legitimacy to negotiate change.

Parents’ aspirations for their children can be more informative of the gender norms they adhere to and what they are trying to change, rather than assessing what they believe based on their own decisions constrained by economic and social realities. Ana recounted her grandmother’s firm conviction to give all her daughters an education. The grandmother was from a village in Antioquia, had an arranged marriage and was mistreated by her husband all her life, staying at home and having eleven children. She was deeply motivated that her daughters would never be economically dependent on a man and ensured they could all get degrees.

In addition to decisions they made in their own lives that departed from their parents’ and grandparents’ decisions, some research participants decided to socialise their children differently, establishing different values in their households, such as involving their sons in domestic chores. The long-term effects of this are unclear and will likely depend on other factors. Some parents explained that they wanted their sons to know how to cook and clean as a matter of basic survival, raising practical concerns, such as finding a job in the restaurant industry, so that they could take care of themselves and make food, if needed. Others wanted to teach their sons that housework and the domestic sphere is also their responsibility, to inculcate ideas of equal obligations in the domestic sphere: “*I teach my sons. They both know that they can’t be macho, that a man has the same obligations as a woman. Why? because nowadays just as a woman has to work and contribute financially, in the same way a man has to do the same occupations that a woman does.*” – Margara, 42, commercial advisor.

Gina made it a habit to bring her sons to the Women’s March every year on March 8<sup>th</sup> and instilled in them a sense of ownership for household responsibilities. Sandra explained her philosophy in raising her daughter to expect equality and stand up for herself. Using her parents’ examples as a pattern not to repeat, she regarded her choices in her relationship as setting an example for her daughter to be independent and not accept an inferior role in future

relationships. She also wanted to teach her daughter to develop skills like strength and fortitude which her mother, who cared for the granddaughter during the day, interfered with:

*Men collaborating is a matter of education. If I show my daughter that a man does the same as me and that I do the same as a man, she will grow up thinking differently. If a man is going to make her cook and do everything, she will say: "I wasn't raised like that, that's not right". She will demand her rights, impose her character and her point of view to have a healthier relationship, more mutual. I've seen it, my dad grew up with a chip on his shoulder that he works and comes home and if my mom asks him to wash a plate, he says "oh no, I shouldn't be washing dishes." I want to move out with my partner and daughter to prevent them from inculcating that. I want to raise my daughter with my ideas and my mother sometimes gets stressed with the child, if she falls, for example. I don't like that, because it is making her very sensitive, spoiled. I want to teach her to be stronger: if I fall, I get up. If I treat her delicately, she is going to be very delicate.*

These everyday negotiations involved reinterpretations, reframing, manipulations, argumentation, emotional leverage, and withholding. Change required reinterpreting or distancing themselves from old principles, demanding new codes and practices, and arguing that new principles are needed for new situations.

### 9.3.3 'Exit'

Women deciding to leave partnerships communicates a rejection of past agreements where they had to endure mistreatment and "serve the man". While 'exit' might appear to be a bold and courageous act, very often it was also an admission of defeat that they can't put up with what is going on and see no hope of change. However, 'exit' is also an indirect way women exert pressure on men and regain control and agency. Some women went off and became female-headed households, others were holding out for a better partner, premised on the belief that it was possible and that they didn't have to put up with mistreatment or 'servitude'. Although 'exit' may appear as a stronger stance, it was often accompanied by forms of insecurity compared to some of the previous cases where women using their "voice" were in a stronger position to negotiate and effect change.

Some covert strategies serve as more than symbolic forms of disapproval: women seized and created their own opportunities in their changing environments. Many women hid their income-generating activities, especially in the past when men had a greater claim to being the sole family breadwinner, as Laura, a 27 re-partnered single mother, recounts of her mother's experience: *In the past the man was the one who worked and brought money back home and 'you do what I say'. My father also intended to do this, but because he was travelling for work [it was more difficult] ... He never allowed my mother to work. So, she*

would make chicken pies at home, but only during the week when he wasn't there, and she would sell them. It wasn't regular, but when she wanted to have some money, she would sell these to the neighbours.

In situations where women's economic dependence on a male breadwinner is strong, with little control over the household income, women secretly carry out economic activities or hide money for savings. While these actions may not have removed the mother's economic reliance on her husband, it may have set a precedent for her daughter Laura, who explicitly discussed wanting to have her own income to have the autonomy to make her own decisions about how she uses her money. *"I tell my mother that [her experience] served as a mirror for me. First, I don't want to feel like a woman who is always depending on a man, like waiting for him to give me [money]. I don't feel like that because of the times we are in. I like having my own income, because I want to contribute, having the authority to say "it's my money"."* Laura explained. In this way she developed a different sense of entitlement than her mother, taking an explicit stand about what she would accept in a relationship.

Women also covertly created opportunities for themselves to be in a better position to demand their rights or leave the household, acting on factors that bolster their outside options. Carmen, 61, described how she acquired a plot of land in her own name, without her husband's knowledge, which gave her a sense of authority to stand her ground against her abusive husband. She tricked her father-in-law who told her about land that was available in another neighbourhood. It was a land invasion, she went to get it for herself, *"I came to sleep on some boards, a neighbour let my children sleep at her place."* At the notary with a female neighbour, she told them "I don't have a husband", so the papers were in her name. *"When I got that plot of land, I felt that I was in charge, and I confronted him and his family: "From here to these mud walls, you don't have anything!" I sold a television and went to buy wood, this is mine!"*

Female solidarity was another resource to draw upon. Despite popular images of the mother-in-law as exerting authority against younger women in the academic literature (Córdova Plaza, 2002; D'Aubeterre Buznego, 2002; Robison & Cotterill, 1996), I found numerous examples of female solidarity extending beyond kinship ties. Brenda lived with her mother-in-law when she separated from her violent ex-husband. They lived off the money he gave his mother for food. She then came to Medellín with her sister-in-law who found her a job as a live-in domestic worker and left her children with their paternal grandmother. Edilma, a 55-year-old grandmother, shared "a good friendship" with her daughters-in-law and continued to care for the grandchildren so they could go to work.

Covert strategies were primarily directed towards securing the means to exit relationships. This reflects high relationship instability, wherein seeking independence and greater freedom takes precedence over intra-household negotiations. Increasingly, women refuse to accept past gender norms that dictate that they should endure mistreatment from their partners. Implicitly, it represents a rejection of normative ideals that women's primary duty is to serve their husbands or male partners. However, this ideal still holds for women's duty towards their children. This outlook is encapsulated by Rosa, a shopkeeper, 65:

*Machismo has gone down a little, but only verrrryyy little. Men always want to boss you around, to lock you up in the house, cooking, cleaning, while they are out on the street drinking and doing everything they do. I think I'm very feminist, in the sense that I am in charge of myself, that no one bosses me around, I am not going to depend on a man because I don't need a man to restrain me, to forbid me from doing things, but rather to accompany me, to respect me, to support me in a life project, if he doesn't serve that function, adios.*

Tensions brought about by changing economic practices have driven women to redefine their expectations and what is acceptable. Some women who left their partners were already responsible for paying the bills, some had a conflictive relationship with their ex-partner, or their partner did drugs and was involved in many "vices", in one case stealing the money the woman had saved under a mattress. Others might have been financially dependent on their partner but were being physically or psychologically abused, and decided to leave, often after receiving help to do so, usually from other women, another example of female solidarity.

A sole focus on bargaining within marriage or cohabitating couples is not appropriate for the local context which is characterised by a great deal of fluidity in marriages and partnerships. The percentage of single mothers has historically been high in Colombia (Liu et al., 2017; Rico de Alonso, 1986), and these statistics do not always capture single mothers who live in male-headed households with their parents and extended family members. Female-headed households is often thought of as a fixed category. In survey analysis, it is often assumed that marital status reflects socio-economic status and that women in different household structures may adhere to different gender norms (Sigle & Goisis, 2019). I find much greater fluidity in practice, where women often move in and out of relationships.<sup>51</sup>

Several women had left unsatisfactory relationships and found more supportive partners, even if they had children from the previous relationship. They explicitly stated that they wanted a partner committed to sharing household tasks, a mutual relationship based on

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<sup>51</sup> While men also go in and out of relationships, they rarely live on their own with children, often moving in with their family, parents, or another partner.

reciprocity that would make them happy. Many, like Cristina, believed that it was crucial to negotiate at the start of the relationship:

*Men don't collaborate because of bad negotiations when deciding to be a couple. If you don't have that negotiation from the beginning, in the middle of the relationship it's much more difficult, because if you taught him that you do everything for him, and that he doesn't have to move a finger, and you change that structure, there will be problems and bad times.*

This did not mean that this was immediately achieved in practice. However, these women viewed this as a strategy to obtain better outcomes more in line with their aspirations. Research has shown that couples may fall back on gendered arrangements when a child is born, especially a second child, or in unexpected situations of unemployment (Rao, 2020; Hoschild, 1989). However, in this context, we are seeing single mothers who are looking for male partners who can serve as involved father figures, as in Kelly's case:

*I took the decision to raise my oldest son with him. I told him that the responsibility is both of ours, it's not just that you work and bring the food to the house, no. The obligations are both of ours, to give the bottle, to change nappies, to take care of him, when I can't, you can, when I can't bring him to get vaccinated, you take him, it's both of us, that's why we are a couple, and if it wasn't going to be like that, then I would have preferred to stay alone, with my children but alone, because in my view sometimes men become an additional burden, like another child.*

Some women sought partners willing to share responsibilities and provide emotional support. Leaving unsatisfactory relationships was a way some women eventually found the support they were looking for. They used the language of choice when describing these decisions, regarding these discussions at the start of a relationship as a means to identify more egalitarian-leaning men. Deutsch notes that power demarcating intimate relations is not forged from differences in material resources and income and from each member's attachment and devotion to the other (Deutsch, 2007, p.65). Women's negotiations at the start of new relationships helped them assess whether they could derive power from men who were willing to negotiate and love them on an 'equal footing.'

In developing their aspirations for a partner, they were rethinking past gender norms. Sandra described these aspirations for a partner: "*Support, lots of support, unconditional support. I don't mean economic support, but for example, if I'm having a bad time, I expect him to help me ... that he encourages me, if I have a problem with my family, he also gives me encouragement. For example, in [my daughter's] upbringing if she needs advice and I don't know how to give it, maybe he will support me with that, because he is very good at talking as well.*" Sandra explained that her expectations for a relationship have changed compared to

women in previous generations, who were looking for “*100 percent to be provided for, economic support so that they could be in the house and have all their needs met.*”

These dynamics of ‘exit’ illustrate how social norms are contested directly within a household and through the choice of partners. The idea that potential supportive partners are ‘out there’ can change bargaining by changing how one’s ‘fallback position’ and outside options are conceived. Women exercised agency by developing new aspirations for partners who embody their ideals of mutual respect. Women’s exercise of agency and taking control of their lives thus at times took place less in contesting norms directly with a ‘difficult’ partner, which could be exhausting or hopeless, but rather in choosing a partner who they thought would be more committed and involved as a father figure for their children. In this way, they exert indirect pressure to change gender norms, reflecting women’s agency in shaping their familial environments.

## 9.4 Beyond the household

### 9.4.1 In the extended family

In a context of diverse family forms and because of the cultural significance of the “united family”, these contestations over social norms occur not only between husbands and wives but also with the extended family. In Medellín, the extended family represents a protective mechanism against precarious livelihoods and the unpredictability of shocks and crises. Workers draw on family relationships to access work opportunities. The extended family acts as an alternative livelihood strategy, moving in with family members to decrease renting costs, after a separation, or when moving to a new city. Some households rely on cash transfers from family members for their household income or as a temporary financial relief during a crisis, as seen during the Covid lockdowns. The extended family remains the central caregiving institution for those who can’t afford external care services, relying on grandmothers and aunts for childcare, especially in adolescent pregnancies, and on adult daughters or daughters-in-law to care for elderly or disabled family members.

The extended family thus plays a vital role in reducing housing costs and utilities bills, providing care, and being a social solidarity network against hunger, poverty, and social exclusion. Still, patriarchal structures often shape these relationships, leading to asymmetric dependencies. The extended family also confers a sense of belonging from which many cultural traditions stem. *Paisa* culture, characterised by strong regionalism and pride, comes with a strong sense of rootedness in the territory. The family is essential to this sense of

belonging and selfhood. Family rituals and celebrations structure social life, from weekend lunches, large family reunions, to holidays such as Mother's Day and Christmas.

Normative influence operates through material, cultural, and emotional pressure in the family, but the family is also a space for discussions around changing norms. Marcela reported conflictual relations with family members who were not as open-minded as her parents who had been killed when she was 9. Her aunt wouldn't let her son change the grandchildren's nappies, even when the daughter-in-law suggested that he do it, "*she's very very machista and I clash with those things.*" As she established more collaborative division of tasks with her ex-partner, she received push-back from her aunt and mother-in-law, their "shock" at the idea that he may iron his clothes or cook for the family. This led to tense family relations that she had to navigate:

*[My aunt] saw my husband ironing his shirts, she asked "Hmmm? so you don't iron for him?". I said: "I don't iron his shirts, it's his shirts and I don't like ironing", He doesn't see it as a problem or mystery, but she does, so, it is difficult, my family is very macho, I come from a very different home...*

*When we were living with my daughter's father, he also comes from a very macho home, unlike mine, his mother is very machista, she does everything, she packs the lunch box, and that was a shock because it was very hard for her to see her son cooking, washing. She thought that I was the one who had to do everything because he contributed economically, but I also contributed financially. So there have been tensions with his family, they still don't like me, because it's not easy to see him contributing [financially] and also collaborating [in the home].*

Mauro who moved in with his wife and her child before having a child of their own discussed the rewarding experience of learning to be a father when caring for his partner's child, "*It was a very beautiful learning experience because it is not something you learn from an early age, I don't think it is taught anywhere, that you have to have a lot of patience with a baby, that you have to be careful and that you have to be there practically 24/7 watching over him.*" But he also commented on how many people in his family expressed disapproval for his choices, and how he had to stand up against them, challenging social perceptions through his actions:

*There were people in my family against it, saying that I was raising a child that wasn't mine, but I think it's not about whether it's yours or not, if I want/love<sup>52</sup> it, it doesn't matter if it's not mine. ... From the beginning, my family never agreed with that. It didn't matter to me, it was enough for me. So, it was very complicated because for example one Christmas, I brought the child with me to my family and I went with my wife and I saw the change [in mood] right away, that they didn't like it."*

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<sup>52</sup> The verb "querer" in Spanish can mean wanting to or loving.



These dynamics highlight the intricate process of negotiating gender norms within the context of diverse family structures and cultural values. The significance of maintaining “family unity” adds another layer of complexity, as diverging views on gender roles can strain intergenerational family relationships. Criticism and tensions in the extended family may deter gender norms change. This underscores that negotiations around gender norms occur through emotional sway, disapproval, and direct negotiations. Some mothers stopped talking to their daughters when they considered that they were not exhibiting proper behaviour, when they were spending too much time going out with friends or when a young woman got a sterilising operation because she did not want to have children.

Trying to displace old norms and instil more egalitarian rules involved changing the family’s perceptions and values. In a study on migrant fathers in Norway who benefited from paternal leave policies, Kvande and Brandth (2017) note the “light humours bullying” from family and friends these fathers experienced in their country of origin. However, these caring fathers benefited from the legitimacy of paternal leave’s universal policies in Norway that construct men and women as equal parents who each take parental leave. They didn’t have to deal with family criticism and teasing in everyday life, compared to fathers in Medellín who have to claim legitimacy for their actions from below, with their family and in their neighbourhood.

Gina described the numerous negotiations she had to carry out with her family and society-at-large to live out the principles she aspired to, juggling her multiple identities as a single mother, partner, university student, youth leader, and all the associated constraints and expectations. These included persuading her mother and grandmother that it is legitimate for her to have interests and aspirations beyond her maternal obligations. This required navigating different normative environments, between her university where it is frowned upon to have children early on, and her family where having interests and preoccupations beyond her children was regarded as neglecting her maternal responsibilities.

Some of her strategies were to delay conversations with her family by hiding her extra-curricular activities for as long as she could, to “disappear from the map” to avoid the judgments of her peers when she became pregnant with her second child, and eventually defending her choices head-on, living out these principles as a model for others.<sup>53</sup> These

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<sup>53</sup> I interviewed Gina through snowball sampling after a young man from her neighbourhood identified her as one of the few female peers who was continuing to pursue her life projects after having children.

multiple negotiations required adjustments, ‘translations’ between different realities, and explanations to gain acceptance for her choices from her family:

*When I visited my grandmother, she said: "oh did you asked \*\*J\*\* [partner] for permission to come up, did you leave lunch for him?", I was like: "no grandma, of course not, he has hands, he can cook". For her it has been a whole process to understand, she has been very respectful though, my mother is more annoying ... If I want to go out of the house, to go to a lecture, that's really complicated, they think that I am neglecting my children... My process has been to make them understand that I am not going to do the same things that they did, precisely because they feel a lot of frustration for what they had to give up.*

Survey data finds that women tend to report more egalitarian attitudes than men, it is also common to hear women complaining about the unequal division of household labour. Yet, ethnographic findings about family dynamics suggest that women also tend to exert pressure on other women to uphold gender norms and motherhood ideals while many research informants believed that women have to be the ones to demand change. Men are often more removed from everyday household concerns, even if some prohibited their sons and grandsons from participating in domestic chores, reprimanding them for behaviours they considered “unmanly”. In narratives, women transpired as more vocal in maintaining social norms in the family. Several young men mentioned discussions they had with their fathers, advocating for new ways of “being manly” by men showing affection in romantic relationships, but they also saw the possibility of discussion as limited, citing that their father was “a product of his own time” or simply “not communicative”.

Asking Juan from chapter 8 (in charge of toilet cleaning in his home) what his parents thought of their shared responsibilities, he suggested that his mother took up more of an issue than his father:

*My father in those matters never got involved, he was very quiet, very reserved, he didn't say anything, my mom was more closed off, more old-fashioned, that no, according to her the woman should always be at home with the children, that the man was the one who had to provide. I told her: on the one hand, you cannot keep the woman as a slave, and on the other hand, economically, one person is not enough to support the household. Those were the explanations that I gave her.*

Theories of institutional change must grapple with the complexity created by unequal gender norms, where those affected by these norms may also be immediate norm enforcers. Because these norms create both constraints and social benefits from compliance, unequal norms may also compel women to uphold these normative values for themselves or their daughters. This creates dynamics of blaming mothers, where women are both subject to and active enforcers of gender norms. Women felt judged by other women and criticised other

women's ways of parenting. Sofia, a community mother, was strikingly critical of the idea of community homes: *"There are women who are very lazy, they want everything to be given to them without giving anything in return... it's a complete 'alcahueteria' in my perception. I think that if you have a child, it's your responsibility to educate them, and not the government. What does the government do [through these community homes]? It's managing laziness in these women."* Women are more affected by the constraining force of family norms; men can more easily remove themselves from these preoccupations as they have less at stake.

The continued centrality of the family for many people's identities and sense of belonging can impede radical norm change, preventing individuals from moving too far away from previously established norms. At the same time, children's negotiations with their parents to accept their life choices that go against past beliefs can act as forces of normative change. Some older parents were forced to accept their children's choices, as Sandra's mother who was encouraged to "modernise" or a grandfather who "became desperate" seeing his grandson pick up a broom, but, nevertheless, *"has respected [the mother's] way of doing things."*

Bargaining with one's family is different from bargaining with an employer or state official. Family contestations around norms are shaped by power relations and by affective dimensions. The centrality of the family in forming aspirations and people's sense of belonging in Antioquia culture creates a complicated line to navigate between standing up for oneself and not alienating one's family. Deviating from social norms can result in a sense of loss of close bonds or rootedness. Family disapproval can lead to ostracism and expulsion from the home, and tense or disapproving relations can make it harder to access favours and resources in times of need. Interviewees shared the emotional difficulties involved in disagreeing with their parents or siblings. This came out in contradictory descriptions of fathers. Elizabeth described how growing up, she held a lot of resentment towards her father, seeing her mother suffer yet stay with her father. Her relationship with her father improved when she made the mental separation between her father as a 'bad' husband to her mother and as a 'good' father to her. She had to understand, she explained, that it was her mother's decision to stay with her father, a decision she did not comprehend but that she explained by her mother's economic and affective dependence on her father.

These reveal some of the intricacies of how power operates in intimate spaces through emotional distance, abuse, manipulation, feelings of being under-appreciated, or exploiting emotional and financial needs. Strategies of change in domestic spaces aim to solicit the

goodwill and favours of family members or connect to local values to build legitimacy. Affective dimensions and concerns for the potential social, economic, and emotional, costs associated with losing family support sustain family norms. Compared to romantic relationships between partners, it is not always possible to “exit” the extended family and using one’s “voice” in too confrontational a way risks jeopardising crucial resources.

#### 9.4.2 In the community

Gendered care norms, as they are inherently social, must be negotiated within the family and at the societal level. Beyond the family, social norms were also negotiated in interactions with the community, engaging with what West and Zimmerman (1987, p.135) refer to as gender “accountability.” Challenging social norms within the community involved raising awareness, dispelling rumours, ignoring social comments, or simply embodying gender-deviating roles, which can expand ideas of what is possible.

In Chapter 6 on violence and insecurity, I explained the salience of the community in peripheral neighbourhoods under the partial control of illegal actors. Social ties and the evaluations of neighbours are shaped by their close physical distance in densely populated settlements and the distinct security dynamics that operate there. Residents in peripheral neighbourhoods interact more directly with gang members who police neighbourhood matters and act as external enforcers of the “social order” (Davila, 2018). These impact community relations and how gender relations are monitored and enforced. In these neighbourhoods, despite the generalised ‘to each their own’ mentality, there are localised solidarity and collective ties that include ‘keeping tabs’ on other community members because of vulnerabilities to crises and violence dynamics.

43 percent of survey respondents believed that it was moderately to very likely that men who participate in domestic chores will be mocked in their community, and 29 percent for men who take on daily childcare responsibilities. When asked about positive sanctions in a separate question, 59 percent of survey respondents believed that it was likely that men who take on domestic responsibilities would be more respected in the neighbourhood (adding up to more than 100 percent if we look at both responses), and 65 percent for men who have childcare responsibilities. Perceptions of community reactions towards normative deviance were thus ambivalent and conflicting, with a tendency towards perceived positive approval for men’s contribution in the household. These likely differ further in terms of male or female community members’ views are considered, which the survey did not differentiate.

Men more involved in housework and parenting explained how they reacted to derogatory comments by trying to ignore them. Negative comments about men who cook and clean in the home or take on primary caregiving seemed to mainly come from other men, in the workplace or in the neighbourhood. Santiago tried not to pay attention to the comments from his peer friendship group, such as *“your wife doesn’t let you go out, she keeps you ‘locked up’ in the home”*. He distanced himself from them by differentiating himself from other young men, justifying that he is in a different position as a “family man”, and emphasised the positive benefits of his involvement as something good for his family, for his relationship with his wife Aleja, and his sons’ protection and well-being. *“They can laugh or say what they want, but in reality what is important is what you do for the family, I always keep that in mind, if they are going to mock me because they see me sweeping or see me organising the house, they don’t see that she’s going to like that I’m involved, that she is going to be able to rest and feel more relaxed.”*

A few men perceived that they were admired by others, for example that their male work colleagues complemented them on their cooking abilities. Nevertheless, men likely downplay their household participation with others because of the possibility of derogatory comments and questioning of their manhood. This points to a barrier to changing male involvement: it is more difficult to observe gender-deviating behaviour that could promote positive feedback loops akin to those posited for women’s paid work outside the home. More radical deviations, that occur in exceptional cases with the man staying at home while the wife goes to work are more easily observable but prone to greater backlash and mockery given the stronger departure from traditional norms.

While the disapproving voices of women in the extended family came out more saliently in research participants’ accounts, bullying and retaliation of male peers and powerholders were more manifest when it came to the community. Santiago and others’ reactions to these comments were essentially strategies to ignore and push them aside. These social practices, nevertheless, may change perceptions in the long run by setting examples for others, a sort of social “proof of concept” for alternative gender roles. This ‘legibility’ of social practices creates the possibility of indirect change through setting examples for others.

#### 9.4.3 The community continued: a postscript

There was a form of care work that came up during fieldwork that men did outside the home, in the insecure neighbourhood. Leidy, a single mother in her late twenties, aptly

captured the complexities in Medellín's development trajectory with continuing violence and recruitment of youths in *barrios populares* for illegal activities but also increased youth activism and education opportunities: *"Good and evil are growing hand in hand."* As a social leader explained: *"Today with the youth in the barrios we see something paradoxical: hundreds of very warm young people doing wonderful things for their families and for the community, and at the same time hundreds of young people joining armed groups."* Engaging with community peacebuilding processes can provide new possibilities for caring masculinities away from the domestic sphere. I found that men who participate in community organisations perform unpaid caring, protective, and mentoring roles through which they become social referents and role models for youth, distinct from the figure of the gang leader or economically successful man.

Men in community organisations acted as role models, when they give classes to children, teaching dance, filmmaking and communication or musical instruments. Mateo, a young leader who started a hip-hop school for children in his neighbourhood, recounted how art changed his own perspective and introduced him to non-violent ways of expressing himself and of standing out in his community.

*When I was an adolescent, there weren't a lot of opportunities. I was thinking of how to be the next Pablo Escobar, to become a narco-trafficker because it was the "easy life" that was admired by many, those were people who were respected, who had money. Thanks to those social processes, I changed my way of thinking, and I realised that there were other ways of expressing myself and to stand out without adopting those habits of violence. They showed me that I could express myself through art and culture and at the same time bring positive things to my territory.*

He now educates younger children through art and culture in a community centre he established. In outlining his vision for the hip-hop school, he explained how he remains dedicated to his community, and fosters trust with parents, working to re-build the social fabric in his neighbourhood.

*In the upper parts of the district, people have few cultural options and that is what our commitment is, to never abandon the territory because this is where they need us. The logic of this project is to show girls and boys that there are other ways of living responsibly, from art, from culture, and that this builds community that contributes to the territory and to their own lives... Parents give us the confidence that their children can come to us, follow classes, and then return home, even if the classes are at night. Any parent who lets their 10-year-old son or daughter go alone to an educational institution and then return home, well that's trust. It's really important for us that the community sees us as referents and to contribute positively to the social fabric.*

This example illustrates how men also express collective aspirations, attachment and rootedness in their community as motivations to perform community-based care. Although

this did not fit within the discussion about domestic spaces in a way I could include it in this thesis, it is important to mention it as a form of care that men feel comfortable with. Young men took pride in becoming youth leaders where they gained social respect for being seen as caregivers, without their manhood being threatened.

## 9.5 Concluding comments: Incomplete and gradual change ‘from within’

The chapter analysed how gender norms governing the household division of labour are contested in urban Colombia, highlighting a complex interplay of conformity, resistance, and accommodation. Instead of focusing on whether household negotiations follow models of cooperation and/or conflict, or on identifying the determinants of bargaining power, as much of the literature does, this chapter explores how men and women actively renegotiate past gender norms where women had to be subservient to their husbands in return for economic security, revealing nuanced forms of agency that reshape household dynamics.

This concluding section draws two main findings that offer new insights into the form and nature of gender norms change. First, the analysis reveals qualitative aspects of gender norms change that quantitative methods do not easily capture. These include the reframing of gender identities *and* interests, contestations over the legitimacy of old and new practices, and the development of a new sense of entitlement. Change unfolded through evolving senses of entitlement and redefining aspirations for a partner based on new notions of what ‘support’ consists of. The analysis also shows that concepts and local values such as ‘equality’, ‘responsibility’ and the ‘united family’ are not static but are adjusted to accommodate evolving social realities. Secondly, the chapter finds that norm continuity and change were negotiated within and outside the household, particularly through interactions with the extended family and across generations. This involved a great deal of play around ‘exit’, ‘voice’ and ‘loyalty’ (Hirschman, 1970), not only within couples and households, but also in navigating social membership in the extended family, friend groups, and the broader community. Models of intra-household bargaining often overlook these broader family, community and intergenerational dynamics.

These everyday negotiations are central to understanding social norms dynamics yet are often neglected in dominant theories of change. The observations offer a contrasting account of change from the WVS which considers the linear relationship between women’s inclusion in economic and political development and more equal gender norms. Here, transformations in gender norms are often partial and grounded in local realities where

change appears contradictory, non-linear, and gradual. Models of gender norms change that are based on ideas of “exposure”, “interest” and belief change posit that women participating in visible economic activities create a critical mass that leads to positive feedback loops, “tipping points” and “equilibrium shifts” (Evans, 2019; Young, 2015). Change connected to core gender identities is more uneven than these models make it appear, where change occurs *within* structures of constraint, often aimed at improving one’s position within existing social structures, extending normative boundaries, and seizing opportunities. Measuring change by comparing levels of disagreement to standardised statements in the WVS obscures normative change from the gradual reinterpretations of gender norms. The picture of change here is one of change through diversification, of weakening sanctions, and of opening space for negotiations.

The chapter unpacked the discourses of equality identified in the two previous chapters and WVS attitudinal trends, revealing them as an active realm of negotiation. Just as “equality” can become an ‘empty signifier’ that can be used to deflect demands for increased male participation, and the flexibility in how to interpret a “responsible man” can provide men with greater discretion to evade responsibilities, these inherent ambiguities can also be exploited as forces of change. The examples above showed that for gender relations that are not only externally enforced but also internally constrained, change involves redefining identities; for men, distancing themselves from a model of masculinity that presupposes authority, redefining themselves as a “family man” or extending what a “responsible man” may consist of. Those pushing for change justified new practices by reinterpreting gender norms around the “united family”, extending aspirations for women beyond motherhood, and arguing for the need for mutual obligations that apply given women’s changing roles. These demands often appealed to shared values around respect, co-responsibility, fairness and partnership.

The accounts of those enacting change highlight the ambiguity and the deeply personal and social transformations involved in challenging established gender norms. These dynamics emphasise the centrality of power and resistance in gender norms change. Scott’s analysis of power identifies processes of change as either pragmatic adaptations within the status quo or transformation driven by rebellion and outburst (Guttmann, 1993). This chapter has shown that a lot happens in between these two types of strategies, highlighting diverse modes of resistance and change. It distinguishes between acts of resistance operating within normative boundaries, seeking relief or minimal improvement, and actions to renegotiate roles and redefine the ‘rules of the game,’ but acknowledges that these coexist along a



continuum rather than distinct dichotomies. Changes in these resilient gender norms are inherently “forward-looking”, which may partly explain why they are more difficult to change. Claims to greater gender equality require imagining otherwise, demanding new rights and entitlements. Women are not reclaiming something they already had, as in Scott’s analysis of Malaysian peasants, but demanding new freedoms. Crucially in the case of unpaid work, accommodating discourses to downplay change can be limiting, as getting others to adopt new roles is sought. Efforts to change norms often involve negotiations around the legitimacy of new practices and pushing for new logics underlying homemaking and caregiving. These forward-looking actions started from existing imaginaries and normative understandings within the framework of the “united family”, underlying the “nested newness” of this change (Mackay, 2014).

Another key distinction with Scott (1987) is that, in gender systems, the distinctions between those who enforce norms, design institutional rules, and those who try to change them, overlap in complex ways; those that gender norms disadvantage may nevertheless try to use them to their advantage, especially as they move along the life course (Kandiyoti, 1988). The chapter highlights the co-occurrence of strategies of ‘voice’ or ‘exit’, broadening the scope of agency and decision-making to questions of ‘entry’ and ‘loyalty’ where the choice of partners and exit strategies emerged as a key mechanism through which women resisted old norms or advocated for new ones. The growing prevalence of women leaving relationships and willing to support their children on their own rather than take on unwanted additional domestic responsibilities may exert pressure on men to adjust their behaviours. These decisions may exert cumulative and sustained pressure for change.

Lastly, the chapter underscores affective dimensions in gender norms change and continuity. Feelings of belonging and identity are intrinsically connected to gender norms in the family. Negotiations in the family involve a mix of confrontation, collaboration, and asking for favours. They sometimes consisted of capitalising on the “goodwill” of household members, and ‘plays’ around their sensibilities, love, and sense of companionship. Unequal gender norms create dilemmas for women between two valued outcomes, such as family harmony and greater personal autonomy. Housework is often assigned the lowest value in society, considered demeaning work, and can keep women economically dependent on men, but it is also what conferred them with social respect in the community, the house being associated with women’s respectability in the past. The chapter highlights how negotiation strategies to challenge unequal gender norms in urban Colombia reveal underlying power dynamics. It argues that these strategies should be seen less as products of internalised norms

or social expectations and more as efforts to navigate the dilemmas and trade-offs created by the very norms they seek to change.

## Chapter 10. Conclusion

### 10.1 Introduction

The thesis investigated asymmetric trajectories in the household division of paid and unpaid work, asking how gender norms change and how researchers can track this change. By integrating conventional research tools into a mixed-methods design and connecting this to a multi-level conceptual framework, the thesis has offered an analysis of the complexities of gender norms change during moments of significant societal upheaval as experienced in Colombia since the end of the twentieth century, revealing the limitations of relying solely on generalised survey data, such as the WVS, to capture these dynamics. Recognising unequal gender norms as macro-levels structures that govern organisations and influence what social actors think and do raises different questions, calls for distinct methodologies, and has distinct policy implications. A premise for the project was that it is as important to study how gender norms change as it is to study whether or not they have changed. This has methodological implications as the focus becomes the study of social processes rather than diagnosing beliefs.

This chapter starts by revisiting the main findings, returning to the research questions outlined in the introduction, highlighting how gender norms change in urban post-conflict societies and what methods lend themselves best to capture that change. The second section draws out the theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions to discussions on research methods, social and institutional change, and urban inequality across feminist economics, gender and development, conflict and urban Latin American studies. The final section presents policy implications and directions for further research.

### 10.2 Revisiting the research questions

#### 10.2.1 Gender norms change in contemporary urban development

The thesis explored how gender norms have evolved, changed, or persisted in Medellín since the 1950s and especially since the 1990s by referring first to WVS trends. This showed a significant move to more egalitarian attitudes towards women's access to employment and capacities as business leaders and politicians, in line with the substantial increase in female labour force participation in Latin America in recent decades. It did not show the same evolution for attitudes towards women's roles as housewives and mothers or

as the primary family breadwinner when cohabiting with a partner. The thesis situated these trends within the country's history and traced different family structures, economic opportunities, and violence dynamics within Medellín's contemporary urban development. By integrating the same WVS questions in localised surveys, qualitative interviews, and intergenerational focus groups, the project complicates the results of the WVS and the theory of change embedded in the research tools.

The lower-level analysis demonstrated that a lot has changed in Medellín. Comparing the division of labour of the past outlined in Chapter 6 with the variations in gender roles revealed in chapters 7 and 8 shows that gender norms were more fixed, with more rigid patterns shaping decisions in older generations' life histories. This led to the question of when changing attitudes and family practices lead to changing norms. The intergenerational perspective brings to light progressive change between generations, as Gina who opened this thesis, a university student from a 'low-low class' neighbourhood and re-partnered single mother of two boys, explained that her life could not be compared to her grandmother, who had six children and was confined to her home by her husband, but obtained some basic primary school education through a community radio programme. However, the thesis also argued that this change presents important continuities with the past and should not be understood with respect to some external abstract benchmark. The findings problematise universal models of change which assume that urbanisation and modernisation uniformly lead to gender norms that support gender equality.

Medellín's urban transformation has had mixed effects on gender norms, resulting in greater diversity and more varied alternatives. The incorporation of women into the labour force has led to some aspects of normative change, such as greater acceptability of women's paid work outside the home, while at the same time preserving other aspects core to gender roles in the family, such as men's primary breadwinner status, and allowing growing diversity in men's involvement in unpaid work. As such, the research offers a more nuanced understanding of how gender norms change in Medellín's urban development, with coexisting normative models, instead of a linear shift from one state to another.

Chapter 7 shows that when it comes to paid work, these models include a sole male breadwinner, a primary male and secondary female earner, dual-earner households, and a female breadwinner. For unpaid work, Chapter 8 mapped distinct normative understandings of men as absent, minimally involved, sharing unpaid responsibilities, and in rare cases as the primary homemaker. Gender norms can be said to have changed in terms of how accepted, prevalent, and expected these different models have become, with the most predominant

being a primary male and secondary female earner and primary female caregiver with a male “helper”. Strategies to transform gender norms become a struggle over the legitimacy of these different models.

### 10.2.2 The logic and nuances behind survey answers

The thesis brings a critical perspective to the methods used to research norms change by comparing how men and women responded to questions about gender norms governing the household division of labour in the WVS, household survey, and qualitative interviews. Examining the consistencies and contradictions between these three levels of responses sheds light on what different methods of inquiry reveal about normative beliefs and values. This approach challenges the presumed consensus in survey data, revealing ambiguities and multiple meanings in how gender norms are understood and negotiated.

The research put forward a reading of the WVS trends and variables from below, focusing on what they mean for city dwellers in urban peripheries. It uncovered the complex logic underpinning what it means for an individual to agree/disagree with WVS statements. Chapters 7 and 8 revealed insights that emerge when we ask about normative understandings in interviews rather than in fixed survey questions that demand to take an explicit position for or against a generalised statement. This pertains to the cognitive dimensions of survey methods (Kelly et al., 2013; Mooney et al., 2018; Seymour et al., 2020) but also to more substantive issues around how gender norms are interpreted and enacted in practice, with attention to the insecurity and violence that structure everyday life in the urban periphery.

Firstly, the research identified confusions and multiple meanings in the responses to WVS questions, pointing out discrepancies between reported beliefs, researchers' interpretations of the responses, and how these beliefs are enacted in practices. These include a distinction between what survey respondents observe and what they think ‘should be’ that becomes muddled in survey responses, for example in the expectation of gender discrimination in labour markets leading to responses that men *have* – rather than *should have* – more right to a job (Chapter 7) or an increase acceptability in men’s cooking or taking their children to medical appointments, without fundamentally questioning women’s responsibilities in the home (Chapter 8). These confusions highlight the complex interplay between, attitudes, lived experiences, and structural constraints that shape how social actors relate to gender norms.

The analysis also revealed the subtle distinctions people make between abstract universal principles and particularities in practice that are not captured by survey data, for example, women can earn more than their husbands *in times of unemployment*. Respondents professed support for gender equality in the abstract, but when it came down to specific situations, they gave excuses or justifications for inequitable practices. Discourses about domestic equality and demands for greater male participation within the home were only considered for specific domains and not others; cooking, for example, was viewed by some women as their obligation and way of showing love to their family.

The mixed-methods analysis underscored how the meanings of concepts in the WVS statements vary depending on time and context. Chapter 7 connected the socio-economic realities of diversifying economic activities amidst precarity and informality to survey respondents' explanations of their answers, showing that these conditions influenced survey answers and led to distinct interpretations of the survey results than those commonly assumed by researchers. It showed that the statements have different meanings for different groups of survey respondents, which points to a multiplicity of normative stances and interpretations of changing practices that aren't captured in a Likert scale. These have implications for cross-national comparative analyses using the WVS measures, raising questions of how comparable these measures are across very different temporal and geographical contexts.

Chapters 7 and 8 highlight how workers and homemakers attach meaning to and associate value with certain activities and those carrying out these activities, making some forms of work and workers more visible than others. For example, a wife's job may be considered secondary or complementary to the husband's job, even if they are both earning the minimum wage or a husband's occasional contribution to repairs, baking, or playing with the children may be mentioned as a significant source of support, whereas a mother's cooking or "doing all the rest" is to be expected. This tangibility, or lack thereof, relates to what is revealed publicly and what is expected in the community. These perceptions and values influence survey responses and impinge on research tools aimed at tracking social norms and their effects, as some activities are more prone to not getting captured in survey data. These include women's economic activities to provide for their entire families to "get ahead" and ensure their children receive education, like Mauro's mother, the water vendor in Chapter 7. The status and value that are assigned to workers and their work, whether they are perceived as "help", as a housewife or mother's duty, or men's natural roles as providers, are reciprocally related to gender norms, plays a crucial role in whether gender norms change or

remain the same. Just as “perceptions impinge on social norms” as noted by Agarwal (1997, p.12), they also impinge on research tools tracking social norms and their effects.

Finally, the research highlights the gap between what people report, what they think in more nuanced terms, and how they act on these beliefs. Endorsing equality does not imply the intention to enact it, and even with this intention, sociological studies of family negotiations have shown that these do not easily translate into practice (Hochschild, 1989). This insight provides an alternative explanation for the mismatch between beliefs and behaviour in survey data, different from the idea of norms misperceptions (Bursztyn et al., 2023). It explains the discrepancies between egalitarian attitudes and persisting gender gaps in practice by emphasising the ways unequal norms structure constraints and motivations for men and women, rather than focusing solely on individual cognitive features. This explanation aligns with ideas of social actors’ agency bounded by structural constraints (Folbre, 1994). While individuals’ social expectations are connected to gender norms, survey measures provide limited insight into the institutional context and power relations involved.

### 10.2.3 How gender norms are negotiated and contested

The analysis emphasised the importance of social actors, their social interactions, and the role of power and affective dimensions in how they negotiate, contest, or reinforce gender norms. Chapter 9 identifies diverse practices through which these negotiations take place, which included strategies of (i) enduring, of waiting, mocking, or reluctant acceptance, (ii) those of navigating within normative boundaries to seek minimal advantage, create opportunities to exit relationships, or appealing to the goodwill of family members, and (iii) those that pushed normative boundaries, calling for the legitimacy of new logics, arguing that old practices were obsolete, or that new rules should apply to new situations. The most successful strategies appeared to draw on past values of responsibility, new sense of belonging and companionship, and reinterpretations of masculine identity in ways that acknowledge the positive benefits of men’s involvement in the family.

In Colombia, due to the cultural and economic centrality of the family, persuasions and negotiations between generations emerge as a critical pathway through which norms are reproduced or transformed, alongside negotiations between husband and wife. Intergenerational change and continuity, beyond socialisation, are key to explaining variations in the unpaid division of labour. Change strategies incrementally built on previous generations’ negotiations. This perspective highlights changing structural factors of

informality and violence, not as apparent in survey data, that create limits to these negotiations and need to be addressed in policies. Structural factors such as the absence of appropriate childcare provision, half-day schooling in public schools, the scarcity of after-school programmes, an environment of insecurity, lack of viable alternatives for youth, and precarious labour markets contribute to the persistence of women taking on the greater share of care responsibilities in families.

Furthermore, internal dynamics of the gender order, including unequal standards and social evaluations of women compared to men influence how gender norms are negotiated. Gender norms around unpaid work may be remarkably resilient because negotiations, contestations, and change around gender norms is not only about getting a better outcome, but about redefining the rules in a rigged game. Men have a conditional expectation to be involved and “responsible” with their families and care for children *as long as* they live in the home. On the flipside, blaming and shaming of mothers act as deterrents for women to deviate from traditional gender roles. Unequal care norms generate unequal social judgments of who is to blame. This can produce “double binds” (Holmelin, 2019) and negative trade-offs for women between material gains and damages to their symbolic sources of power. These asymmetric social evaluations give more room for men to find excuses and justifications not to participate in domestic life. In contrast, women are held to higher standards to be a “good mother.”

### 10.3 Main contributions

At a time of emerging critiques of the social norms research agenda in international development (Wazir 2022, Piedalue et al. 2020), the thesis reframes approaches to study gender norms change and their relation to socio-economic development. Connecting a multi-level theoretical approach to a corresponding methodological design tracing the same variables across three levels of analysis provides a blueprint through which other scholars may find effective applications for their own work on social norms and other topics. Through this approach, the thesis encourages more nuanced conceptual, methodological and empirical reflections about the processes of gender norms change. In doing so, it contributes to social research methods, institutional studies, and gender and development, injecting new thinking and methodologies for direct inquiry into gender norms change.



### 10.3.1 Theoretical contributions

The thesis offers a theoretically informed investigation of gender norms within a specific geographical and temporal setting, contributing to theories of gender norms change. It develops a multi-level conceptual framework that situates gender norms within a system of cross-level interactions. The framework provides a new lens to understand uneven progress in gender equality, from which to approach questions central to gender and development (McLeod, 2005). It shifts the analytical focus to asking *at what level* continuity and change occur. For example, change at lower levels – e.g., in discourses or women’s participation in paid work – can coexist with stability at higher levels, such as maternalistic family policies at the meso-level and deep-seated normative ideals about gender qualities at the macro-level. This perspective highlights the importance of factors such as the quality and conditions under which paid work is performed, or the status and value assigned to different forms of work and care, and workers and caregivers. These insights demonstrate the need to develop new concepts, methods, and theoretical models to analyse these cross-level transformations. By integrating dimensions of power and structural constraints, the research enables an analysis of complex and dynamic processes (Ang 2023) to explore the resilience of feminised care norms despite changing conditions and meanings across time and place. It adds to Yuen Yuen Ang’s complexity paradigm by not only considering coevolution between types of institutions, but also how coevolution unfolds at and across different levels of analysis.

Theoretically, the thesis broadens conceptual understandings of what norms are, how and at what level they operate. It challenges theories of uniform trajectories of change in gender norms as a predictable part of “modernisation” and economic development. Whereas standard economic and behavioural models emphasise punctuated equilibrium and “norm cascades” trajectories of change, especially as they follow from a critical mass of women in public roles, the findings speak to feminist scholarship that has showed that gender norms can change in multiple ways, subject to both exogenous and endogenous forces (Pearse & Connell, 2016). The view of normative change presented here is one of shifts to multiple states that co-exist, where some have progressively lost in relevance and force, and others have gained in significance and legitimacy.

The thesis challenges the presumed theoretical link between attitudes and norms in WVS studies. A higher level of abstraction is not the same as higher-level aggregation. The first presupposes unobservable social structures that need to be identified and reconstructed through empirical observations and contextual analysis. Aggregation suggests that the whole

is simply a “mechanical” combination of its constituent parts (Ang, 2023, p. 2). These two ideas entail different causal pathways linking micro/cognitive levels with macro/structural ones. This distinction points to different views on what must change for transforming higher-level structures – whether it is individuals’ beliefs and behaviours or broader social processes and arrangements. The multi-level perspective theorises that social norms, their reproduction and change, have a fractal quality (Kranton, 2016, p. 405): similar dynamics and effects can be found at different levels and scales. Patterns and structures repeat themselves at multiple levels. Every snowflake is unique, but they all share a basic structure. The task is to identify this underlying (or higher-order) structure.

In doing so, the thesis contributes to a richer vocabulary and new conceptual tools to study change than current models reviewed in Chapter 2. It puts forward a model of norm change that links micro-level changes in individual consciousness and attitudes to meso-level interactions and negotiations within the family and community, i.e., concrete organisational domains, and gender norms at the macro-level, processes that are by no means automatic and that are shaped by structural and contextual factors. It emphasises the need for theoretical models that allow for non-linearity and change through greater diversity. It shows that change also occurs through a ‘relaxing’ or bending of gender norms, moving from more rigid norms with stronger sanctions to a weakening of these sanctions and a diversification of family practices, generating less disapproval than in the past.

The thesis contributes to existing knowledge on exogenous and endogenous change, extending this in important ways. The findings concur with institutional perspectives that consider ambiguity and vagueness as permanent features of gender norms and institutions (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009, p. 11), as they cannot specify all situations they should apply to, especially in a changing context of rapid urbanisation and competing ideologies stemming from variegated local and global influences. As Mackay observes (2014, p.560) “there are always ambiguities for different groups of actors to contest, elaborate, and exploit.” These ambiguities and tensions around gender norms and practices – existing within individuals and society – are not captured in the WVS instruments. The research addresses a critical gap in this literature by focusing on the deep-seated gender norms embedded in family practices that influence the behavioural rules across politics, international relations, or work organisations studied by many feminist institutionalists and governance scholars. These norms are particularly resistant to change, and negotiations and strategies to shift them transpire in informal spaces of the home, family, and community, entailing differences to institutional change in the political sphere.

By focusing on intergenerational dynamics of change and continuity, the thesis also complements the story of change in feminist readings of the intra-household bargaining literature, where current research tends to focus on cooperation and conflict between married women and men. In their upbringing, research informants learned as much about what is typical and appropriate as about what not to follow and what they didn't want for their own lives; "I don't want to keep repeating the same story" an interview participant declared. They were "breaking patterns" in their family life, by choosing different kinds of partners and teaching their children differently, involving their sons in housework or teaching their daughters to be independent and stand up for themselves. Children negotiated with their families and older generations about it being acceptable for a man to cook his family's meals or iron his own clothes. The analysis shows that negotiations are not confined to stable relationships; they extend to the broader family and neighbourhood, which are important sources of belonging and economic security in urban Colombia. This brings an intergenerational lens to studying power dynamics, institutional change, and development (Gram et al., 2018).

Mapping the life histories of different generations of city dwellers raises the question of whether changes in the present may lay the groundwork for future change. This intergenerational perspective reveals gradual change that is embedded in past histories. It demonstrates how strategies for change incrementally built on past negotiations. This asks researchers to pay attention to the conditions and direction of change, instead of focusing solely on whether change has occurred. The processes identified speak to broader debates about the resilience of gender systems, path-dependence, and change at critical junctures. The analysis supports Mackay's (2014, p.552) idea of nested newness "to capture the ways in which the new is embedded in time, sequence, and its institutional environment". It extends it by showing how gender norms are both the object and constraints of endogenous change, calling for more pluralistic models to account for the reciprocal nature of normative change.

### 10.3.2 Methodological contributions

By putting different methods in conversation and embedding them within long-term community engagement and feminist research practices, the thesis allows for a critical appraisal of the emerging field of social norms research methods (Andrighetto & Vriens, 2022; Görges & Nosenzo, 2020; Weber et al., 2019). This interactive use of methods instils a cross-disciplinary character in the analysis, essential to critical gender and development

studies (Harriss, 2002; Jackson, 2002; White, 2002). The methodological approach enables comparisons between quantitative and qualitative findings, across different levels of analysis and amongst respondents and households, which adds multilevel, intergenerational and power dimensions to the study of gender norms.

Through its innovative research design, it interrogates overly simple assumptions about the nature of gender progress which inform the construction of the WVS. This is an important methodological contribution, given the central role of the WVS as a research tool for understanding a broad range of social issues. In arguing that gender attitudes in the WVS are associated with gender equality and economic development outcomes, authors are not only making an empirical claim but a theoretical one to infer policy prescriptions: establishing ‘good’ or ‘progressive’ attitudes leads to gender equality. This leads to ranking countries according to whether they exhibit assumed “modern” attitudes or “traditional” and “patriarchal” ones (Vleuten et al., 2024). By considering a narrow set of indicators to measure social norms and their relation to gender and economic development, the WVS produces a dominant paradigm of change, based on women gaining access to public spaces. The “housewife” WVS variable explored in Chapter 7 is particularly striking. Agreeing that ‘being a housewife can be just as fulfilling as working for pay’ is often taken to indicate conservative values about women’s roles. Beyond the contextual factors that might explain agreement with this statement (e.g., precarious work and risks of abuse in the workplace), it reflects a vision of change where it is women’s “roles as mothers that are under surveillance here and it is that behavior that is the target for change” (Chatterjee & Riley, 2018, p. 3), detracting from the need for more men to consider involvement in homemaking as fulfilling.

This methodological approach – critically examine global indicators by investigating what they mean on the ground – can be applied to research on gender norms and other concepts like wellbeing, autonomy, empowerment, where quantitative data faces multiple challenges (Kabeer, 2020; Seymour et al., 2020; Small, 2024). This can be used to develop better research tools. Expanding recent critiques of the social norms literature (Piedalue et al., 2020; Wazir, 2023), the thesis challenges the dominance of individual-level measures of gender norms tools. Generalised statements used to study norms bear little relationship to how individuals interpret and engage with gender norms and how they interact with the wider economic and political environment. Survey respondents might downplay or overreport practices so that they are more in line with established norms (Langsten & Salen, 2008; Martinez-Restrepo et al., 2017). Qualitative analysis can be integrated within survey questionnaires through open-ended questions; ‘cognitive interviewing’ emerged as a critical

methodology, not just for pre-testing surveys but as a basis for substantive findings about individuals' interpretations of social norms. This demonstrates the value of mixed methods to understand why respondents may be overreporting or underreporting their answers, to gain direct access to survey respondents' reasons and interpretations for their answers, and to know the processes through which these practices and outcomes come about (Shammas, 2017; Tichenor, 2005).

The methodological critique of the WVS speaks to questions of evidence, knowledge production, and methodology in development studies (Eyben, 2013; Fine et al., 2016; Harriss, 2002). It raises broader methodological questions about how we understand societies, social practices, and everyday lives crucial to development studies. The dissertation critically assessed the “qualitative content” of WVS attitudinal statements and the assumptions underlying them (McClelland et al., 2020). The mixed-methods analysis questions the reliability of WVS measures that appear objective and neutral. The WVS establishes its legitimacy as one of the largest endeavours to study values, from which studies on attitudes and norm perceptions set research interests and best practices, creating frames to see and act on the world (Ferguson, 1990; Scott, 1998). This sets the standard for further research as large development organisations and think tanks look to what data exists to generate new indicators. Moving from survey data to development organisations' reports and evaluations risks creating a “dispersion of bias” (McClelland et al., 2020, p.257), reinforcing stereotypes about countries and homogenising societies as ‘conservative’ or ‘progressive’. These guide development interventions and lead to misallocation of resources and efforts (Jerven, 2013). This, I conclude, amounts to historical and cross-disciplinary “softness” (Harriss, 2002).

Lastly, the thesis reflects on the messy realities involved in producing survey statistics, drawing connections to Jerven's *Poor Numbers* (2013). The extended time spent in the ‘field’ in insecure neighbourhoods provides insights into what takes place behind survey data collection. Conducting fieldwork during the worst of the pandemic and within contexts of crisis posed considerable challenges that required experimenting with virtual and in-person data collection and balancing flexibility and coherence throughout the project. The ability to shift between methods, modes, and sites throughout the sixteen months ensured continuity despite shifting methodologies. Methodological plurality and adaptability constituted strengths to research gender norms in the ever-changing context of the Covid pandemic. These experiences underscore what it takes – logistically, ethically, and regarding the research team and participants' safety – to conduct survey-based research in such settings (Legros et al., 2021). The methods chapter emphasised the value of ethnographic sensibility

and feminist research practices, even within survey data collection. While the thesis highlights the limitations of survey data to capture complex lived realities, the process of designing and implementing a survey, from training the survey team in feminist ethical approaches, engaging with local power holders, and walking the streets of the district, offered a critical “sense of place” (Garrido, 2013; Mendoza & Morén-Alegret, 2013). This provided rich contextual knowledge about living conditions and power dynamics that I wouldn’t have gotten from interviews alone.

### 10.3.3 Empirical contributions

How do gender norms evolve in the context of uneven development processes? The mixed-methods approach generated rich empirical data on family and intergenerational dynamics, decision-making, and the realities of everyday life in marginalised, often violent, urban neighbourhoods, contributing to a more context-specific and empirically informed understanding of gender norms. It presents novel empirical evidence on gender norms governing the household division of labour in a ‘modern’ city that challenges assumptions of universal transitions to egalitarian gender norms following economic development. The dissertation argues that these should not be seen as an ‘incomplete’ transition to modernity, but that a more nuanced analysis of change must account for distinctive pathways that diverge from idealised models of Western European development.

By exploring how norms change happens in a rapidly urbanising yet highly unequal Latin American city and what this has meant for men and women in marginalised neighbourhoods, the thesis contributes to debates about rising women’s labour force participation in Latin America and how this has impacted gender relations in the home. By centring the experiences of those at the urban margins, the findings show that while things have become different, some of the shifts identified in the WVS trends need further qualification. Institutional change has led to more diversified practices that have created greater ‘room for manoeuvre’ to negotiate gender norms. This adds to other studies on how to interpret the changes in the Latin American region linked to increased urbanisation and female labour force participation. While the findings here share the distinction between practices and norms, where “more deep-seated transformations in gender ideologies or ‘gender scripts’ were much more resistant to change” (McIlwaine 2010, p.282), the thesis adds further nuance by exploring more directly how greater diversity can be a force for normative change.

The thesis foregrounds overlooked gender and collective dimensions of the “Medellín Model”, which has become an international reference of urban transformation and pacification, attracting significant interest from scholars, policymakers and urban planners. This contributes to discussions in Latin American and urban studies around whether cities can be catalysts for gender equality (Evans, 2018a, 2019) or lead to the recomposition of gender inequalities (Chant, 2013; Chant & McIlwaine, 2016); and the extent to which transgressions of gender norms in everyday practices can transform normative ideals and unequal gender relations (Whitson, 2010). Connecting different periods of Medellín’s urban transformation to personal and family histories reveals the uneven nature of the city’s gender transformation, with instances of upward personal and family trajectories coexisting with significant precarity, gendered vulnerabilities, and experiences of loss.

The thesis extends empirical studies of gradual institutional change (Waylen, 2014) by analysing how this plays out in the family and whether this results in normative change. In conversation with Agarwal’s foundational insights on social norms and intra-household bargaining (1997), the analysis highlights how gender norms influence processes through which family practices and responsibilities are decided and that negotiations around these family practices serve as a key arena through which gender norms are reinterpreted and new gender logics introduced. It focuses on how negotiation happens across institutional spheres, more difficult to operationalise than the determinants of bargaining power (Doss, 2013). It shows that the high incidence of female-headed households and diverse family structures characteristic of Colombia and Latin America are important to how negotiations and contestations of gender norms play out in this context.

An alternative story of change emerges from this empirical analysis. Instead of benchmarking gender attitudes and diagnosing beliefs, the mixed-methods analysis provides a story of *what* has changed and *how* that change has occurred. It unpacked a common discourse of equality emerging from surveys and interviews, showing how the concept of ‘equality’ is malleable and meanings are adjusted to preserve or contest male privileges, where informal norms’ meanings are reinterpreted to incorporate new realities. It also brings out qualitative aspects of normative change. Informal institutional change within the family happens where there is significant overlap between norm “enforcers”, “rule-makers”, “institutional designers” and “change agents” (Waylen, 2014). In these cases, interests and identities need to be reinterpreted in a deeper way than for institutional change in political settings. Men dedicated to their families expressed a desire for self-improvement and reported being proud and happy with their family life, noting that this involved a shift in their

masculine identities. These examples illustrate that men also stand to gain by being more collaborative at home.

By locating men's changing roles as essential to gender justice, the dissertation highlights the importance of researching men and masculinities in gender and development studies (Chant & Gutmann, 2000; Connell, 2005; Cornwall & White, 2000). It contributes to studies on men's (non-)participation in unpaid work, revealing the practical, everyday realities of efforts to promote caring masculinities (Wojnicka & Kubisa, 2024). The findings indicate more variations in practice, not captured by the WVS story of change, with different meanings of equality used to justify limited participation in the home, but also used in attempts to enact new norms. As Deutsch argues, this omission in the WVS impoverishes our understanding of change; it impedes efforts to bring about future social change, as "it is critical to acknowledge and examine that variability so that we can understand the conditions under which change for the better occurs." (2007, p.113). This is particularly significant when considering the uncertainty in building new caring models for fathers and partners captured in Chapter 8. Masculine norms' resilience to change may partly stem from them not receiving enough attention in measurement, policy, and interventions. By asking men directly about their views, examining their strategies to navigate gender norms and the formative experiences that contributed to changing their ways of thinking, the study expands our understanding of power and gender relations in the home, which can inform gender-transformative interventions (Bhojani et al., 2024).

Lastly, unexpected insights emerged from the fieldwork about gender norms and care dynamics in violent neighbourhoods, highlighting the intersections between care work and (in)security relevant for conflict and peacebuilding societies (Ibnouf, 2020b, 2020a). These pointed to experiences of caregiving and parenting under violence in post-conflict societies, which have not been systematically analysed (El-Khani et al., 2016). The research also highlights the importance of community-based social infrastructure in fostering human security and resilience, emphasising the vital role of collective care work that acts as security and peace mechanisms while providing new possibilities for caring masculinities and social respect for women. This makes visible the efforts of grassroots organisations and social leaders in urban pacification and development (Legros et al., 2025).



## 10.4 Concluding thoughts: Implications for policymaking and future research

### 10.4.1 Policymaking and development interventions

The findings offer learnings for policymaking and development practice. By highlighting case studies of successful change in men's family roles, the research identifies new entry points and positive narratives for policies to redistribute care work equitably across society. This underscores the need for a policy environment that actively supports men's unpaid responsibilities as part of a broader strategy for gender equality. The insights are especially timely, as COVID-19 and feminist mobilisations across Latin America have put comprehensive care systems on the political agenda (ECLAC, 2022). The research emphasises care infrastructure's potential for building state legitimacy, gender-just peace, resilience against crises, and fostering gender equality. Ultimately, the research underlines how urban transformation is incomplete without gender justice.

The thesis argues that development practice can be improved by recognising gradual, locally-driven change and placing social actors at the centre of interventions. This 'change from within' perspective shifts the focus from externally imposed interventions to change social expectations in the minds of individuals to strategies to support communities in transforming the social structures around them and creating more equitable practices. Changing gender norms requires a holistic approach that accounts for their interactions with broader structural conditions. Such an approach demands close attention to local realities, understanding why people follow unequal norms or choose to challenge them. Mixed methods are better suited to this task than secondary quantitative data alone. To change gender norms in the "united family", interventions must engage with local values, instead of promoting new ideals through social messaging campaigns that do not hold legitimacy. Policies that aim to improve socioeconomic conditions, expanding the space for social actors to negotiate gender norms and develop alternatives, are more likely to achieve sustainable results (Himmelweit & Sigala, 2004). These must adapt to high levels of informality, insecurity, weak state capacity, and widespread mistrust of state institutions in peripheral neighbourhoods that shape pathways of change. Maternity and parental leave policies, for example, may not have the desired effect and push more people into informal work.

Social infrastructure investments creating employment opportunities for women and higher quality care services emerge as one promising avenue (Addati et al., 2018). Extending public school hours, currently only half days, or after-school programmes (Busso & Fonseca, 2015) would address some of the barriers to women's access to quality paid work in gang-

controlled neighbourhoods. Although the municipal government has increased its child development programmes through the *Buen Comienzo* institutions, many care workers are in low-paid, temporary contracts with few security benefits (Ramirez Parra, 2015). While policies may provide the impetus for normative change, the thesis has demonstrated that whether and how this change happens ultimately depends on the actions of social actors in how they adapt and respond to reforms and structural transformations.

#### 10.4.2 Further research

The thesis calls for caution when comparing countries' progress towards gender equality based on standardised questions. It argued that gender norms change cannot be inferred from attitudinal trends in cross-national surveys without further contextual and lower-level analysis. Survey variables' static nature doesn't capture how social norms are being reinterpreted or legitimised in individuals' thinking and social interactions. The research argues against a focus on individual-level measures of gender norms and joins others in exploring mixed-methods approaches to capture meso-level institutional factors that perpetuate gender inequalities (Bauer, 2014; Hook, 2006; Sochas, 2021). The study shows that pathways of normative change following economic development and rapid urbanisation are not predetermined. This opens avenues for comparative perspectives. The concepts – gender norms, organisations, social expectations, and personal attitudes – can be used in comparative approaches to research how gender norms operate in distinct contexts and across time and identify barriers and possibilities for change.

Much is still to be learned about social norms measurement and change. The thesis recommends theorising and measuring 'norm strength': how much they are valued, how relevant they are across organisations and society, and the degrees to which norms are practised, adhered to, sanctioned, and institutionalised. For research instruments, it suggests prioritising statements about specific behaviours or traits; abstract statements often lead to contradictory answers and are difficult to interpret. The findings also suggest that whether statements refer to the status quo or the opposite will impact survey responses: questions about non-traditional roles for men may be more revealing about sticking points. This points to a broader implication of the project, connecting research instruments to political endeavours for social change. Asking about where societies could be headed, e.g., the positive benefits of caring masculinities, can provide "more systematic measurement of beliefs about future institutions" (Callen et al., 2023). These should be central considerations for development interventions and research projects that aim for transformative change.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 WVS: Colombian trends disaggregated by age, social class, and geographical region

#### Percentage in agreement with gender statements by age brackets in 2019

|   | 18-24    | 25-34    | 35-49    | 50-64  | Older than 65 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|--------|---------------|
| <b><i>When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women</i></b>                |          |          |          |        |               |
| All   | 18,6     | 24,6     | 25,8     | 30,7   | 41,7          |
| Men   | 22,0     | 30,6     | 32,8     | 30,7   | 42,4          |
| Women   | 14,9     | 19,5     | 19,7     | 30,6   | 40,8          |
| Gender gap  | -7,1**   | -11,1**  | -13,1*** | -0,1** | -1,6          |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better business executives than women do.</i></b>                    |          |          |          |        |               |
| All   | 9,6      | 15,7     | 17,4     | 29,0   | 36,5          |
| Men   | 12,6     | 21,9     | 26,0     | 30,1   | 43,9          |
| Women   | 6,3      | 10,5     | 9,9      | 27,8   | 26,5          |
| Gender gap  | -6,3**   | -11,4*** | -16,1*** | -2,3   | -17,4**       |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do</i></b>                       |          |          |          |        |               |
| All   | 16,2     | 21,7     | 22,6     | 33,2   | 37,4          |
| Men   | 22,5     | 28,1     | 28,3     | 37,4   | 39,4          |
| Women   | 9,2      | 16,3     | 17,7     | 28,5   | 34,7          |
| Gender gap  | -13,3*** | -11,8*** | -10,5*** | -8,9** | -4,7          |
| <b><i>A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl</i></b>                  |          |          |          |        |               |
| All   | 7,4      | 14,3     | 19,0     | 26,8   | 38,3          |
| Men   | 9,4      | 17,5     | 23,2     | 23,5   | 45,5          |
| Women   | 5,2      | 11,6     | 15,3     | 30,6   | 28,6          |
| Gender gap  | -4,2*    | -5,9*    | -7,9*    | 7,2*   | -16,9*        |
| <b><i>If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems</i></b> |          |          |          |        |               |
| All   | 42,5     | 44,3     | 49,2     | 58,4   | 48,7          |
| Men   | 35,1     | 37,5     | 44,6     | 61,5   | 45,5          |
| Women   | 50,6     | 50,0     | 53,2     | 54,9   | 53,1          |
| Gender gap  | 15,5***  | 12,5***  | 8,6**    | -6,6   | 7,6           |
| <b><i>When a mother works for pay, the children suffer</i></b>                                    |          |          |          |        |               |
| All   | 48,0     | 43,1     | 48,7     | 54,2   | 58,3          |
| Men   | 41,9     | 39,4     | 40,1     | 51,2   | 56,1          |
| Women   | 54,6     | 46,3     | 56,2     | 57,6   | 61,2          |
| Gender gap  | 12,7***  | 6,9***   | 16,1***  | 6,4    | 5,1           |
| <b><i>Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay</i></b>                          |          |          |          |        |               |
| All**   | 55,6     | 61,43    | 58,4     | 63,9   | 65,2          |
| Men   | 47,6     | 62,5     | 58,2     | 62,1   | 68,2          |
| Women   | 64,4     | 60,5     | 58,6     | 66,0   | 61,2          |
| Gender gap  | 16,8***  | -2,0     | 0,4      | 3,9    | -7,0          |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\* ,  $p < 0.1$ \*

Although I explored the relationships between self-reported social class (five categories) and gender attitudes in cross-tabulations, it is difficult to ascertain the connection between these two variables because of very limited sample sizes for some of the categories, especially for the upper-class category with only 21 observations. Chi-squared tests found significant relations between gender attitudes and social class for women's right to a job at the 5% significance level, men making better business leaders (1% level), university education (1% level), and whether children of working mothers suffer (1% sign. level). The Chi-squared test for the political, housewife, and earn variables was not significant.

### Percentage in agreement with gender statements by self-reported social class in 2019

|   | Lower class<br>(N=339) | Working class<br>(N=335) | Lower middle<br>(N=723) | Upper middle<br>(N=102) | Upper<br>(N=21) |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| <b><i>When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women</i></b>                |                        |                          |                         |                         |                 |
| All   | 32,5                   | 22,4                     | 24,9                    | 25,5                    | 19,1            |
| Men   | 36,8                   | 27,1                     | 27,8                    | 32,0                    | 20,0            |
| Women   | 27,4                   | 17,8                     | 22,1                    | 19,2                    | 18,2            |
| Gender gap  | -9,4**                 | -9,3**                   | -5,7**                  | -12,8*                  | -1,8            |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do</i></b>                       |                        |                          |                         |                         |                 |
| All   | 29,5                   | 21,5                     | 23,0                    | 22,6                    | 28,6            |
| Men   | 34,1                   | 27,1                     | 28,7                    | 28,0                    | 40,0            |
| Women   | 24,2                   | 16,0                     | 17,5                    | 17,3                    | 18,2            |
| Gender gap  | -9,9**                 | -11,1***                 | -11,2***                | -10,7*                  | -21,8           |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better business executives than women do.</i></b>                    |                        |                          |                         |                         |                 |
| All   | 28,0                   | 13,1                     | 17,4                    | 18,6                    | 19,1            |
| Men   | 33,0                   | 18,1                     | 23,6                    | 18,0                    | 20,0            |
| Women   | 22,3                   | 8,3                      | 11,6                    | 19,2                    | 18,2            |
| Gender gap  | -10,7**                | -9,8***                  | -12,0***                | 1,2                     | -1,8            |
| <b><i>A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl</i></b>                  |                        |                          |                         |                         |                 |
| All   | 27,7                   | 14,3                     | 15,5                    | 14,7                    | 33,3            |
| Men   | 29,7                   | 19,3                     | 17,6                    | 10,0                    | 30,0            |
| Women   | 25,5                   | 9,5                      | 13,5                    | 19,2                    | 36,4            |
| Gender gap  | -4,2                   | -9,8***                  | -4,1*                   | 9,2*                    | 6,4             |
| <b><i>If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems</i></b> |                        |                          |                         |                         |                 |
| All   | 51,9                   | 50,8                     | 46,3                    | 42,2                    | 47,6            |
| Men   | 53,9                   | 48,2                     | 38,6                    | 40,0                    | 40,0            |
| Women   | 49,7                   | 53,3                     | 53,6                    | 44,2                    | 54,6            |
| Gender gap  | -4,2                   | 5,1                      | 15,0***                 | 4,2                     | 14,6            |
| <b><i>Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay</i></b>                          |                        |                          |                         |                         |                 |
| All   | 58,1                   | 55,8                     | 61,7                    | 65,7                    | 76,2            |
| Men   | 55,5                   | 56,6                     | 59,4                    | 62,0                    | 70,0            |
| Women   | 61,2                   | 55,0                     | 63,9                    | 69,2                    | 81,8            |
| Gender gap  | 5,7                    | -1,6                     | 4,5                     | 7,2                     | 11,8            |
| <b><i>When a mother works for pay, the children suffer</i></b>                                    |                        |                          |                         |                         |                 |
| All   | 55,5                   | 50,5                     | 47,9                    | 35,3                    | 33,3            |
| Men   | 52,8                   | 42,2                     | 44,0                    | 26,0                    | 20,0            |
| Women   | 58,6                   | 58,6                     | 51,5                    | 44,2                    | 45,5            |
| Gender gap  | 5,9                    | 16,4***                  | 7,5**                   | 18,2**                  | 25,5            |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\*,  $p < 0.1$ \*

## Percentage in agreement with statements by geographical region in 2019

|   | Bogota<br>N=272 | Caribe<br>N=320 | Eje Cafetero<br>and Antioquia<br>N= 288 | Pacifica<br>N=240 | Central<br>N=336 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------------------|------------------|
| <b><i>When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women</i></b>                |                 |                 |   |                   |                  |
| All   | 22,8            | 30,6            | 24,0                                    | 31,3              | 21,1             |
| Men   | 23,9            | 38,1            | 27,1                                    | 39,2              | 21,8             |
| Women   | 21,7            | 23,1            | 20,8                                    | 23,3              | 20,5             |
| Gender gap  | -2,1            | -15,0***        | -6,3                                    | -15,9***          | -1,3             |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do</i></b>                       |                 |                 |   |                   |                  |
| All   | 17,3            | 28,8            | 27,8                                    | 24,6              | 21,4             |
| Men   | 22,4            | 36,3            | 32,6                                    | 31,7              | 25,9             |
| Women   | 12,3            | 21,3            | 22,9                                    | 17,5              | 16,0             |
| Gender gap  | -10,1**         | -15,0***        | -9,7**                                  | -14,2***          | -9,0**           |
| <b><i>On the whole, men make better business executives than women do.</i></b>                    |                 |                 |   |                   |                  |
| All   | 12,5            | 22,8            | 20,6                                    | 22,9              | 14,6             |
| Men   | 13,4            | 31,9            | 23,6                                    | 35,0              | 17,1             |
| Women   | 11,6            | 13,8            | 18,1                                    | 10,8              | 12,1             |
| Gender gap  | -1,8            | -18,1***        | -5,6                                    | -24,2***          | -5,0*            |
| <b><i>A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl</i></b>                  |                 |                 |   |                   |                  |
| All   | 10,3            | 23,8            | 23,6                                    | 21,7              | 11,0             |
| Men   | 10,5            | 30,6            | 23,6                                    | 25,0              | 10,6             |
| Women   | 10,1            | 16,9            | 23,6                                    | 18,3              | 11,5             |
| Gender gap  | -0,3            | -13,7***        | 0,0                                     | -6,7              | 0,9              |
| <b><i>If a woman earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems</i></b> |                 |                 |   |                   |                  |
| All   | 43,4            | 48,4            | 49,7                                    | 51,7              | 48,2             |
| Men   | 35,1            | 48,8            | 43,8                                    | 50,0              | 44,1             |
| Women   | 51,5            | 48,1            | 55,6                                    | 53,3              | 52,4             |
| Gender gap  | 16,4***         | -0,7            | 11,8**                                  | 3,3               | 8,3*             |
| <b><i>Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay</i></b>                          |                 |                 |   |                   |                  |
| All   | 54,0            | 71,6            | 60,4                                    | 62,5              | 52,1             |
| Men   | 51,5            | 68,1            | 57,6                                    | 61,7              | 51,2             |
| Women   | 56,5            | 75,0            | 63,2                                    | 63,3              | 53,0             |
| Gender gap  | 5,0             | 6,9*            | 5,6                                     | 1,6               | 1,8              |
| <b><i>When a mother works for pay, the children suffer</i></b>                                    |                 |                 |   |                   |                  |
| All   | 47,4            | 52,8            | 50,0                                    | 52,5              | 41,4             |
| Men   | 38,1            | 47,5            | 45,8                                    | 49,2              | 35,9             |
| Women   | 56,5            | 58,1            | 54,2                                    | 55,8              | 47,0             |
| Gender gap  | 18,5***         | 10,6**          | 8,3*                                    | 6,6               | 11,1**           |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\*,  $p < 0.1$ \*

## Appendix 2 Paid work statistics

I took a broad definition of work and economic activity in constructing work status variables, although it is possible that some casual and irregular forms of economic activity that occur in the home might still not have been accounted for in the survey. This definition also included unremunerated workers for a family business, although I found in my samples and interviews that research participants who worked for a family business or workshop were often paid.

The phone survey started with a keyword question of whether the respondent had worked for pay/money the month before the start of the pandemic (in February, about 2 months before). The question included a prompt that this could be some form of remuneration from work, but also informal work, “daily work” or small “favours”, using local language to capture subsistence work and informal work in the streets. If they answered no, the survey asked what they did before the pandemic (in February 2020), including looking for work, working for a family business without remuneration, studying, homemaking, or other (that they could specify). Follow-up questions asked for their occupation, what they did for work in an open-ended format if they reported working, and the sector they worked in (multiple options format). Having an open question format allowed for qualitative and richer information, giving survey participants the opportunity to say what their occupation was in their own words to capture economic and market activities that might not be easily captured in standard classifications, and it allowed for post-fieldwork coding (Anker, 1983). The survey enumerators filled in the employment sector category based on the information given by the respondent, which I could change myself afterwards if there were mistakes. The survey then asked if they had worked in the last two weeks for pay (i.e., during the Covid-19 lockdown), including the same prompt as before around what counts as work and another question asked how their work situation had changed since the pandemic (continuing working, lost their job, found a new job, uncertain – if the job was suspended for example – and “other” they could specify).

I constructed a work status variable that I coded as working if they answered “yes” to having done some activity for pay or cash the month prior to the start of the pandemic. I also included those that had answered “no” to the first keyword question but specified some economic activity – usually informal or casual – in the occupations question (in the “other” response), and those that indicated that they were working for a family business without pay/remuneration. It has been shown that keyword questions are not ideal for capturing “non-normative” forms of work, that are home-based, casual, informal, flexible, and low-paid (Langsten & Salen, 2008). An activities list would have increased the number of questions, not recommendable for phone surveys, although keyword questions make the process more dependent on surveyors’ probing and how they administered the survey. Including open-ended responses allowed to partly make up for the keyword items’ limitations. In addition to this, enumerators were able to provide qualitative information about the respondent’s situation at the end of the survey about respondents’ work and family situations that were not easily covered by the survey questions. This allowed to include informal or home-based workers who did not answer “yes” to the work question but who were nevertheless

performing some market and livelihoods-generation activities, for example a young artist who did circus tricks at traffic lights or a woman who prepared and sold sugary drinks to sell from her home with her husband.

**Participation in the labour force by gender before Covid pandemic, in February 2020 (phone survey)**

| (percentages %)  | Men  | Women | Gender gap |
|--|------|-------|------------|
| Received pay or pension the month before the pandemic. | 79,2 | 69,1  | -10,1***   |
| Has their own savings                                  | 34,1 | 25,8  | -8,3**     |
| Economically active before the pandemic                | 75,8 | 67,3  | -8,5***    |
| Main occupation: housework                             | 3,1  | 19,5  | 16,4***    |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\* ,  $p < 0.1$ \*

In the 2021 household survey, the questionnaire first asked a multiple keyword question,<sup>54</sup> asking for their main activities in the past 3 months (respondents could answer one or two activities). The survey then included an activities list of questions with 7 days as a reference period, followed by a time-use question on the time spent on that activity in the past 24 hours. The activities list items asked (1) if they had worked for pay for an individual, organization or company, (2) if they had worked in their own business or a family business (whether or not they received remuneration for this) and (3) if they had worked in any informal, casual, or “rummaging” work (translation of *rebusque* a local term used to designate forms of informal work), daily work, “elementary tasks” (“*oficios varios*”) or peddling. The definition of work in the household survey thus included three main types of economic activities: being in some form of paid work, in informal work (“*rebusque*”), or own (or family) business/self-employment. Other survey items covering expenses-saving activities such as gardening, going to collect subsidies, sewing and house repairs were asked but were not included in the definition of work for this analysis. I constructed two work status variables,<sup>55</sup> one based on

<sup>54</sup> Not ideal for capturing all forms of hidden work according to Langsten & Salen 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Although the household survey included activities-based questions, more effective at capturing non-conventional forms of work, and produce higher work rates for women (Langsten & Salen 2008), I found a large difference in the percentage of women who reported working, the number being significantly lower in the household survey than in the phone survey. This is unlikely due to the impact of Covid on women’s work, as the number of women who reported working before Covid was significantly lower in the household survey compared to the phone survey and the percentages of men working in both surveys are comparable. A potential bias towards non-working populations and those identifying as housewives who are more likely to be in the house when the survey team visited might have been introduced due to the survey mode being in person and because of the family sampling design that was non-probabilistic – the first family respondent was selected randomly but we then tried to interview all available family members. We had to stop fieldwork due to a Covid



the seven-day references period, and one based on both the main activities question and activities list for the past three months. Hence, by construction, the second variable with the three-month reference period produces a higher rate of workers. Unpaid family workers were included in this work definition. The survey also included an open-ended question to include a qualitative description in respondents' own words (as transcribed by the enumerator) of the activities they did for work, so that their responses could be used for further checks.

### Economic participation statistics by gender, February-March 2021 (household survey)

| (in %)                              | Men  | Women | Gender gap |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------|------------|
| Has their own savings               | 33,0 | 24,9  | -8,1*      |
| Economically active before pandemic | 72,5 | 55,5  | -17,1***   |
| Working in 2021 (past 3 months)     | 74,2 | 50,9  | -23,3***   |
| Working in 2021 (past 7 days)       | 68,0 | 47,3  | -20,8***   |
| Main occupation: housework (%)      | 10,3 | 49,1  | 38,8       |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\*,  $p < 0.1$ \*

A proportion of women report being housewives as their main occupation, around 20% in the phone survey and close to 50% in the household survey. After further checks, I found that 20% of women who identified “home-based services” as their main occupation were in some form of paid work or self-employment in the past 7 days in the household survey.<sup>56</sup> Survey responses to “main activity” questions can be influenced by social norms that still confer respect, status, and moral superiority to housewives.

25% of working women in the phone survey reported working from home in February 2020, compared to 6% of working men, and 41% of working women in *comuna 6* studied were working from home in early 2021, compared to 15% of men, reflecting both gender differences and the effect of the pandemic on work location (26% of working women and 3% of working men reported working from home before the Covid pandemic in the household survey).

I did not find conclusive gender differences between employment types, whether workers were independent or dependent labour. This classification is hard to apply to workers in the informal economy, with industrial outworkers, workers in the gig economy such as Uber drivers or street vendors and peddlers that don't fall easily into one category (Chen, 2020). Even within the employed or self-employed population, there are meaningful differences in work experiences and conditions that the survey was not able to cover in detail. In the phone

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outbreak and hence did not have the time to survey some of the more difficult-to-access respondents selected (e.g., with less availability because of their work hours). The phone survey that took place during the first pandemic lockdown presented the unusual opportunity that most working populations were at home and could be interviewed over the phone.

<sup>56</sup> Removing them from those identifying home-based work as their main occupation would mean around 39% of women fall into that category, which is still high compared to the phone survey.

survey, men are more likely to be self-employed, and women to be employed, whether formally or informally (6,75% of working women as domestic workers). In the household survey, I did not find significant gender differences, apart for the day-to-day casual labourer category.

### Types of employment for economically active male and female survey participants in 2020 and 2021 (%)

| Phone survey (April-May 2020)                   |      |       |         | Household survey (February-March 2021) |       |        |
|---|------|-------|---------|--|-------|--------|
|   | Men  | Women | Gap     | Men                                    | Women | Gap    |
| Employed, dependent labour (formal or informal) | 46,9 | 55,6  | 8,7**   | 44,3                                   | 46,8  | 2,5    |
| Self-employed, independent labour               | 43,9 | 35,3  | -8,6*** | 40,0                                   | 46,8  | 6,8    |
| Day-to-day casual labourer (“rebusque”)         | 9,2  | 9,1   | 0,1     | 15,7                                   | 6,5   | -9,2** |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\*,  $p < 0.1$ \*

The survey asked for income ranges, using the minimum wage as a reference because asking about precise incomes was a sensitive question in Medellín and risked making respondents uncomfortable. The working population in the sample reported on average making between \$908.526 - \$1.800.000 monthly (1 to 2 times the minimum wage amount, about £160-£320), with the median being of two to three times the minimum wages, corresponding to \$1.800.000 - \$2.700.000 (£320-£485). Women on average made less than men, with the difference being significance at the 5% significance level.

There is some overlap between occupations for men and women surveyed, many being involved in service jobs, sales, and work in shops and stalls, where men and women carry out similar jobs. Despite this convergence, jobs and income generating activities at the lower and middle level of the job hierarchy are feminized and masculinized. Among men, the most common activities were in the industry, manufacturing, transport category (35,21%) and the construction and craft work categories (25,35%). 26,78% of working men were in services or sales, with the fewest in the professional category or odd jobs. A comparable percentage of working men and women - around 7% - were in forms of work in the “odd jobs” category, representing the most vulnerable, casual, and low pay forms of work. For women, half (50%) were working in sales and services, followed by professional, technical, or clerical jobs (20,24%). Some were in jobs related to industrial and manufacturing industries, mostly through garment work, and very little were in construction and crafts/manual labour work.

### Ranking of occupational categories by gender (household survey)

|   | Men (N=71)  | %    | Women (N=84)  | %    |
|---|---|------|---|------|
| 1 | Industry, manufacturing, and machines (including transport of vehicles) | 35,2 | Sales (shops, stalls, and home-based)                                   | 26,2 |
| 2 | Construction, crafts, repairs   | 25,4 | Services  | 23,8 |
| 3 | Services  | 15,5 | Professional, technical, clerical                                       | 20,2 |
| 4 | Sales (shops, stalls, and home-based)                                   | 11,3 | Industry, manufacturing, and machines (including transport of vehicles) | 17,9 |
| 5 | Professional, technical, clerical                                       | 9,9  | Odd jobs  | 7,1  |
| 6 | Odd jobs  | 7,0  | Construction, crafts, repairs   | 1,2  |

*\*Does not add up to 100% because some mentioned "no work."*

Looking at statistics from the survey data on economic provision and earnings, I observe that men on average still tend to earn more than their spouses<sup>57</sup> (if cohabitating) and are economically responsible for a greater share of household and child expenses, although answers to these questions could also be influenced by social norms and perceptions.

### Economic provision in the households sampled

| (%)   | Men  | Women | Gap      |
|---|------|-------|----------|
| Earns more than spouse                            | 77,6 | 14,3  | -63,3*** |
| Provides for others outside the household         | 44,4 | 33,7  | -10,8*   |
| Pays for more than half of the household expenses | 59,3 | 33,7  | -25,6*** |
| Pays for half of household expenses               | 30,9 | 21,8  | -9,1***  |
| Pays for less than half of household expenses     | 9,9  | 44,6  | 34,7***  |

$p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\*,  $p < 0.1$ \*

### Gender of the main economic provider(s) in the household, by household headship

| (%)    | Female headed household | Male headed households | Mixed household headship |
|--------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Male   | 21,0                    | 72,1                   | 57,7                     |
| Female | 60,0                    | 8,7                    | 1,9                      |
| Mixed  | 19,1                    | 19,2                   | 40,4                     |

<sup>57</sup> The percentages men and women report (of whether the male or female spouse earns more, or whether they earn equally) are roughly comparable.

**Gender of primary provider of child costs (who is the person responsible for child costs)**

| (N=110)                   | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Mother                    | 26,4              |
| Father                    | 40,0              |
| Mother and father jointly | 18,2              |
| Other                     | 15,5              |

## Appendix 3 Unpaid work statistics

The phone and household surveys captured household participation, time use, and responsibilities with regards to domestic and care activities. The phone survey was exploratory and does not provide an exact measurement of time use in daily activities. It did capture men and women's reports of their participation and share of responsibilities in various household and care activities before and during the lockdown. The household survey included time use questions on distinct economic and household activities. However, I was not able to implement more rigorous – and more time-intensive methods – capturing time use on primary and secondary activities such as time use diaries because of concerns in keeping the survey interview time to less than 45 minutes, of widespread survey fatigue and high levels of mistrust in households to give out information about their families, and because of the limited time and resources to train survey enumerators and prepare for the survey given the uncertainties surrounding the Covid pandemic.

I nevertheless used questions format comparable to other surveys (Oxfam We-Care, from the Emerge initiative resources), asking survey participants how many minutes/hours they had spent on an activity in the past 24 hours. This is prone to over-reporting and because several activities can be conducted simultaneously (e.g., supervision of children and other care activities, or helping children with homework while also overseeing a family run business), the total of hours spent on activities in the past day might surpass 24 hours. Although this might not achieve a representative and precise estimate of time use, the method has nevertheless been shown to be useful to identifying overall trends (Mueller 2018), data and can provide points of comparison to understand the general structure and variations in the household division of labour and who is more likely to perform specific activities.

In addition to time use and participation, the surveys also asked about the distribution of responsibilities in the household division of labour (who is mainly responsible for specific domestic and care tasks), variables related to household decision-making, domestic and care preferences, and reasons for these preferences, and perceived changes in domestic and care responsibilities since Covid (short-term captured by the phone survey, medium-term – a year afterwards by the household survey). Finally, the surveys also included questions about normative beliefs around gender roles and participation in domestic and care work, including personal normative beliefs, social expectations about what is typical or expected in the community, and existing sanctions for men who take on a central role in housework or parenting.

The household survey reveals significant gender gaps in participation in household tasks. Reported participation in household and care activities in the past week was high for both men and women, suggesting potential social desirability biases when comparing with the National Time Use Survey findings from 2018 and observations from ethnographic fieldwork.

### Reported participation this past week in household and childcare activities (%)

| Activity              | Men  | Women | Gender Gap (W-M) |
|-----------------------|------|-------|------------------|
| Cleaning house        | 79,4 | 92,1  | 12,7**           |
| Cooking               | 67,0 | 91,5  | 24,5***          |
| Washing dishes        | 81,4 | 93,3  | 11,9**           |
| Washing clothes       | 61,9 | 89,7  | 27,8***          |
| Groceries             | 65,0 | 64    | -1,0             |
| Daily childcare tasks | 39,5 | 57,1  | 17,6*            |
| Supervision children  | 89,5 | 91,4  | 1,9              |
| Spend quality time    | 94,7 | 90,0  | -4,7             |
| Help with homework    | 71,1 | 81,2  | 10,              |
| Eldercare             | 12,5 | 19,4  | 6,9%             |

*for childcare activities: for respondents where children under 12 live in the household*  
 $p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\*,  $p < 0.1$ \*

### Time use in the past 24 hours, by gender

| Activity              | Men<br>N=97 | Women<br>N=165 | Gender Gap (W-M) |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|
| Cleaning house        | 1,1         | 2,2            | -1,1***          |
| Cooking               | 0,6         | 1,7            | -1,1***          |
| Washing dishes        | 0,5         | 0,8            | -0,2*            |
| Washing clothes       | 0,4         | 0,9            | -0,5***          |
| Groceries             | 0,3         | 0,4            | -0,8             |
| Daily childcare tasks | 0,5         | 1,6            | -1,1*            |
| Supervision children  | 4,6         | 8,1            | -3,5**           |
| Spend quality time    | 1,9         | 2,3            | -0,4             |
| Help with homework    | 0,8         | 2,2            | -1,3**           |
| Eldercare             | 0,5         | 0,8            | -0,3             |

*For childcare activities: if children under 12 are living in their household*  
 $p < 0.01$ \*\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ \*\*,  $p < 0.1$ \*

On average, women reported spending around an hour more than men daily on cleaning and cooking activities, over an hour a day more than men on daily childcare tasks and helping children with homework, and over three hours more than men on supervisory activities. I did not find gender differences in eldercare, although this could be due to limited sample size and

the fact that the question did not differentiate between types of activities related to eldercare<sup>58</sup>. Time spent supervising children reflects broader responsibilities and obligations rather than the execution of specific activities. Supervising children had the greatest gender gap in time use. Child supervision activities are often conducted simultaneously to other activities (Folbre 2006), and significant gender gaps reflect women's decisions to stay at home with their children during the day, as full-time carers or working in home-based, part-time, or flexible forms of employment.

Not including child supervision activities, as this is often carried out simultaneously with other activities, I calculate total time spent in domestic labour, care labour, and in paid work and other economic activities, to obtain estimates of total work spent in the past 24 hours. The gender gap in the total time spent daily on unpaid work is almost 5 hours on average, whereas the gap between men and women in paid work is smaller – close to 1 hour 30 minutes, on average. Although men report participating in household and childcare activities in the past week (60% to 80% depending on task), when considering the actual time use reported, we find significant gender gaps. The wider gender gaps in unpaid work are not counterbalanced by commensurate gender gaps in paid work, resulting in women working an estimated 3 hours on average per day in total work in the survey sample. To note: these are overall trends and not precise estimates of time use.

#### Time use in paid work, unpaid work, and total work.

| Total time   | Men  | Women | Gender gap |
|--|------|-------|------------|
| Domestic activities/housework<br><i>Cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, washing clothes, grocery shopping</i>     | 2,92 | 5,94  | -3,01***   |
| Childcare (if under 12)<br><i>Daily care, quality time and homework</i>  | 1,57 | 3,2   | -1,6**     |
| Total care (childcare and eldercare) –<br>for all households   | 2,03 | 3,93  | -1,90**    |
| Total unpaid: domestic and care work   | 4,95 | 9,86  | -4,91***   |
| Total paid work<br><i>Paid work, own business, informal</i>  | 4,58 | 3,05  | 1,53*      |
| Total economic activity<br><i>Total paid work, house auto-construction, sewing, gardening, getting subsidies</i> | 5,12 | 3,52  | 1,59**     |
| Total paid work and unpaid activities<br><i>studying or community work not included</i>                          | 9,53 | 12,91 | -3,38**    |

The phone survey asked respondent to give an estimate of the share (percentage) of cooking responsibilities, for example, that fell on them before the pandemic and during the lockdown. The household survey captured responsibilities for domestic and care activities by asking “who is in charge of that activity” (*encargada* in Colombian Spanish), with the possibility of

<sup>58</sup> Friedemann-Sanchez (2012) finds gender differences in family caregiving patterns in Bogotá, not just in terms of time spent performing direct eldercare activities but also related to what types of activities were performed by male and female children and what they felt responsible for, with sons tending to feel responsible for economic support or other forms of indirect care towards their parents while daughters were more likely to provide direct care for an elderly parent.

adding two or more people if the responsibility is shared. Based on the household survey, I report the level of feminisation of housework and childcare tasks, i.e., the percentage of households where a given activity was the responsibility of only women (one or several women), only men, or shared between men and women. Gender differences in responsibilities were statistically significant at the 1% level.

### Level of “feminisation” of household and care tasks – who is in charge (%)

| Task                          | All male | All female | Mixed |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------|-------|
| Housework                     | 12,2     | 76         | 11,8  |
| Cooking                       | 11,6     | 85,3       | 3,1   |
| Childcare*                    | 3,6      | 61,8       | 34,6  |
| Kids to medical appointments* | 4        | 70         | 26    |
| Kids to school*               | 5,3      | 72,6       | 22,1  |

*\*Households with children under 12.*

For childcare tasks, the mother alone was responsible for the tasks in close to 50% of households or more. Fathers rarely were stated as the sole responsible for childcare or bringing children to school or medical appointments; in households where fathers were responsible, this responsibility was shared with the mother. As the data shows, grand-parents, especially grand-mothers, provide important support to families for childcare.

### Person in charge of childcare tasks’ relationship with the child(ren) for different activities (%)

|   | Daily childcare | Bringing child to medical appointments | Bringing the kids to school |
|---|-----------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Mother alone                              | 49,1            | 64                                     | 48,1                        |
| Father alone                              | 1,8             | 3,5                                    | 1,0                         |
| Parents jointly                           | 21,8            | 23                                     | 11,5                        |
| Grandparent(s)                            | 12,7            | 2,5                                    | 17,3                        |
| Parents and other family members together | 14,6            | 7,0                                    | 14,4                        |
| On their own or transport                 |                 |  | 7,7                         |



## Appendix 4 Intergenerational statistics

### Childhood characteristics and household participation variables, by age group

| Variable<br>N=  | 18-39 years<br>(106) | 40-64 years<br>(117) | 65+ years<br>(38) |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| No. of siblings <sup>59</sup>   | 3.65 (0.22)          | 6.97 (0.32)          | 9.59 (0.68)       |
| Women had first child before turning 23   | 44.1%                | 49.3%                | 65.2%             |
| Grew up in urban area   | 51.18%               | 41.76%               | 7.06%             |
| Education level (scale of 0-8) <sup>60</sup>  | 4.46 (0.11)          | 3.23 (0.13)          | 1.94 (0.23)       |
| Mother's education (same scale)   | 2.88 (0.16)          | 1.47 (0.13)          | 1.30 (0.24)       |
| Father's education (same scale)   | 2.69 (0.20)          | 1.40 (0.16)          | 0.86 (0.17)       |
| Mother worked outside the home in their childhood   | 55.66%               | 33.96%               | 10.38%            |
| Grandmother worked outside the home   | 56.14%               | 42.11%               | 1.75%             |
| Father absenteeism: No father figure growing up   | 14.15%               | 10.26%               | 7.89%             |
| Father cooked frequently or always during childhood                                       | 18.82%               | 17.93%               | 2.86%             |
| Father cleaned the house frequently or always in childhood                                | 20.93%               | 16.19%               | 2.86%             |
| Father's participation in domestic and childcare activities index                         | 13.35<br>(0.74)      | 11.34<br>(0.62)      | 9.58<br>(0.80)    |
| Respondent in charge of ....  |                      |                      |                   |
| cooking, alone or jointly   |                      |                      |                   |
| Women   | 61.76%               | 87.67 %              | 91.30%            |
| Men   | 24.32%               | 31.82%               | 21.43%            |
| domestic chores, alone or jointly   |                      |                      |                   |
| Women   | 76.47%               | 90.41%               | 82.61%            |
| Men   | 39.47%               | 50.00%               | 53.33%            |
| Respondents cooked in their childhood, frequently or always                               |                      |                      |                   |
| Women   | 16.18%               | 56.17%               | 56.52%            |
| Men   | 28.95%               | 18.18%               | 6.67%             |
| Respondents who cleaned in their childhood, frequently or always                          |                      |                      |                   |
| Women   | 50.00%               | 72.61%               | 69.57%            |
| Men   | 52.64%               | 27.28%               | 20.00%            |
| Respondents who cared for their younger siblings in their childhood, frequently or always |                      |                      |                   |
| Women   | 25.76%               | 45.83%               | 60.87%            |
| Men   | 13.51%               | 20.45%               | 40.00%            |

(Standard deviation in brackets). Source: primary household survey 202

<sup>59</sup> This includes all siblings, including those who died.

<sup>60</sup> '4' corresponds to completing secondary school, '3' starting but not finishing secondary school, and '1' incomplete primary schooling.

## Appendix 5 Interview lists

### Key informant interviewees Nov – Dec 2019

|    |                           |   |                           |
|----|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1  | Development practitioner  | Head of rural development, <i>Foundation Bancolombia</i>  | 18.11.2019                |
| 2  | Researcher                | Professor, Department of Education and Human Rights, <i>Universidad Autonoma Latinoamericana</i>                                | 18.11.2019<br>13.12.2019  |
| 3  | Researcher                | PhD Student, Harvard Law School   | 22.11.2019                |
| 4  | NGO and activist          | Staff member, women and work area of the <i>Escuela Nacional Sindical</i>   | 22.11.2019                |
| 5  | NGO and activist          | Former staff member, <i>community NGO Con-Vivamos</i>   | 22.11.2019                |
| 6  | Local government official | Undersecretary in charge of vulnerable populations of the <i>Secretariat of Social Inclusion, Families, and Human Rights</i>    | 26.11.2019;<br>30.11.2019 |
| 7  | Local government official | Professional, former <i>Secretaria for Women</i> and consultant for the <i>IADB</i>   | 30.11.2019                |
| 8  | Development practitioner  | Founder, <i>Aros de Esperanza (NGO)</i>   | 2.12.2019;<br>9.12.2019   |
| 9  | Development practitioner  | Social worker, women and justice area of <i>Penca de Sabila (NGO in rural areas)</i>  | 2.12.2019                 |
| 10 | Activist                  | Head of Antioquia, <i>Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres (NGO feminist mobilization for peace and against violence against women)</i> | 2.12.2019                 |
| 11 | Local government official | Professional, Administrative Department for Planning  | 2.12.2019                 |
| 12 | Researcher                | Professor, Department of Social Work, <i>Universidad Uniminuto Bello</i>  | 3.12.2019                 |
| 13 | Activist                  | Political communications and on the board of <i>Fundacion Bien Humano (NGO for families)</i>                                    | 4.12.2019                 |
| 14 | Social leader             | Retired social worker (CEDECIS) and community leader  | 5.12.2019                 |
| 15 | Civil servants            | Group of 5 administrators of the Families Unit of the <i>Secretariat of Social Inclusion, Families, and Human Rights</i>        | 5.12.2019                 |
| 16 | Civil servant             | Staff member investigative area of the Families Unit of the <i>Secretariat of Social Inclusion, Families, and Human Rights</i>  | 9.12.2019                 |
| 17 | Local government official | Secretary of the <i>Secretariat for Women</i>   | 10.12.2019                |
| 18 | Civil servant             | Professional, work on masculinities for the <i>Secretariat for Women</i>  | 10.12.2019                |
| 19 | Researcher                | Consultant, <i>Center for Political Analysis of EAFIT University</i>  | 11.12.2019                |
| 20 | NGO and activist          | Director, <i>Pichacho con Futuro (community NGO)</i>  | 12.12.2019;<br>19.12.2019 |
| 21 | Local government official | Project leader “Hombres Como Vos” (masculinities) of the <i>Secretariat of Health</i>   | 13.12.2019                |
| 22 | Development practitioner  | Staff member, <i>Fundacion Bien Humano (NGO)</i>  | 16.12.2019                |
| 23 | Civil servant             | Staff member “Hombres Como Vos” (masculinities) of the <i>Secretariat of Health</i>   | 18.12.2019                |

## Interview list

| Age | Gender | Occupation                                     | Date       | Living in                  | Mode       |
|-----|--------|--|------------|----------------------------|------------|
| 54  | F      | Housewife                                      | 2020-04-21 | Comuna 6                   | Video call |
| 52  | F      | Domestic worker                                | 2020-04-29 | Comuna 8                   | Phone      |
| 58  | F      | Community mother                               | 2020-05-01 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 82  | M      | Retired (former street vendor)                 | 2020-05-08 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 65  | M      | Street vendor                                  | 2020-06-09 | San Cristobal (peri-urban) | Phone      |
| 47  | F      | Cleaner  | 2020-06-10 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 57  | M      | Garment outworker                              | 2020-06-13 | Comuna 6                   | Video call |
| 58  | F      | Street vendor                                  | 2020-06-17 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 59  | F      | Street vendor                                  | 2020-06-17 | Comuna 1                   | Phone      |
| 20  | M      | Unemployed                                     | 2020-06-18 | Comuna 13                  | Phone      |
| 36  | F      | Community mother                               | 2020-06-19 | Comuna 8                   | Phone      |
| 42  | F      | Community mother                               | 2020-06-23 | Comuna 13                  | Phone      |
| 43  | M      | Salesman                                       | 2020-06-24 | Comuna 3                   | Phone      |
| 54  | F      | Housewife                                      | 2020-06-25 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 55  | M      | Social worker                                  | 2020-06-26 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 28  | M      | Electrician                                    | 2020-06-28 | Comuna 5                   | Phone      |
| 61  | M      | Street vendor                                  | 2020-06-29 | Comuna 9                   | Phone      |
| 35  | F      | Unemployed                                     | 2020-06-29 | Comuna 9                   | Phone      |
| 32  | M      | Student  | 2020-07-01 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 36  | F      | Psychologist                                   | 2020-07-02 | Comuna 11                  | Phone      |
| 42  | F      | Casual work (manicures)                        | 2020-07-02 | Comuna 8                   | Phone      |
| 59  | M      | Mover  | 2020-07-02 | Comuna 4                   | Phone      |
| 58  | M      | Security guard                                 | 2020-07-04 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 25  | M      | Student  | 2020-07-06 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 63  | F      | Retired (former cleaner and cook)              | 2020-07-07 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 34  | F      | Unemployed (saleswoman)                        | 2020-07-14 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 48  | M      | Casual labour (cobbler and favours)            | 2020-07-22 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 59  | M      | Unemployed (agriculture and construction work) | 2020-07-22 | Comuna 8                   | Phone      |
| 45  | F      | Unemployed (domestic worker)                   | 2020-07-24 | Comuna 13                  | Phone      |
| 34  | F      | Nurse  | 2020-07-26 | Comuna 5                   | Phone      |
| 46  | F      | Domestic worker and catalogue sales            | 2020-07-27 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 39  | F      | Receptionist in a laboratory                   | 2020-07-28 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 33  | F      | Manicurist                                     | 2020-07-28 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 21  | M      | Student  | 2020-07-28 | Comuna 1                   | Phone      |
| 38  | M      | Waste picker                                   | 2020-07-30 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 34  | M      | Salesman                                       | 2020-07-31 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |

|    |   |  |            |                            |            |
|----|---|--|------------|----------------------------|------------|
| 24 | M | Unemployed                                     | 2020-08-03 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 42 | F | Commercial advisor                             | 2020-08-07 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 62 | M | Construction worker                            | 2020-08-09 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 24 | M | Production assistant in a private company      | 2020-09-30 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 35 | M | Security guard                                 | 2020-10-03 | Comuna 16                  | Phone      |
| 27 | M | Student  | 2020-10-07 | Comuna 1                   | Phone      |
| 56 | M | Unemployed                                     | 2020-10-07 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 28 | M | Business owner                                 | 2020-10-13 | Comuna 5                   | Phone      |
| 29 | F | Student  | 2020-10-15 | Comuna 1                   | Phone      |
| 71 | F | Housewife                                      | 2020-10-18 | Comuna 3                   | Phone      |
| 38 | M | Artist   | 2020-10-22 | San Cristobal (peri-urban) | In-person  |
| 55 | F | Housewife                                      | 2020-10-23 | San Cristobal (peri-urban) | In-person  |
| 21 | F | Student  | 2020-10-23 | San Cristobal (peri-urban) | In-person  |
| 58 | F | Retired, cleaner and cook in a garment factory | 2020-10-25 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 45 | F | Administrative assistant                       | 2020-11-02 | Envigado                   | In-person  |
| 34 | M | Elevators technicians                          | 2020-11-13 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 65 | F | Community mother (retired)                     | 2020-11-15 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 42 | F | Oversees construction and cleaning sites       | 2020-11-15 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 28 | F | Leader of a cultural organisation              | 2020-11-18 | Comuna 12                  | Video call |
| 60 | F | Teacher  | 2020-11-20 | Comuna 12                  | Video call |
| 63 | M | Retired (teacher)                              | 2020-11-20 | Comuna 12                  | Video call |
| 32 | M | Unemployed (construction worker)               | 2021-02-28 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 30 | F | Photographer                                   | 2021-02-28 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 26 | F | Manicurist                                     | 2021-03-02 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 36 | F | Laboratory assistant                           | 2021-03-03 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 25 | F | Unemployed (phone credits sales from home)     | 2021-03-04 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 52 | M | Construction worker                            | 2021-03-04 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 65 | M | Construction worker                            | 2021-03-05 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 64 | F | Housewife                                      | 2021-03-05 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 58 | F | Housewife                                      | 2021-03-10 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 56 | M | Gardener                                       | 2021-03-10 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 67 | M | Street vendor                                  | 2021-03-12 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 68 | F | Housewife                                      | 2021-03-13 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 66 | M | Retired (factory worker)                       | 2021-03-15 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 65 | F | Housewife                                      | 2021-03-15 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 75 | F | Housewife                                      | 2021-03-15 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 65 | F | Shop owner                                     | 2021-03-16 | Comuna 6                   | Phone      |
| 59 | M | Home-based small garment workshop              | 2021-03-17 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |
| 49 | F | Community mother                               | 2021-03-17 | Comuna 6                   | In-person  |

|    |   |                                 |            |          |           |
|----|---|---------------------------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| 18 | M | Student                         | 2021-03-20 | Comuna 6 | In-person |
| 34 | M | Garment worker                  | 2021-03-20 | Comuna 6 | In-person |
| 22 | F | Beautician                      | 2021-03-25 | Comuna 6 | In-person |
| 30 | F | Beads, necklace, basket weaving | 2021-03-25 | Comuna 6 | In-person |
| 46 | F | Domestic worker                 | 2021-03-25 | Comuna 6 | In-person |
| 52 | F | Housewife                       | 2021-03-26 | Comuna 6 | In-person |
| 43 | M | Technician                      | 2021-03-27 | Comuna 6 | In-person |
| 27 | F | Food packaging home business    | 2021-03-28 | Comuna 6 | In-person |

### Intergenerational and family interviews

|                | Family members (Age)  | Date       | Location      |
|----------------|---|------------|---------------|
| <b>Group 1</b> | Grandmother (87)<br>Mother (61)<br>Older sister (39)<br>Younger sister (29) | 2020-10-22 | San Cristobal |
| <b>Group 2</b> | Mother (69)<br>Father (72)<br>Daughter (36)                                 | 2021-03-05 | Comuna 6      |
| <b>Group 3</b> | Mother (64)<br>Father (68)<br>Daughter (37)                                 | 2021-03-05 | Comuna 6      |
| <b>Group 4</b> | Grandmother (68)<br>Uncle (39)<br>Aunt (41)<br>Aunt (36)<br>Grand-son (18)  | 2021-03-07 | Comuna 6      |
| <b>Group 5</b> | Father (51)<br>Mother (46)<br>Daughter (23)<br>Daughter (20)                | 2021-03-28 | Comuna 6      |
| <b>Group 6</b> | Father (62)<br>Mother (66)<br>Daughter (40)<br>Daughter (36)                | 2021-03-29 | Comuna 6      |

## Appendix 6 Household Surveys Questionnaire

*This is a copy of the survey questions and response options that were inputted into Qualtrics*

### Encuestas de Familias Comuna 6 - 2021

| I - INFORMACIÓN ENCUESTA Y PERSONA ENCUESTADA |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| I1  | Encuestador  |   |
| I2  | Tipo de persona encuestada   | 1) Persona seleccionada por regla del cumpleaños<br>2) Familiar de la persona seleccionada  |
| I3  | Código identidad de la encuesta  |   |
| I4  | Relación a la persona seleccionada si es un familiar<br><i>Solo incluir padres, abuelos, hijos adultos o parejas de la persona seleccionada (no suegros, yernos, etc.)</i>   | 1) Madre<br>2) Padre<br>3) Abuelo<br>4) Abuela<br>5) Hermano(a)<br>6) Hijo(a)<br>7) Cónyuge/pareja  |
| E   | <i>Asegurar que la persona es Colombiana. Asegurar que la persona vive en el hogar.<br/>           Si es extrajera o no vive en el hogar, marcar "no elegible" en el documento de seguimiento, agradecer la persona y no seguir con la encuesta.</i>   |   |
| CI1   | Obtener el consentimiento informado<br><br>1) Leer el guion:<br><i>"Usted fue seleccionado(a) de manera aleatoria entre los diferentes hogares del barrio. Es muy importante para nosotros conocer su opinión para entender su experiencia y la de su familia. Esperamos que pueda generar conocimientos beneficiosos para su comunidad y señalar temas importantes para que las políticas públicas locales apoyen a las familias en Medellín. Su participación es voluntaria, no tiene que responder a una pregunta si le hace sentir incómodo(a) y puede cambiar de opinión sobre su participación en cualquier momento, sin ninguno efecto negativo. No vamos a preguntar datos personales como la cédula, por ejemplo. Todo la información y los datos serán guardados de forma segura. Su información será anónima, es decir su nombre y lugar donde vive no se utilizará en ningún informe o artículo, y los investigadores no compartirán su información o contactos con nadie. La encuesta dura aproximadamente entre 30 y 40 minutos y voy a hacer preguntas relacionadas con su familia, su situación laboral y la organización del trabajo doméstico y de cuidado."</i> | 2) Preguntar si tiene algunas dudas o preguntas.<br><br>3) Obtener consentimiento verbal explícito: "Si está de acuerdo en participar de manera voluntaria para aproximadamente 30 o 40 minutos en la encuesta y autoriza la publicación de los resultados del estudio siempre que la información sea anónima por favor dice que 'sí, está de acuerdo'."<br><br>- Si dice no, tratar de responder a sus preocupaciones.<br>- Si después de sus esfuerzos, todavía no quiere, poner no y terminar la encuesta. |
| CI2   | Obtener el consentimiento informado  | 1) Sí, estoy de acuerdo<br>2) No  |
| I5  | Nombre de la persona encuestada  |   |
| I6  | Teléfono   |   |
| I7  | Dirección del hogar  |   |
| T0  | Hora exacta al principio de la encuesta<br>(HH:MM, por ejemplo 14:16)  |   |
| D - CARACTERÍSTICAS DEMOGRÁFICAS              |  |   |
| D1  | Género<br>* Si la persona menciona durante la encuesta alguna identidad  | 1) Masculino<br>2) Femenino   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <i>diversa, se le puede anotar en sus observaciones al final de la encuesta</i>  |  |
| D2   | ¿Cuántos años cumplidos tiene?   |  |
| D3   | ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha estado viviendo de manera continua en la comuna?   | .... Años .... Meses   |
| D4   | ¿Cuál es el nivel educativo más alto que ha alcanzado?   | 1) Ninguna educación formal completa<br>2) Primaria empezada pero incomplete<br>3) Primaria terminada<br>4) Bachillerato empezado pero incomplete<br>5) Bachillerato terminado<br>6) Técnico o tecnológico<br>7) Universidad empezada pero incomplete<br>8) Universidad terminada<br>9) Posgrado (especialización, diplomado o maestría)<br>98 No sabe<br>99 Prefiere no responder (no leer) |
| D5   | ¿Actualmente está inscrito en una institución educativa para seguir estudios?<br>Si: ¿En cuál nivel educativo está?      | 1) No va a la escuela<br>2) Primaria<br>3) Bachillerato 6-9<br>4) Bachillerato 10-11<br>5) Técnico o tecnológico<br>6) Universidad<br>7) Posgrado (especialización, diplomado o maestría)  |
| D6   | Esta actualmente:<br>(¿Cuál es su estado civil actual?)  | 1) Soltero(a), nunca casado(a)<br>2) Casado(a) o vive en unión libre como si estuviera casado(a)<br>3) Divorciado(a) o separado(a)<br>4) Viudo(a)<br>5) Otro:<br>99 Prefiere no responder (no leer)  |
| D7   | ¿Tiene hijos?  | 1) No<br>2) Si<br>3) Embarazada con su primer niño(a) (o compañera embarazada con su primer niño)  |
| D8   | D8 ¿Cuántos hijos e hijas tiene en total?  |  |
| D9   | ¿Qué tan importante es la religión para usted?   | 1) Muy importante<br>2) Algo importante<br>3) No es muy importante<br>4) No es importante en absoluto<br>98 No sabe (no leer)<br>99 Prefiere no responder (no leer)  |
| D10  | ¿Pertenece a alguna religión o grupo religioso?<br>Si: ¿A cuál?  | 1) Ninguno<br>2) Católico<br>3) Cristiano<br>4) Testigos de Jehova<br>5) Otro:   |
| <b>H - CARACTERÍSTICAS DEL HOGAR</b><br><i>Ahora, voy a preguntarle sobre su familia y las personas que están viviendo con usted</i> |  |  |
| H1   | ¿Cuántas personas viven en este hogar, incluyendo usted?<br>*Definición DANE - Hogar: es una persona o grupo de personas |  |

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
|    | <i>que ocupan la totalidad o parte de una vivienda y que se han asociado para compartir la dormida y/o la comida. Pueden ser familiares o no entre sí. Incluyendo si alguien es empleada interna pero vive allá en fines de semana (por ejemplo la mamá)</i>   |   |
| H2 | <p>¿Quién es el jefe/la jefa o los jefes de hogar?</p> <p><i>Un hogar se define como una persona o grupo de personas: emparentadas o no emparentadas, que viven juntos en la misma unidad de vivienda, que reconocen a un adulto o adultos, varón o mujer como cabeza de familia, que comparten los mismos arreglos de vivienda, que comparten la comida, y que se consideran una sola unidad.</i></p>                                     | <p>1) Soy yo el jefe/la jefa de hogar</p> <p>2) Mi esposo(a)/pareja/cónyuge</p> <p>3) Mi padre</p> <p>4) Mi madre</p> <p>5) Cónyuge de mi mamá</p> <p>6) Cónyuge de mi papá</p> <p>7) Abuelo (o abuelo de mi pareja)</p> <p>8) Abuela (o abuela de mi pareja)</p> <p>9) Hijo</p> <p>10) Hija</p> <p>11) Otro familiar:</p> <p>12) Otro:</p> |
| H3 | <p>Listado del hogar:</p> <p><i>Solo queremos tener una idea de la composición familiar del hogar y de lo que hacen los diferentes miembros del hogar.</i></p> <p>¿Cuál es el género, la edad, el empleo y su relación de cada miembro del hogar, sin contar usted?</p>  | (Household listing chart)   |
| H4 | <p>¿Cuántos niños menores de edad viven en su hogar?</p> <p><i>Llenar con las respuestas del listado del hogar, no debe preguntarlo a la persona.</i></p> <p><i>Poner en valor numérico (no en letra), y poner 0 si no hay niños de esta edad</i></p>  | <p>Menos de 5 años:</p> <p>Entre 6 y 12 años:</p> <p>Adolescentes entre 13 y 18 años:</p>   |
| H5 | ¿Quién aporta más económicamente en su hogar?  | <p>1) Yo</p> <p>2) Mi cónyuge o compañero(a)</p> <p>3) Mi padre</p> <p>4) Mi madre</p> <p>5) Suegro</p> <p>6) Suegra</p> <p>7) Mi abuelo</p> <p>8) Mi abuela</p> <p>9) Hijo</p> <p>10) Hija</p> <p>11) Hermano</p> <p>12) Hermana</p> <p>13) Otro familiar mujer:</p> <p>14) Otro familiar hombre:</p>                                      |
| H6 | <p><i>Voy a preguntar sobre algunas de las decisiones que se toman en su hogar y quién toma estas decisiones</i></p> <p><i>Si es una decisión compartida, que se consultan y deciden juntos: seleccionar todas las personas involucradas</i></p> <p>¿Quién toma las decisiones en su hogar sobre las grandes inversiones para la familia (invertir un negocio, comprar o vender tierras/mejoras de vivienda como construir otro piso)?</p> | <p>1) Yo</p> <p>2) Mi cónyuge o compañero(a)</p> <p>3) Un hijo</p> <p>4) Una hija</p> <p>5) Mi padre</p> <p>6) Mi madre</p> <p>7) Suegro</p> <p>8) Suegra</p> <p>9) Otro miembro de la familia:</p> <p>10) Otra persona:</p>  |
| H7 | ¿Quién decide en su hogar si usted visita a sus familiares o amigos?   |   |
| H8 | ¿Quién toma las decisiones sobre la repartición de las tareas domésticas en el hogar?  |   |
| H9 | ¿Quién toma las decisiones sobre cómo cuidar a los miembros del hogar contra el Covid en su casa?  |   |



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| H10  | ¿Quién toma las decisiones laborales en su hogar - si usted trabajo o no, si acepta un trabajo fuera de la casa?  | 1) Yo<br>2) Mi cónyuge o compañero(a)<br>3) Un hijo<br>4) Una hija<br>5) Mi padre<br>6) Mi madre<br>7) Otro miembro de la familia:<br>8) Otra persona: |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>N - CREENCIAS Y PERCEPCIONES</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ahora voy a preguntarle sobre algunas de sus percepciones y opiniones. No hay respuesta correcta o incorrecta, solo queremos escuchar lo que realmente piensa para entender puntos de vista diferentes en la comuan.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Recuerdo que todo lo que diga es confidencial.</i></p> |   |  |
| N1   | ¿Crees que cuando hay escasez de trabajos los patrones deben darles prioridad a los colombianos sobre los extranjeros?  | 1) Si<br>2) No<br>3) Depende   |
| N2   | ¿Crees que los hijos o hijas deben cuidar a sus padres que están enfermos?  |  |
| N3   | ¿Crees que la educación universitaria es más importante para un hombre que para una mujer?  |  |
| N4   | ¿Crees que en general, los hombres son mejores líderes políticos que las mujeres?   |  |
| N5   | ¿Crees que el hombre debería ser jefe de hogar?   |  |
| N6   | ¿Crees que para ser un hombre de verdad hay que ser fuerte?   |  |
| N7   | ¿Crees que cuando hay escasez de trabajos, los hombres tienen más derecho al trabajo que las mujeres?   | 1) Si<br>2) No<br>3) Depende   |
| N7A  | ¿Por qué si/no/depende?   |  |
| N8   | ¿Crees que un hombre debe ganar más dinero que su esposa o compañera?   | 1) Si<br>2) No<br>3) Depende   |
| N8A  | ¿Por qué si/no/depende?   |  |
| N9   | ¿Crees que cambiar pañales, bañar a los niños y alimentarlos debe ser responsabilidad de las mujeres?   | 1) Si<br>2) No<br>3) Depende   |
| N9A  | ¿Por qué si/no/depende?   |  |
| N10  | ¿Crees que los hombres deben hacer al menos una hora al día de oficios domésticos (como cocinar o trapear)?   | 1) Si<br>2) No<br>3) Depende   |
| N10A   | ¿Por qué si/no/depende?   |  |
| N11  | ¿Crees que los hombres deben asumir responsabilidades domésticas compartidas por igual de tiempo y de cantidad en sus familia?  | 1) Si<br>2) No<br>3) Depende   |
| N11A   | ¿Por qué si/no/depende?   |  |
| N12  | ¿Crees que un papá debe pasar al menos una hora al día cuidando a sus niños (es decir cambiar pañales, estar pendiente de ellos, ayudar con las tareas)?  | 1) Si<br>2) No<br>3) Depende   |
| N12A   | ¿Por qué si/no/depende?   |  |
| N13  | ¿Crees que un papá debe asumir responsabilidades compartidas por igual de tiempo y en cantidad que las madres en el cuidado de los niños (es decir cambiar pañales, estar pendiente de ellos, ayudar con las tareas)? | 1) Si<br>2) No<br>3) Depende   |

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|      | <i>Aclarar que por igual es de verdad la misma cantidad de tiempo y de actividades</i>  |  |
| N13A | ¿Por qué si/no/depende?   |  |
| N14  | Si piensa en las mujeres en su barrio, en su opinión, ¿cuántas cree usted que trabajan fuera de la casa por remuneración?   | 1) Todas<br>2) Muchas<br>3) La mitad<br>4) Algunas<br>5) Ningunas<br>98 No sabe (no leer)  |
| N15  | Si piensa en las parejas en su barrio, en su opinión, ¿en cuántas cree usted que las mujeres ganan más que su esposo/cónyuge?   |  |
|      | Si piensa en los hombres en su barrio, en su opinión, ¿cuántos cree usted han dedicado al menos una hora al trabajo doméstico como cocinar o lavar la ropa el día anterior?   |  |
| N16  | Y en su opinión ¿cuántos de los hombres en su barrio cree usted comparten las responsabilidades domésticas como cocinar o trapear por igual en sus familias?  | 1) Todos<br>2) Muchos<br>3) La mitad<br>4) Algunos<br>5) Ningunos<br>98 No sabe (no leer)  |
| N17  | Si piensa en los hombres con hijos en su barrio, en su opinión ¿cuántos cree usted han dedicado al menos una hora al cuidado de sus niños el día anterior?  |  |
| N18  | Si piensa en los hombres con hijos en su barrio, en su opinión ¿cuántos cree usted han dedicado al menos una hora al cuidado de sus niños el día anterior?  |  |
| N19  | Y si piensa en los hombres con hijos en su barrio, en su opinión, ¿Cuántos cree usted asumen responsabilidades por igual que las madres en el cuidado de los niños (es decir cambiar pañales, estar pendiente de ellos, ayudar con las tareas)? |  |
| N20  | Las personas que me importan en mi entorno piensan que los hombres deben ganar más que sus esposas  | 1) Todos<br>2) Muchos<br>3) La mitad<br>4) Algunos<br>5) Ningunos<br>98 No sabe (no leer)  |
| N21  | Las personas que me importan en mi entorno piensan que los hombres deben asumir responsabilidades domésticas como cocinar o trapear   |  |
| N22  | Las personas que me importan en mi entorno piensan que los hombres con hijos deben asumir responsabilidades del cuidado y en la crianza de sus hijos  |  |
| N23  | Mi esposo(a)/compañero(a) está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con que los hombres deben asumir responsabilidades domésticas como cocinar o trapear  | 0) No tiene cónyuge/esposo(a)<br>1) Está muy de acuerdo<br>2) Está de acuerdo<br>3) No está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo<br>4) Está en desacuerdo<br>5) Está muy en desacuerdo<br>98 No sabe (no leer) |
| N24  | Mi esposo(a)/compañero(a) está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con que los hombres con hijos deben asumir responsabilidades del cuidado y en la crianza de sus hijos   |  |
| N25  | <i>A José le gusta cocinar y cuidar su hogar. En su casa, el toma responsabilidades en los oficios del hogar como cocinar para el almuerzo, trapear y lavar la ropa.</i>  | 1) Muy probable<br>2) Probable<br>3) Moderadamente probable (de pronto si, de pronto no)<br>4) Poco probable<br>5) No probable<br>98 No sabe (no leer)   |

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| N26                              | <p>Es muy probable, probable o no probable que estas situaciones suceden:</p> <p>N25.1 Las personas donde vive José pensarían mal, hablarían mal o se burlaron de él.</p> <p>N25.2 José será más respetado en su barrio.</p> <p><i>Jorge tiene un hijo de 1 año y una hija de 3 años. Jorge asume las responsabilidades de cuidado de sus niños con su esposa, Maria: el cambia pañales, les da el tetero y es pendiente de ellos cuando Maria necesita estar afuera.</i></p> <p>Es muy probable, probable o poco probable que estas situaciones suceden:</p> <p>N26.1 Las personas donde vive Jorge pensarían mal, hablarían mal o se burlaron de él.</p> <p>N26.2 Jorge será más respetado en su barrio.</p>   |  |
| N27                              | <p>En su opinión, ¿la participación de los hombres en los oficios domésticos ha disminuido, aumentado o es igual que hace 30-50 años, como cuando tus padres o abuelos eran jóvenes?</p> <p>En su opinión, ¿la participación de los hombres en el cuidado de sus hijos ha disminuido, aumentado o es igual que hace 30-50 años, como cuando tus padres o abuelos eran jóvenes?</p>   | <p>1) Ha disminuido mucho</p> <p>2) Ha disminuido un poco</p> <p>3) No ha cambiado, es igual</p> <p>4) Ha aumentado un poco</p> <p>5) Ha aumentado mucho</p> |
| N28                              |  |  |
| U TRABAJO DOMÉSTICO Y DE CUIDADO |  |  |
| U1-<br>U9                        | <p>En los últimos 7 días, pasó tiempo:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- en limpiar la casa (aseo, trapear, barrer, lavar los baños) durante una hora o más</li> <li>- en preparar la comida y cocinar durante una hora o más</li> <li>- lavando platos y arreglar la cocina después de la comida durante una hora o más</li> <li>- tiempo lavando, secando y guardando ropa durante una hora o más</li> <li>- en el cuidado diario de niños (bañar, cambiar pañales, vestir, etc.) durante una hora o más</li> <li>- en estar pendiente de niños en la casa o supervisar los niños durante una hora o más</li> <li>- en jugar con niños, pasar tiempo de calidad o hablar con ellos <i>*preguntar igual si no vive con ellos</i></li> <li>- ayudando a niños con las clases y las tareas del colegio o en clases virtuales durante una hora o más <i>*preguntar igual si no vives con ellos</i></li> <li>- en cuidado de personas mayores o con discapacidad en su familia durante una hora o más <i>*preguntar igual si no vives con ellos</i></li> </ul> | <p>1) Si</p> <p>2) No</p>  |

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| U10-<br>U18 | <p>Cuánto tiempo se dedicó en estas actividades en las últimas 24 horas (ayer de 00:00 hasta 23:59):</p> <p><i>Nota: Conversión 0.25 = 15 minutos, 0.50 = 30 minutos, 0.75 = 45 minutos</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limpiar la casa (aseo, trapear, barrer, lavar los baños)</li> <li>- Preparar la comida y cocinar</li> <li>- Lavar los platos y arreglar la cocina después de la comida</li> <li>- Lavar, secar y guardar ropa</li> <li>- Cuidado diario de los niños (bañar, cambiar pañales, vestir, etc.) <i>*igual si no vives con ellos</i></li> <li>- Estar pendiente de los niños en la casa, supervisión de niños <i>*igual si no vives con ellos</i></li> <li>- jugar con niños, pasar tiempo de calidad o hablar con ellos <i>*igual si no vives con ellos</i></li> <li>- Ayudar niños con las clases y las tareas del colegio <i>*igual si no vives con ellos</i></li> <li>- en cuidado de personas mayores o con discapacidad en su familia durante una hora o más <i>*igual si no vives con ellos</i></li> </ul> |  |
| U19         | <p>En comparación con antes de la pandemia de COVID-19, en febrero 2020 ¿Cree que su carga de trabajo ha aumentado o disminuido o se quedó más o menos igual para?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trabajo remunerado, lo que hace para generar ingresos</li> <li>- Negocio propio o familiar</li> <li>- Oficios domésticas de la casa (cocinar, aseo, etc.)</li> <li>- Cuidado y supervisión de los niños</li> <li>- Cuidado de familiares</li> <li>- Trabajo comunitario y social</li> </ul>  | <p>1) Ha aumentado mucho</p> <p>2) Ha aumentado un poco</p> <p>3) Permaneció casi igual</p> <p>4) Ha disminuido un poco</p> <p>5) Ha disminuido mucho</p> <p>6) No aplica</p>                            |
| U20         | <p>¿En su casa, quién es la persona encargada, principalmente responsable de los oficios del hogar?</p> <p><i>Si más de una persona: seleccionar todas las personas encargadas</i></p>  | <p>1) Yo</p> <p>2) Mi cónyuge o compañero(a)</p> <p>3) Mi padre</p> <p>4) Mi madre</p> <p>5) Un hijo</p> <p>6) Una hija</p>  |
| U21         | <p>¿Quién cocina la mayoría de las comidas de su familia?</p>   | <p>7) Mi abuelo</p> <p>8) Mi abuela</p> <p>9) Empleada doméstica</p> <p>10) Suegro</p> <p>11) Suegra</p> <p>12) Otro:</p>  |
| U22         | <p>¿Le pagan a alguna persona que no vive en este hogar para que les ayude los oficios domésticos <i>incluyendo a un familiar</i>?</p>  | <p>1) No</p> <p>2) Si</p>  |
| U23         | <p>¿Quién es la persona en la casa principalmente responsable del cuidado y la crianza de los niños de su hogar?</p> <p><i>Si más de una persona: seleccionar todas las personas encargadas</i></p>   | <p>1) La mamá del niño</p> <p>2) El papá del niño</p> <p>3) El abuelo de los niños</p> <p>4) La abuela de los niños</p> <p>5) Un hermano mayor de los niños</p> <p>6) Una hermana mayor de los niños</p> |
| U24         | <p>¿Quién lleva o llevaba a los niños/las niñas a citas médicas cuando se enferman?</p> <p><i>*Puede preguntar quién llevaba a los niños a citas médicas cuándo los hijos eran pequeños, si los hijos ya son grandes</i></p>  | <p>7) Niñera</p> <p>8) Otro:</p>   |

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| U25 | <p>¿Los niños y niñas de esta casa están inscritos a un jardín o un colegio en este momento o dedican tiempo a la educación?</p> <p><i>*Nota: la educación incluye cualquier actividad de aprendizaje, no solo la escolarización formal</i></p>  | <p>1) No están inscritos</p> <p>2) Si (todos), virtual o a distancia</p> <p>3) Si (todos), presencial o en alternancia</p> <p>4) Si (algunos), virtual o a distancia</p> <p>5) Si (algunos), presencial o en alternancia</p> <p>6) Situación incierta</p>  |
| U26 | <p>Antes del Covid-19 ¿Quién llevaba y recogía los niños del jardín, de la guardería o del colegio?</p> <p><i>O si ya van al colegio o a la guardería presencial: ¿quién lleva y recoge los niños si ya van a la guardería o al colegio?</i></p> | <p>1) Iban solos</p> <p>2) La mamá del hijo(a)</p> <p>3) El papá del hijo(a)</p> <p>4) Abuelo del hijo(a)</p> <p>5) Abuela del hijo(a)</p> <p>6) Hijo mayor (hermano del hijo(a))</p> <p>7) Hija mayor (hermana del hijo(a))</p> <p>8) Tía del hijo(a)</p> <p>9) Tío del hijo(a)</p> <p>10) Vecino(a)</p> <p>11) Otro:</p>   |
| U27 | <p>¿Quién cuida a los niños mientras que los padres está en el trabajo, están ocupado(a)s o fuera de la casa?</p> <p><i>*Puede ser una persona que no vive en el hogar.</i></p>  | <p>1) Nadie, se quedan solos</p> <p>2) La mamá del niño(a)</p> <p>3) El papá del niño(a)</p> <p>4) Abuela del niño(a)</p> <p>5) Abuelo del niño(a)</p> <p>6) Hermano mayor del niño(a)</p> <p>7) Hermana mayor del niño(a)</p> <p>8) Tía del niño(a)</p> <p>9) Tío del niño(a)</p> <p>10) Niñera</p> <p>11) Madre comunitaria</p> <p>12) Vecina</p> <p>13) Institución Buen Comienzo</p> <p>14) Jardín, guardería, colegio privado</p> <p>15) Corporación/organización comunitaria/ludoteca</p> <p>16) Otro:</p> |
| U28 | <p>¿Pagan a quienes cuidan a los niños mientras está en el trabajo o fuera de la casa?</p>   | <p>1) No</p> <p>2) Si</p>  |
| U29 | <p>Si podía elegir, ¿Dónde prefieres (o hubieras preferido) dejar tus hijos durante el día, cuando le toca(ba) trabajar o estar fuera de la casa?</p> <p><i>Clasifica las 3 primeras opciones que prefieres de 1 a 3</i></p>                     | <p>_____ Solos (en la casa)</p> <p>_____ Con una madre comunitaria</p> <p>_____ En un Buen Comienzo, jardín o guardería pública</p> <p>_____ Jardín infantil o guardería privado</p> <p>_____ Corporación/organización comunitaria</p> <p>_____ Con la mamá</p> <p>_____ Con el papá</p> <p>_____ Con la abuela</p> <p>_____ Con el abuelo</p> <p>_____ Con un(a)hermano(a) mayor del niño(a)</p> <p>_____ Otro</p> <p>_____ No aplica</p>   |
| U30 | <p>¿Le gustaría que su cónyuge o compañero(a) participara más en los oficios del hogar?</p>  | <p>1) No</p> <p>2) Si</p>  |

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| U31 | ¿Le gustaría que sus hijos participaran más en los oficios del hogar?                           | 1) No<br>2) Si   |
| U32 | ¿Por qué no le gustaría que su cónyuge o hijo(a)s hicieran más oficios del hogar?               | 1) Se negará<br>2) Esta ocupado(a) con trabajo remunerado o sus estudios<br>3) No sabrá como hacerlo<br>4) No lo hace bien, yo lo hago mejor<br>5) Los demás en mi barrio le criticarían<br>6) Mi familia no está de acuerdo<br>7) Otro:   |
| U33 | Con respecto a las tareas domésticas en su hogar, considera que hace                            | 1) Mucho más que de lo que me corresponde<br>2) Un poco más de lo que me corresponde<br>3) Lo que me corresponde<br>4) Un poco menos de lo que me corresponde<br>5) Mucho menos que lo que me corresponde  |
| U34 | ¿Cuál es la razón por la que hace menos de lo que le corresponde en las tareas domésticas?      | 1) No me deja la persona encargada u otro familiar<br>2) Estoy ocupado(a) con trabajo remunerado o mis estudios<br>3) No sé como hacerlo<br>4) Las mujeres son mejores en las tareas domésticas que los hombres<br>5) Los demás en mi barrio me criticarían<br>6) Mi familia no está de acuerdo<br>7) Me da pereza<br>8) Otro: |
| U35 | Con respecto al cuidado de los niños, considera que hace  | 1) Mucho más que de lo que me corresponde<br>2) Un poco más de lo que me corresponde<br>3) Lo que me corresponde<br>4) Un poco menos de lo que me corresponde<br>5) Mucho menos que lo que me corresponde  |
| U36 | ¿Cuál es la razón por la que hace menos de lo que le corresponde en el cuidado de los niño(a)s? | 1) No me deja la persona encargada u otro familiar<br>2) Estoy ocupado(a) con trabajo remunerado o mis estudios<br>3) No sé como hacerlo<br>4) Las mujeres son mejores en las tareas domésticas que los hombres<br>5) Los demás en mi barrio me criticarían<br>6) Mi familia no está de acuerdo<br>7) Me da pereza<br>8) Otro: |

| E EMPLEO E INGRESOS  |  |   |
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| <i>Estamos a más de la mitad de la encuesta. Ahora, voy a preguntarle sobre las actividades que hace, su situación laboral y económica y cómo han cambiado desde que la pandemia empezó. Recuerdo que todo lo que diga es confidencial y no tiene que responder a una pregunta si no lo desea.</i> |  |   |
| E1   | <p>¿A qué se dedicó usted en los últimos 3 mes?</p> <p><i>Poner una o las 2 actividades principales</i></p>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Generando ingresos (trabajo o negocio propio o familiar)</li> <li>2) Rebusque, trabajo diario, oficios varios</li> <li>3) Buscando trabajo activamente (desempleado)</li> <li>4) Trabajo para un familiar sin remuneración</li> <li>5) Estudiando</li> <li>6) Oficios del hogar</li> <li>7) Cuidado y estar pendiente de niños sin remuneración</li> <li>8) Cuidado no remunerado a familiares enfermos o con discapacidad</li> <li>9) Rentista</li> <li>10) Jubilado o pensionado</li> <li>11) Trabajo social o comunitario</li> <li>12) Practicante o voluntariado</li> <li>13) Con discapacidad, no puede trabajar</li> <li>14) Otro:</li> </ol> |
| E2-E12   | <p>En los últimos 7 días, pasó tiempo:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- trabajando por un pago para algún particular, organización o empresa durante una hora o más (trabajo remunerado o generando ingresos)</li> <li>- trabajando para su propio negocio o un negocio familiar durante una hora o más</li> <li>- en trabajo de rebusque, diario, oficios varios o ventas ambulantes para generar dinero durante una hora o más</li> <li>- realizó actividades de auto-construcción o mejoramiento de vivienda para su propia casa durante una hora o más</li> <li>- pasó tiempo en elaborar prendas de vestir o coser/cortar ropa para las personas del hogar durante una hora o más<br/><i>*Solo poner "si", si elaboró prendas de vestir o cosió para miembros del hogar, no para vender</i></li> <li>- en actividades de jardinería/huerta particular (de la casa) durante una hora o más</li> <li>- para hacer compras o mercar para las necesidades básicas del hogar durante una hora o más</li> <li>- en estudios o actividades de aprendizaje durante una hora o más, incluyendo hacer tareas <i>*Estudios para ellos mismos no para ayudar a un familiar o niño en sus tareas</i></li> <li>- en actividades sociales, religiosas o de deporte para su propio disfrute durante una hora o más</li> <li>- en trabajo comunitario durante una hora o más</li> <li>- en recoger subsidios (como Familias en Acción por ejemplo) durante una hora o más</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Si</li> <li>2) No</li> </ol>  |
| E13-E24  | <p>Cuánto tiempo se dedicó en las últimas 24 horas (ayer de 00:00 hasta 23:59):</p> <p><i>Nota: Conversión 0.25 = 15 minutos, 0.50 = 30 minutos, 0.75 = 45</i></p>   | <p><i>*A veces no es fácil de recordar. Agradecemos que responda con su mejor estimación, según su conocimiento. Esto es útil para comprender cómo pasan su tiempo los demás miembros del hogar. Por</i></p>  |

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|     | <p><i>minutos.</i><br/> <i>Por ejemplo, si es 3 horas y 30 minutos poner: 3.50</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- en un trabajo por un pago para algún particular, organización o empresa</li> <li>- trabajando para un negocio propio o familiar</li> <li>- en un trabajo de rebusque, trabajo diario, oficios varios o ventas ambulantes</li> <li>- a actividades de auto-construcción y mejoramiento de vivienda para su propia casa</li> <li>- en elaborar prendas de vestir o coser/cortar ropa para personas del hogar</li> <li>- a actividades de jardinería/huerta particular (de la casa)</li> <li>- a estudios, haciendo sus tareas o actividades de aprendizaje</li> <li>- en hacer compras o mercar para las necesidades básicas del hogar</li> <li>- en actividades sociales, religiosas o de deporte para su propio disfrute</li> <li>- al trabajo comunitario</li> <li>- a recoger subsidios <b>esta última semana</b></li> <li>- durmiendo o descansando</li> </ul> | <p><i>favor, dénos la mejor estimación aproximada que sepa.</i></p>  |
| E25 | <p>¿Puedes describir las actividades que hace para ganar dinero en su trabajo o su negocio?<br/> <i>(Escribe todo exactamente como se le dijo)</i></p>  |  |
| E26 | <p>¿Cuál es su situación laboral?<br/> <i>(Marcar hasta dos, las principales)</i></p>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Empleado remunerado en una empresa</li> <li>2) Empleado del gobierno/alcaldía ; trabajador del sector público</li> <li>3) Empleado remunerado para una organización comunitaria o social</li> <li>4) Empleado(a) doméstico(a) - externa o interna</li> <li>5) Trabajador por cuenta propia / negocio propio</li> <li>6) Independiente - prestación de servicios para un tercero</li> <li>7) Trabajo de rebusque / trabajo diario por jornada / ventas ambulantes</li> <li>8) Trabajo remunerado de cuidado para un particular: cuidar a niños o adultos mayores</li> <li>9) Madre comunitaria o FAMY</li> <li>10) Otro:</li> </ol> |



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| E27 | ¿Qué sector describe mejor su actividad principal en los últimos 7 días?  | 1) Agricultura<br>2) Manufactura<br>3) Construcción<br>4) Textil o confecciones<br>5) Hoteles y restaurants<br>6) Comercio y servicios (almacenes, ventas por catálogo, servicios de uñas, peluquería, etc.)<br>7) Trabajo informal de rebusque (reciclador, ventas ambulantes, trabajo en semáforos, etc.)<br>8) Transporte, almacenamiento, domicilios<br>9) Sector público<br>10) Información y comunicación<br>11) Actividades financieras (9)<br>12) Actividades inmobiliarias y de alquiler<br>13) Educación (docente, profesor, etc.)<br>14) Economía de cuidado (empleo doméstico, oficios varios de aseo, cuidadora o madre comunitaria)<br>15) Salud<br>16) Entretenimiento, deporte y sector artístico (sector cultural)<br>17) Sector social y comunitario |
| E28 | ¿Por cuánto tiempo llevas haciendo este trabajo o teniendo este negocio específico?   | Años:<br>Meses:  |
| E29 | Ahora, ¿Esta trabajando en la casa o afuera?  | 1) En la casa<br>2) Fuera de las casa  |
| E30 | ¿Cuánto dinero aproximadamente recibió usted individualmente el mes pasado de su trabajo, subsidios, pensión?<br><br><i>Si trabaja por jornada: hacer el cálculo con ellos por mes. Preguntar en promedio cuánto en un día que trabaja, y cuántas días por semana. Intentar hacer una estimación de cuánto por mes (menos de un salario mínimo, un poco más, etc.)</i><br><i>*Averiguar también cuánto ganan si dicen por ejemplo "un salario mínimo" porque si trabajan solo a medio tiempo podría ser solo 500,000COP en vez de 900,00COP</i> | 1) No recibe ingresos o dinero<br>2) Menos de un salario mínimo legal vigente (SMMLV) (908.526)<br>3) Entre 1 y 2 SMMLV (908.526 - 1.800.000)<br>4) Entre 2 y 3 SMMLV (1.800.000 - 2.700.000)<br>5) Entre 3 y 5 SMMLV (2.700.000 - 4.500.000)<br>6) Más de 5 SMMLV (más de 4.500.000)<br>99 Prefiere no responder (no leer)  |

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| E31  | ¿Cuál es la razón principal por la que no trabaja para generar dinero?   | 1) No me dejan - algún familiar no quiere que trabaja<br>2) Tener tiempo personal, para descansar<br>3) Oficios de la casa (cocinar, aseo, etc.)<br>4) Cuidar a niños<br>5) Cuidar a familiares mayores o con discapacidad<br>6) Estudiando<br>7) No puedo encontrar más trabajo / falta de oportunidades<br>8) Remuneración muy baja, pagan muy mal<br>9) Falta de educación<br>10) Discapacidad<br>11) Otra razón: |
| E32  | ¿Trabaja a tiempo completo, más de 35 horas a la semana?   | 1) Si<br>2) No   |
| E33  | ¿Cuál es la razón principal por la que no trabaja más horas a la semana?   | 1) No me dejan - algún familiar no quiere que trabaja<br>2) Tener tiempo personal, para descansar<br>3) Oficios de la casa (cocinar, aseo, etc.)<br>4) Cuidar a niños<br>5) Cuidar a familiares mayores o con discapacidad<br>6) Estudiando<br>7) No puedo encontrar más trabajo / falta de oportunidades<br>8) Remuneración muy baja, pagan muy mal<br>9) Falta de educación<br>10) Discapacidad<br>11) Otra razón: |
| E34  | ¿Hizo alguna otra actividad o trabajo para generar dinero en los últimos 12 meses (en el último año)?<br>(si no estaba trabajando)   | 1) Si<br>2) No   |
| E35  | ¿Ha tenido un empleo, trabajo remunerado o propio negocio alguna vez en su vida?<br>(si no trabajó en los últimos 12 meses)  | 1) Si<br>2) No   |
| E36  | ¿Estuvo trabajando, haciendo una actividad remunerada o generando dinero en febrero 2020, antes del Covid-19?<br>*Puede ser también generando ingresos por un negocio propio o familiar, o por trabajo de rebusque | 1) Si<br>2) No   |
| E37  | ¿Sus ingresos mensuales actuales son más, menos o lo mismo de lo que ganaba en febrero 2020, antes del Covid-19?   | 1) Menos<br>2) Igual, lo mismo<br>3) Más   |
| E37A | ¿Le ha pasado algunas de estas situaciones desde que la pandemia empezó en marzo 2020?   | 1) Perdió su trabajo, terminación de su contrato<br>2) Se quebró su negocio<br>3) Le suspendieron su trabajo por un tiempo<br>4) Le bajaron su salario o sus ingresos<br>5) Encontró un nuevo trabajo  |

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| E38  | ¿Antes de la cuarentena, en febrero 2020, trabajaba la mayoría del tiempo en la casa o afuera de la casa?  | 1) En la casa<br>2) Fuera de la casa  |
| E39  | Si vive con una pareja: ¿Quién de usted o de su cónyuge o compañero(a) ganó más dinero el año pasado?  | 1) No aplica - No vive con un compañero(a)<br>2) Yo<br>3) Mi cónyuge o compañero(a)<br>4) Aproximadamente igual<br>5) Cónyuge no trabaja/no genera ingresos<br>98 No sabe (no leer)<br>99 Prefiere no responder (no leer) |
| E40  | ¿Proporciona ayuda o apoyo económico a alguien que no vive en este hogar?<br><i>por ejemplo a un familiar</i><br><br>Sí: ¿A quién?   | 1) Nadie<br>2) Padres (o a uno de los padres)<br>3) Abuelos (o a uno de los abuelos)<br>4) Hijo(a)s (o a unos de los hijos)<br>5) Hermano(a)s (o a unos de los hermanos)<br>6) Otro:                                      |
| E41  | En el mes pasado, ¿Quién pagó principalmente por gastos relacionado a los niños como artículos de cuidado para sus hijos (cómo pañales, ropa, medicinas, comida, juguetes)?<br><i>*Igual si no viven con ellos</i> | 1) No aplica<br>2) La mamá del niño(a)<br>3) El papá del niño(a)<br>4) Los dos papás conjuntos<br>5) Otro familiar:<br>6) Otro:   |
| E42  | En promedio, ¿usted paga cuántos de los gastos del hogar?  | 1) Nada<br>2) Casi nada<br>3) Menos de la mitad<br>4) La mitad<br>5) Más de la mitad<br>6) Todo<br>98 No sabe (no leer)<br>99 Prefiere no responder (no leer)   |
| E43  | ¿Quién usualmente decide cómo se utilizará el dinero que usted gana?<br><i>Si dos personas conjuntos, decisión compartida: seleccionar las dos personas</i>  | 1) Yo<br>2) Mi cónyuge o compañero(a)<br>3) Mi padre<br>4) Mi madre<br>5) Un hijo<br>6) Una hija<br>7) Otro:  |
| E44  | ¿Quién usualmente decide cómo se utilizará el dinero que gana su cónyuge/compañero(a)?<br><i>Si dos personas conjuntos, decisión compartida: seleccionar las dos personas</i>                                      | 1) No tiene cónyuge<br>2) Cónyuge no tiene ingresos<br>3) Yo<br>4) Mi cónyuge o compañero(a)<br>5) Otro:  |
| E45  | En general en un mes, ¿Le queda dinero para su propio disfrute, para comprar cosas para sí mismo o solo usas tus ingresos para los gastos de la familia y para los demás?  | 1) Si me queda dinero para mi propio disfrute<br>2) No me queda dinero para mi propio disfrute  |
| C INFANCIA<br><i>Ya estamos terminando la encuesta, nos falta dos partes. Ahora voy a preguntarle sobre su infancia y experiencias anteriores.</i> |  |   |
| C1   | ¿Dónde vivía cuando tenía 8 años?  | 1) Medellín<br>2) Otra ciudad<br>3) Cabecera municipal (un pueblo)<br>4) Área rural, en el campo<br>5) Otro país  |
| C2   | ¿Cuántos hermanos y hermanas son en su familia, incluyendo usted?  |   |

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|     | <i>Si, por ejemplo, solo tiene un hermano: poner 2 (el hermano y la persona encuestada); si tiene 2, poner 3, etc.</i>  |  |
| C3  | De todos los hermanos, eres el primero (mayor), segundo, tercero..., último (menor)   | 1) Primero(a) (mayor)<br>2) Segundo(a)<br>3) Tercero(a)<br>4) 4<br>5) 5<br>6) 6<br>7) 7<br>8) 8<br>9) 9<br>10) 10<br>11) Otro:   |
| C4  | ¿A qué edad salió del hogar de su infancia y adolescencia para ir a vivir de manera continua en otro lugar?<br><i>(en años). Escribir "no aplica" si todavía está viviendo en el hogar de su infancia y nunca ha salido.</i>  |  |
| C5  | ¿Cuál fue el motivo principal para hacerlo?   | 1) No aplica (está todavía viviendo con sus padres)<br>2) Independizarse, vivir solo(a)<br>3) Casarse o vivir con mi cónyuge, formar un hogar<br>4) Tuve un hijo<br>5) Ejército<br>6) Para estudiar<br>7) Para trabajar<br>8) Otro:                                  |
| C6  | ¿Cuántos años tenía usted cuando nació su primer hijo(a)?   |  |
| C7  | ¿Su papa, la pareja de su mamá u otro hombre en la casa participaba en algunas de las siguientes actividades cuando era niño(a)?<br><i>Poner no aplica si no había un hombre en la casa en su infancia</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cocinaba</li> <li>- Limpiaba la casa, hacía aseo</li> <li>- Lavaba la ropa</li> <li>- Cuidaba a usted o a sus hermanos (cambiar pañales, etc.)</li> <li>- Iba a las reuniones de padres al colegio</li> <li>- Llevaba a usted o a sus hermanos a citas médicas</li> </ul> | 1) Nunca<br>2) Casi nunca<br>3) A veces<br>4) Frecuentemente<br>5) Siempre<br>6) No Aplica   |
| C8  | ¿Cuándo era niño o adolescente, le tocó: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cocinar</li> <li>- Limpiar la casa, hacer aseo</li> <li>- Lavar la ropa</li> <li>- Cuidar a sus hermanos</li> </ul>   | 1) Nunca<br>2) Casi nunca<br>3) A veces<br>4) Frecuentemente<br>5) Siempre<br>6) (No aplica)   |
| C9  | En su infancia a usted (a la persona encuestada) ¿A qué se dedicaba principalmente su mamá o la mujer adulta en la casa?<br><i>Poner la actividad principal</i>   | 1) No había una mujer en la casa<br>2) Campesina – trabajo en fincas<br>3) Oficios de hogar (ama de casa)<br>4) Obrera en una factoría<br>5) Empleo remunerada<br>6) Independiente<br>7) Negocio propio fuera de la casa<br>8) Negocio propio o ventas desde la casa |
| C11 | En su infancia a usted (a la persona encuestada) ¿A qué se dedicaba principalmente su papá o el hombre adulto en la casa en su infancia? (Ocupación de su papá, del hombre de la casa)  | 9) Empleo doméstico, casas de familia<br>10) Cuidadora/madre comunitaria<br>11) Trabajo informal de rebusque<br>12) Otro:  |

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| C10   | ¿Cuál es el nivel educativo más alto que ha alcanzado su mamá o la mujer de la casa?   | 1) Ninguna educación formal completa<br>2) Primaria empezada pero incompleta<br>3) Primaria terminada<br>4) Bachillerato empezado pero incompleto<br>5) Bachillerato terminada<br>6) Técnico o tecnológico<br>7) Universidad empezada pero incompleta<br>8) Universidad terminada<br>9) Posgrado<br>98 No sabe (no leer)  |
| C12   | ¿Cuál es el nivel educativo más alto que ha alcanzado su papá o el hombre de la casa?  | 98 No sabe (no leer)  |
| C13   | Si se acuerda, ¿Su abuela trabajaba por dinero fuera de casa?  | 1) No<br>2) Si  |
| <b>R - Ahora, para terminar voy a preguntarle sobre algunos recursos económicos y sociales.</b> |  |   |
| R1  | La vivienda donde vive es:   | 1) Arrendada<br>2) Propia<br>3) A nombre de su cónyuge<br>4) Familiar, sin pagar arriendo<br>5) Familiar, pagando arriendo<br>6) Propia con hipoteca (pagando la casa)<br>7) Subarrendada (comparte alquiler)<br>8) Otro:   |
| R2  | ¿Cuál es el estrato socioeconómico de su vivienda?<br><i>*Puede averiguar en la cuenta de servicios si no sabe</i>                                 |   |
| R3  | ¿Cuáles fueron las principales fuentes de sustento de su hogar para el último mes?<br><i>Leer todo y seleccionar todas las fuentes de sustento</i> | 1) Negocio de los miembros del hogar<br>2) Trabajo remunerado o independiente de miembros del hogar<br>3) Trabajo diario, oficios varios, o rebusque de miembros del hogar<br>4) Ingresos de una propiedad o inversiones<br>5) Ahorros<br>6) Pensión<br>7) Agricultura<br>8) Apoyo económico de alguien viviendo por fuera del país<br>9) Apoyo económico de alguien en Colombia<br>10) Subsidios (Adulto Mayor, Familias en Acción, Jóvenes en Acción, beca universitaria, etc.)<br>11) Asistencia de una organización social o comunitaria, o iglesia<br>12) Otro:<br>13) Ninguna |
| R4  | ¿Los ingresos de todo el hogar han aumentado, disminuido o son iguales que en febrero 2020, antes de la pandemia del Covid-19?                     | 1) Aumentaron<br>2) Lo mismo<br>3) Disminuyeron   |
| R5  | En su hogar, se encuentra:<br><i>*Si la persona está incomodá con esta pregunta, explicar que solo</i>   | 1) Si<br>2) No<br>98 No sabe (no leer)<br>99 Prefiere no responder (no leer)  |

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|                      | <p><i>preguntamos porque tienen un impacto sobre los oficios domésticos, el trabajo, y las clases virtuales, no es para el SISBEN.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motocicleta o automóvil para uso particular</li> <li>- Computador</li> <li>- Máquina de coser</li> <li>- Lavadora</li> <li>- Nevera</li> <li>- Estufa</li> <li>- Conectividad internet</li> </ul>  |   |
| R6                   | ¿Tiene a su nombre una cuenta bancaria o una cuenta de una cooperativa como Confiar?   | 1) No<br>2) Si<br>3) Si, cuenta compartida  |
| R7                   | ¿Tiene sus propios ahorros?  | 1) No<br>2) Si  |
| R8                   | ¿Hace parte de un grupo de ahorros, natillera o es cliente de una empresa de microcrédito?   | 1) No<br>2) Si  |
| R9                   | ¿Eres miembro de una organización comunitaria, social o política?<br><i>*si asistente regularmente a las reuniones of eventos</i><br><br><i>Ejemplos si pregunta: iglesias o grupos religiosos, Juntas de Acción Comunal, colectivos, asociaciones, clubes recreativos, deportivos, artísticos, culturales, ambientales</i>  | 1) No<br>2) Si  |
| R10                  | ¿Tiene o alguna vez tuvo una función de liderazgo en su comuna?<br><i>(Ejemplos: presidente, directora, líder barrial, secretaria, tesorera, líder o vocera de un pequeño grupo)</i>   | 1) No<br>2) Si, especificar:  |
| R11                  | ¿Ha participado alguna vez en capacitaciones sobre la familia, el cuidado de los hijos, temas de género o masculinidades?<br><i>*Puede ser por el trabajo, la alcaldía, la biblioteca, colegio, Comfama, etc.</i>  | 1) No<br>2) Si, de quién:   |
| F FIN DE LA ENCUESTA |  |   |
| T1                   | Hora exacta al fin de la encuesta<br>(HH:MM, por ejemplo 14:55)  |   |
| F0                   | Agradecer la persona por su tiempo y su participación en la encuesta. Es muy importante para nosotros conocer su opinion y su experiencia.<br>Explicar que por ser un estudio sobre familias, nos interesaría encuestar a sus familiares cercanos, si es posible y si está de acuerdo. Es decir: si tiene una pareja, abuelos, padres o hijos adultos que viven en Medellín. Anotar sus nombres y contactos/direcciones si la persona está de acuerdo. |   |
| F2                   | ¿Estaría de acuerdo en participar en una entrevista cualitativa?<br><i>*La entrevista cualitativa es para hablar un poco más de sus percepciones y experiencias en el trabajo y en su familia.</i>   | 1) Si<br>2) No  |
| F3                   | ¿Cuáles días y horas tiene mayor disponibilidad?   |   |
| F4                   | 1) Proporcionar un número de teléfono de contacto y un correo electrónico a los que los participantes pueden contactar si se infectan con Covid-19 o si necesitan más información sobre la investigación   | 2) Compartir el detalle: las suculentas, el mekatico, carta de información<br>3) No olvidar anotar sus observaciones sobre la encuesta después de salir de la entrevista y terminar la encuesta |
| F5                   | Durante la entrevista, el entrevistado estuvo:   | 1) Muy interesado<br>2) Algo interesado<br>3) No muy interesado   |
| F6                   | Lugar de la encuesta (en el hogar, un espacio público, en una sede social...)  |   |

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| F7 | ¿Alguien más presente durante la encuesta?  |  |
| F8 | Algunas dificultades durante la encuesta: (preguntas que no entendía, interferencias, ruido, etc.)  |  |
| F9 | Observaciones, comentarios, e información adicional sobre la familia o la persona encuestada:<br><i>La observaciones pueden ser sobre la situación familiar, más información sobre su trabajo o empleo de los miembros del hogar, sobre cómo se reparten las tareas domésticas en el hogar, o comentarios que hicieron sobre las preguntas de las creencias (porque creen o no que los hombres deben asumir responsabilidades compartidas por igual, por ejemplo)</i> |  |

## Appendix 7 Approval from the LSE Research Ethics Committee



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Research Ethics Committee

Sophie Legros  
Department of International Development  
[s.c.legros@lse.ac.uk](mailto:s.c.legros@lse.ac.uk)

9<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Dear Sophie

**Re: 'Resistant to Change: Exploring Changes and Continuities in Gender Norms in Urban Communities of Medellin, Colombia' (REC ref. 1006)**

I am writing with reference to the above research proposal. The Research Ethics Committee, having considered the documentation sent, is satisfied that the ethical issues raised by the proposed research have been properly taken into account and that adequate safeguards have been put in place. I am accordingly able on behalf of the Committee to confirm our approval of the application. Please note, however, that ethics approval is contingent upon approval of your travel outline/risk assessment by the Health and Safety team.

Please note that any significant changes to the research design must be reported to the Research Ethics Committee. Amendments to the research design that may affect participants and/or that may have ethical implications must be reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee before commencement (or recommencement) of the project. The Research Ethics Committee may periodically conduct a selective audit of current research projects.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well with your research project.  
If you have any further queries, please feel free to contact Lyn Grove, Research Division.

Yours sincerely,

Professor David Lewis  
Chair, Research Ethics Committee  
cc. Dr Lyn Grove, Research & Innovation Division

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Research Ethics Committee

Sophie Legros  
Department of International Development  
[s.c.legros@lse.ac.uk](mailto:s.c.legros@lse.ac.uk)

25<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Sophie

**Re: 'Resistant to Change: Exploring Changes and Continuities in Gender Norms in Urban Communities of Medellín, Colombia'**

Request to resume in-person fieldwork (REC ref. 1006b)

I am writing with reference to the above research proposal, which received Research Ethics Committee approval in October 2019, and for which you have now submitted a request to proceed with conducting your fieldwork in Medellín. Having considered the documentation you have provided, the Committee is satisfied that you have given due consideration to the ethical issues raised and that additional safeguards are in place to mitigate risks relating to the COVID19 pandemic. I am thus able in my capacity as Deputy Chair of the Committee to approve the fieldwork request. **Please note, however, that ethics approval is contingent upon confirmation from the Health and Safety team regarding approval of the risk assessment of the research activity/travel.**

Please note also that any significant changes to the research design that may have ethical implications must be reported to the Research Ethics Committee and may require further review by the Committee before commencement (or recommencement) of the project. In addition, you must continue to monitor and abide by any local restrictions and public health guidance relating to the COVID19 pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well with your research project.

If you have any further queries please contact Lyn Grove via [research.ethics@lse.ac.uk](mailto:research.ethics@lse.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ilka Gleibs  
Deputy Chair, Research Ethics Committee  
cc. Dr Lyn Grove, Research Division

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