

Measuring gender equality in family decision making in Latin America: A key towards understanding changing family configurations¹

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This study investigates gender equality in terms of decision making in Latin American families. A step-by-step multi-group latent class analysis (MGLCA) is applied to extract the construct of gender equality from DHS data. Its cross-cultural validation for seven Latin American countries (N=62,554) is attested and the influence of women's age, education and type of union on family decision making is shown. The types of union included in this analysis are marriage and three previously identified types of cohabitation: traditional, innovative and blended. Three types of decision making are found. In the first two types, women make household decisions alone or jointly with their husbands or partners. These are married, older and higher educated women. The third type groups women who have the decisions in their household made by their partners. These are lower educated women, who tend to live in the traditional cohabitation. The differences in terms of decision making for the innovative and blended types of cohabitation in Latin America are not clear. Results confirm earlier evidence that changes in gender roles happen in different rhythms for different social classes: in the upper social strata the gender revolution is in a more advanced stage than in the lower ones.

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1. Introduction

Family formation patterns have witnessed a noticeable change in Western countries since the 1960s. With greater social acceptance of non-marital cohabitation, marriage is no longer considered to be the only way to establish a family, and the incidence of divorce has been increasing as well. In fully developed countries, changes in nuptiality patterns, such as increasing cohabitation, postponement of marriage and decreases in fertility are interpreted by sociologists and demographers as consistent with a shift in the ideational domain, meaning values and beliefs, as well as increasing gender symmetry (e.g. Esteve et al., 2013; Esteve et al., 2012a; Lesthaeghe, 2010; Lesthaeghe & Surkyn, 1988).

Statistics indicate that Latin America follows these Western trends with its growing divorce and cohabitation rates. Census data show, although with marked heterogeneity, that there is a rising trend in cohabitation in Latin America. For example, the percentage of cohabitation for partnered women aged 25-29 in Colombia increased from approximately 20 percent in 1973 to over 65 percent in 2007 (Esteve et al., 2012a). At the same time, the incidence and, sometimes, prevalence of cohabitation is a historical feature of nuptiality in the region, with different meanings from those usually observed in fully developed countries.

In contemporary Latin America, the choice for cohabiting instead of getting married is related to either tradition or innovation. This choice depends on the social group under study (Castro-Martin, 2002). While cohabitation has always been prevalent in rural regions among the lower and less educated social classes (Arriagada, 2002), there is evidence that modern types of cohabitation are booming in the region (Esteve et al., 2012). These modern types of cohabitation are closely linked to the consensual union observed in developed Western countries (Parrado & Tienda, 1997; Cabella et al., 2004). In this case, cohabitation is usually a childless period, an alternative to marriage or singlehood, being most visible among younger and higher educated cohorts.

The different types of cohabitation in Latin America were identified in a recent study by Covre-Sussai and colleagues (2012). These types of cohabitation were differentiated on the basis of the relationship context at the beginning of cohabitation (age at start of cohabitation and existence of pre-cohabitation pregnancy or childbearing) and its outcomes in terms of childbearing (age [of the mother] at first child and number of children). The choice

of the indicators was grounded on the argument that the timing and circumstances of union formation and childbearing, as well as the number of children raised, have different meanings for traditional and modern types of cohabitations in Latin America.

Multiple group latent class analysis (MGLCA) was applied and three different types of Latin American cohabitations were found, the traditional and two modern types which were labeled as 'innovative' and 'blended' cohabitations. The traditional type of cohabitation is practiced by women who moved in together at very young ages and have high fertility. The innovative cohabitation groups women who moved in together during early adulthood, have fewer children born at a higher age of the mother and never as a single woman. The blended cohabitation refers to women who start to cohabit later in life in comparison to the other types, but always after single pregnancy or childbearing. Traditional cohabitants were found to be low educated, while modern ones present higher educational attainment (Covre-Sussai et al., 2012). An open question for this study is whether Latin American modern cohabitations present more egalitarian relationships than the traditional one.

While postponement of marriage, decreasing fertility and increasing cohabitation are relatively easy to measure with available data (e.g. demographic censuses), it is not possible to say the same about the social forces behind this phenomenon, as well as its outcomes. The study of gender relations inside families, for example, requires the use of specific surveys aiming at couples' dynamics. Unfortunately, nationally representative surveys of this type are not available for Latin American countries (Vignoli-Rodríguez, 2005). However, the last phases of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) include a section on 'Women Status and Empowerment', which provides some information about gender relations in terms of decision making.

The main goals of this study are (i) to identify whether it is possible to measure gender equality, in terms of family decision making, through the information provided by DHS collected in seven Latin American countries (i.e. Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Guyana and Peru); (ii) to verify whether this information is comparable across these countries; and (iii) to examine whether decision making in Latin American couples varies according to women's age, educational level and type of union: marriage, or one of the different types of cohabitation previously identified in the region.

Concerns about measurement invariance are becoming evident in the methodological literature of the social sciences. Invariance deals with similarities in which

latent concepts, such as decision making, are interpreted among different cultures or groups. It implies that a latent concept can be meaningfully discussed over these groups (Billiet & Welkenhuysen-Gybels, 2004). Consequently, comparisons between countries are not valid without first assessing whether the latent concepts used are in fact invariant (Billiet & Welkenhuysen-Gybels, 2004; Billiet, 2003).

Women's empowerment in family decision making is one of the central aspects in the study of forms of family life from a gender perspective, and one of the least explored subjects in a comparative perspective in Latin America (García & de Oliveira, 2011). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study verifying gender relations in different types of union, as well as its construct equivalence among Latin American countries, using the section 'Women's Status and Empowerment' of DHS. For this purpose, a step-by-step multi-group latent class analysis (MGLCA - Kankaras et al., 2011) is applied in order to verify whether the concept of gender equality can be extracted from the data and be meaningfully compared across the analyzed countries.

We start by contextualizing gender relations inside Latin American families, as well as Latin American socioeconomic and demographic diversity. We then present the theoretical framework of the study as well as its hypotheses. Subsequently, data and methods used, as well as the main results are shown. These results are discussed in the last section.

2. Gender relations and socioeconomic diversity in Latin America

In Latin America, the institutions of marriage and the family were historically constructed based on hierarchic, authoritarian and patriarchal relationships. This legacy attaches great importance to traditional gender roles and the division of labor inside the family. Nowadays, although the patriarchal model of family and social organization is eroding, the interaction of gender, social classes and ethnic relations is seen in modern family studies as the foundation of inequality in Latin America. They "define very different conditions of life and structures of opportunities, while looking closely at the interactions between individual time-frames, family cycles and social processes" (Arriagada, 2002, p.138).

In this sense, until the middle of the 20th century, family relations were marked by submission to the father/husband, control of female sexuality and the concept of family honor. The control over female sexuality was intensified by ethnic and class differences.

Historically, men were permitted to have relationships with women from different social and ethnic groups, following different rationalities and moral codes (Arriagada, 2002). Traditionally, women from the same (higher) social class and ethnicity (white) were 'to be married with', although extra-marital relationships (concubinage) with women from lower social classes and different ethnic groups were common (Caulfield, 2001; Fernández-Aceves, 2007).

With socioeconomic development, the patriarchal model of family is being questioned in both the public and private spheres, although with evident heterogeneity. While increased legal protection has been given to women in the public domain (Arriagada, 2004, 2007; Vignoli-Rodríguez, 2005), socio-economic development is opening space for greater autonomy. Increasing women's education and participation in the labor force, as well as the separation between sexual and reproductive lives (as a result of contraception) have favored some individuation and independence (Jelin & Díaz-Muñoz, 2003).

Recent socioeconomic indicators show that gender roles in Latin America are changing toward some form of egalitarianism between women and men. Women's gross school enrolment at the tertiary level rose from 22 percent to 39 percent between 1999 and 2007 and their participation in the labor force increased from approximately 20 percent in the 1950s to over 55 percent in 2008 (World Bank, 2010). The use of modern contraceptive methods by women in reproductive ages in the region is 67.1 percent, which is among the highest in the world (United Nations, 2012). At the same time, the regional total fertility rate for 2010 was 2.1, but it ranges from 1.5 in Cuba to 3.7 in Guatemala (ECLAC, 2012). Esteve and colleagues even show that, since the 1990s, women are higher educated than men in several Latin American countries (i.e. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela), but not in all of them, such as Bolivia, Peru and Mexico (Esteve et al., 2012b). Simultaneously, studies indicate that working women are still the main person responsible for household labor in their families and childcare (Arriagada, 2002; Soares, 2008; Sorj et al., 2007).

Changes in women's status are expected to influence family relationships through more egalitarian relations. The expectation of having more egalitarian family relationships raises the importance of finding a construct which is able to measure this egalitarianism. This increases the research interest on gender relations and the need for a reliable construct to measure it. Consequently, the first research questions of this study are raised: *'Is it possible to*

differentiate types of gender relations based on Latin American DHS questions? And 'Do these types of gender relations differ in terms of age, education and type of union?'

Considering that gender, social class and ethnic relations are interrelated, one could expect that different levels of socioeconomic development and ethnic composition lead to different levels of gender equality in a given country. In this sense, Latin American heterogeneity in terms of socioeconomic development and ethnic composition must be taken into consideration when a construct for the measurement of gender equality is to be computed.

Following the debt crisis which affected the region in the 1980s, the 1990s were characterized by economic restructuring in most Latin American countries. Rapid urbanization, internal rural to urban migration, transition to democratic governments in the political domain as well as the expansion of mass education transformed the organization of Latin American society enormously. At the same time, economic development has not yet reached the majority of the population and social inequality is another important feature of the region.

Data shows that while the proportion of people classified as poor or indigent decreased from 44 percent in 2002 to 29.4 percent in 2012 (ECLAC, 2012), the region is still the most unequal in the world (Cavenaghi, 2009). Although socio-economic development increased during the last decades, significant differences can be observed between and within countries. The differences within countries can be illustrated by the GINI index, while the figures for Human Development Index (HDI) demonstrate their socioeconomic development. With the exception of Haiti, the HDI increased in all Latin American countries between 1980 and 2010. In 2010, while the majority of the countries (i.e Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Panama, Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador and Colombia) saw their HDI increase from medium to high, some of them improved from low to a medium level (i.e. Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Suriname, Bolivia, Paraguay, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala). At the same time, inequality is still one of the main features of the region where the GINI coefficients range from a minimum of 0.43 in Guatemala to more than 0.59 in Haiti.

Latin American heterogeneity is also visible in terms of ethnic composition. While many countries are marked by the presence of the indigenous population, in other countries such groups are very few. On the other hand, European and African populations have

immigrated into the region over the centuries, and miscegenation has created numerous racial groups within and across national boundaries (Heaton et al., 2002). The self-declared ethnic composition of some Latin American countries is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 demonstrates that the general ethnic composition of Latin America (total) reflects the interracial miscegenation that has marked its history: at the present time, more than 50% of the population is identified as mixed (Mullatos, Mestizos, Creoles or Garifunas). Additionally, enormous variations can be found between and within countries.

Table 1: Latin American self-declared ethnic distribution (%)

Country	Amerindians	Whites	Mestizos	Mulattos	Blacks	Creoles & Garifunas	Asians
Argentina	0.1	85.0	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9
Bolivia	55.0	15.0	28.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Brazil	0.4	53.8	0.0	39.1	6.2	0.0	0.5
Chile	8.0	52.7	39.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Colombia	1.8	20.0	53.2	21.0	3.9	0.1	0.0
Costa Rica	0.8	82.0	15.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.2
Cuba	0.0	37.0	0.0	51.0	11.0	0.0	1.0
Dominican Republic	0.0	14.6	0.0	75.0	7.7	2.3	0.4
Ecuador	39.0	9.9	41.0	5.0	5.0	0.0	0.1
El Salvador	1.0	9.0	90.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Guatemala	53.0	4.0	42.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.8
Honduras	7.7	1.0	85.6	1.7	0.0	3.3	0.7
Mexico	14.0	15.0	70.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.5
Nicaragua	6.9	14.0	78.3	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.2
Panama	8.0	10.0	32.0	27.0	5.0	14.0	4.0
Paraguay	1.5	20.0	74.5	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.5
Peru	45.5	12.0	32.0	9.7	0.0	0.0	0.8
Puerto Rico	0.0	74.8	0.0	10.0	15.0	0.0	0.2
Uruguay	0.0	88.0	8.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Venezuela	2.7	16.9	37.7	37.7	2.8	0.0	2.2
Total	9.2	36.1	30.3	20.3	3.2	0.2	0.7

Source: Fernandez (2005), several sources of data. Adapted and translated by author.

While some countries present certain homogeneity in their ethnic composition, others are marked by ethnic diversity and internal miscegenation. The former is the case of Uruguay, Argentina and Costa Rica which present predominance in European descents (whites) and of Peru, Bolivia and Guatemala which present high proportions of Amerindians. In addition, the other countries are marked by the existence of particular ethnicities originating from specific colonization and miscegenation histories.

This socioeconomic and cultural diversity raises the concern about how meaningful would be a comparison survey of the gender relations concept over the Latin American

countries. This drives the last research question of this study: *'Is the latent variable of gender relations equivalent among Latin American countries?'*

3. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

The increased economic independence of women is an important driving force of social change towards more egalitarian gender relations, as well as modifications in patterns of family formation, fertility and family dissolution. Socioeconomic development opened opportunities for women in the education system and labor market, which, therefore, increased female labor force participation among all women, including married and mothers. It resulted in a significant transformation in relative spousal power resources, which is expected to change family relations in the direction of some egalitarianism between women and men. Changes in women's status are also related to changes in family formation and outcomes, such as delay and decline in marriage and fertility, as well as increase of divorce and cohabitation (e.g. Lesthaeghe, 2010; McDonald, 2000, 2013; Prinz, 1995).

However, changes in gender roles do not happen in the same rhythm and in all spheres of a society. While improvements in women's status are visible in terms of educational attainment and participation in the labor market, the division of household tasks and family decision making are still largely influenced by traditional gender norms and expectations, mainly among the lower social strata (for a literature review on developed countries see Esping-Andersen, 2009, pp. 19–54; for Latin American evidence see Arriagada, 2002; Soares, 2008; Sorj et al., 2007). Overall, studies on time use reported by Esping-Andersen (2009) show a clear decrease in women's contribution to household tasks, a significant increase in joint time spent on these chores and some increase in men's participation in household jobs, mainly in tasks related to child care. However, these changes are mostly observed for higher educated couples. Among lower educated couples, traditional forms of division of household tasks, based on gender specialization, are still predominant, even when couples' homogamy is taken into consideration (Esping-Andersen, 2009).

Homogamous couples are assumed to have equilibrated bargaining power and as a consequence, symmetric gender relations. However, evidence shows that, while higher educated and homogamous couples tend to behave in a more egalitarian way, traditional gender roles and the division of labor are still prevalent for lower educated couples

(especially when homogamous). It seems that social norms play different roles in different social classes, and that it is intensified by couples' level of homogamy. In this sense, while homogamy in the lower social classes leads to the prevalence of traditional gender roles and division of labor, in the upper social strata it leads to egalitarian gender relations (Esping-Andersen, 2009).

This ambiguity can be explained by the idea of 'incomplete revolution', which distinguishes gender equality in terms of individual-level (education, participation in the labor market) and family-level (availability of day care, maternity leave, division of household tasks) institutions (Esping-Andersen, 2009; McDonald, 2000, 2013). According to McDonald (2000, 2013), the first part of the gender revolution is almost complete and has changed women's roles in individual-level institutions, such as education and participation in the job market and public life. Conversely, the second part of this revolution is happening in family-oriented institutions in a much slower rhythm. Family organization and decision making based on the patriarchal model still persists, even for two-income families, especially for the lower social classes (McDonald, 2000, 2013; Esping-Andersen, 2009).

In his recent study, Peter McDonald (2013) states that gaps between individual-level and family-level institutions influence family decisions in the direction of lower fertility and reduced propensity to start formal unions, depending on women's human capital. As stated before, Latin American women have reached a certain level of gender equality in individual-level institutions. A good example of this development is the level of education achieved by them over a short period of time. Accordingly, considering the evidence that higher educated couples tend to be more egalitarian (Esping-Andersen, 2009; McDonald, 2013), we expect that higher educated women make private decisions by themselves or jointly with their husbands and partners. At the same time, there is evidence that gender equality in family relations has not been completely achieved and the patriarchal model of the family is not totally obsolete, especially among the lower social classes. Therefore, it is expected *that lower educated women make daily decisions related to the household by themselves, but that important household decisions are still mostly made by men.*

The historical incidence of the traditional Latin American cohabitation is an example of the effect of women's lower bargaining power (and lower human capital) in family life. This type of union is considered an alternative to marriage, practiced as a strategy to cope with the hardships of poverty and single, sometimes adolescent pregnancy or childbearing (Arriagada, 2002). Faced with the need of taking care of younger brothers and sisters or with

domestic violence, young women from the lower social classes tend to prefer to move in together in a cohabiting union than wait and negotiate a marriage (Greene & Rao, 1995). At the same time, higher educated women are able to negotiate a marriage, which is preferable and provides greater institutional protection in comparison to cohabiting unions (Greene & Rao, 1995). In this sense, *women living in the traditional cohabitation are expected to have lower bargaining power and, as a consequence less authority in family decision making.* At the same time, *married women are expected to be found in families with more egalitarian decision making.*

The research of Greene and Rao (1995) was done with data from the 1980s. Since then, the incidence of cohabitation has increased in Latin America, also among higher educated groups. As stated before, the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) framework explains the spread of innovative forms of living arrangements as an expression of not only changing socioeconomic circumstances or expanding female employment, but also as outcomes of egalitarian sentiments of younger and higher educated groups (Surkyn & Lesthaeghe, 2004). The increasing incidence of the so-called modern types of cohabitation among Latin American higher educated groups is considered a signal of the SDT in the region (Covre-Sussai et al., 2012; Esteve et al., 2012a). To be explained by the SDT framework, cohabitation should reflect some level of women's empowerment and more egalitarian gender relations. Consequently, *we expect that previously identified modern types of cohabitation in Latin America are more egalitarian than the traditional cohabitation.*

4. Research Method

4.1 Data: Demographic and Health Survey

The research questions have been addressed by means of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data. The DHS are nationally representative surveys that collect comparable data on demographic and health issues in developing countries (Rutstein & Rojas, 2006). The surveys focus on women in their reproductive years (15-49 years old). We use the most recent data collected for seven Latin American countries, which included a section called

‘women’s status and empowerment’. These are Bolivia (2008, n = 8,999), Brazil² (2006, n = 7,285), Colombia (2010, n = 17,950), Dominican Republic (2007, n = 9,349), Guyana (2009, n = 2,394), Honduras (2005/6, n = 9,138) and Peru (2008, n = 7,439). In order to avoid countries with larger sample sizes which could have dominated the results we used equal size weighting of the samples (Kankaras et al., 2011).

The DHS section on women’s status and empowerment includes the following questions: Who usually makes decisions about (i) health care for yourself; (ii) making major household purchases; (iii) making purchases for daily household needs; (iv) visits to your family or relatives; and (v) who usually decides how the money you earn will be used? The possible answers are: mainly you (the woman); mainly your husband/partner; you and your husband/partner jointly; or someone else. These questions are used to construct the indicators (observed variables) of the latent construct called ‘family decision making’. Women who were not working at the moment of the survey are coded by DHS as missing in the variable ‘who usually decides how the money you earn will be used’. In order to keep them in the analysis we created a new category by coding them as, ‘Responded not working’.

The focus of this study is on couples’ gender relations. As a result, only women in a relationship (marriage or cohabitation), and who answered “mainly you”, “mainly your husband/partner”, or “you and your husband/partner jointly” were selected. In addition, in order to verify whether gender relations vary according to the type of union, we followed the procedures adopted by Covre-Sussai et al. (2012) and focused on first unions. Consequently, only women who had only one relationship, who were living with the same partner or husband at the moment of the survey were selected. This choice implies that only 78 percent of all unions in Latin America are included in the analysis and that this proportion ranges from 91 percent in Bolivia to 62.3 percent of cohabiting unions in Dominican Republic³. The final sample was composed of 62,554 women.

4.2 Variables

² The Brazilian DHS is called ‘*Pesquisa Nacional de Demografia e Saúde (PNDS)*’ and can be found here: <http://bvsms.saude.gov.br/bvs/pnds/index.php>

³ Detailed information about the sample, i.e. the share of first and higher order unions as well as proportion of partnered women by marital status and country is presented in the appendix 5.1.

As stated before, the information about types of cohabitation used as covariate in this study is extracted from a typology that differentiates the types of cohabitation in Latin America. These types of cohabitation were identified through multi-group latent class analysis (MGLCA), based on the relationship context at the beginning of cohabitation (age in which the woman started to cohabit and the existence of pre-cohabitation pregnancy or childbearing) and its outputs in terms of childbearing (age in which the woman had her first child and the number of children she had up to the moment of the survey).

Besides identifying different classes of cohabitants, latent class analysis allows for the calculation of the conditional probabilities of a woman to live in one type of cohabitation instead of another (for detailed information see Covre-Sussai et al., 2012). For the purpose of including marriage as one of the types of union we categorize this information based on the higher probability of living in one of the three types of cohabitation. Consequently, we identify (1) marriage, (2) traditional cohabitation, (3) innovative cohabitation and (4) blended cohabitation.

The remaining two covariates included in the analysis are: 'Education', which indicates women with (1) no education, (2) primary, (3) secondary or (4) higher levels of education; and 'age', which differentiates women (1) younger than 26 years old, (2) between 26 and 36 years old and (3) older than 36 years old.

Listwise deletion was the method used for handling missing data. In our understanding the sample size of our data is large enough to not generate biased results due to the deletion of missing data. Descriptive statistics of all variables are included in the appendix 1 and support this supposition.

In Table 2, we summarize the variables and the expected outcomes of this study. In Table 2 our hypotheses are presented in the form of '+' and '-' which represent the direction of expected effect of each observed variable (indicators) and covariate on the latent classes (gender equality).

Table 2: Variables and Hypotheses

Indicators	Gender Equality in family decision making
Who usually decides how the money you earn will be used	
Respondent alone	+
Respondent and husband/partner	+
Husband/partner alone	-
Respondent not working	-
Decision about health care for yourself	
Respondent alone	+
Respondent and husband/partner	+
Husband/partner alone	-
Decision about making major household purchases	
Respondent alone	-
Respondent and husband/partner	-
Husband/partner alone	+
Decision about making purchases for daily household needs	
Respondent alone	+
Respondent and husband/partner	+
Husband/partner alone	-
Decision about visits to your family or relatives	
Respondent alone	-
Respondent and husband/partner	+
Husband/partner alone	+
Covariates	
Age	
Younger than 26 years old	+
Between 26 and 36 years old	+
Older than 36 years old	-
Education	
No education	-
Primary	-
Secondary	+
Higher	+
Type of Union	
Marriage	+
Traditional Cohabitation	-
Innovative Cohabitation	+
Blended Cohabitation	+

4.1 Method

In order to verify whether the concept of 'gender equality in family decision making' extracted from the DHS is equivalent across Latin American countries, its measurement equivalence will be tested using multiple group latent class analysis (MGLCA). Because 'gender equality in family decision making' is a construct that cannot be observed directly, we look at the observed indicators that may define this latent concept as unobserved types of relationships. Patterns of interrelationships between observed indicators are studied in order to understand and characterize gender equality in Latin America (McCutcheon, 1987). For more information about MGLCA, see McCutcheon (1987, 2002). A similar application of this method can be found in Kankaras et al. (2011).

In order to verify if the theoretical concept of gender equality in family decision making is comparable across the Latin American countries under study, it is necessary to check for measurement invariance. Measurement invariance is attested when the class-specific conditional probabilities are equal across groups. Imposing some group equality restrictions on these conditional probabilities, it is possible to test various levels of homogeneity as well as measurement invariance (Kankaras et al., 2011).

In order to verify if gender equality in family decision making has the same meaning and implications across Latin American countries, we will apply the general procedure of analyzing measurement invariance proposed by Kankaras et al. (2011, pp.367-374). Consequently, we will test whether our model is completely homogeneous, structurally homogeneous or only partially homogeneous, against the hypothesis that it is completely heterogeneous. The complete heterogeneity model assumes that no similarity exists across the Latin American countries. The partial homogeneity model restricts the relationships (i.e., the slopes) between the latent variable and the observed variables to be the same, but allows for country-specific conditional response probabilities (intercepts). It means that the slopes are equal across groups, but the conditional response parameters can be different. In the structurally homogeneous model, both intercept and slope parameters are set to be the same across countries. It makes the observed variables independent of the grouping variable (countries), while controlling for the latent variable (gender relation, Kankaras et al., 2011).

Following the procedure proposed by Kankaras and colleagues (2011), the number of latent classes should first be determined for each country separately, and then for all countries together. If the pooled data presents the same number of classes found for each country then the heterogeneous model is fitted to the data, as a baseline model. Next, a series of nested models is fitted to the data. Equality restrictions are applied to these models and

they are evaluated in terms of model fit. Comparability is attested if the restrictions do not deteriorate the model's goodness of fit. Afterwards, we repeat this procedure for each item in order to guarantee that the observed indicators are not sources of invariance. Finally the covariates (age, education and type of union) are introduced into the model (Kankaras et al., 2011).

5. Results

As stated previously, in order to verify how many classes the latent variable 'gender equality in family decision making' presents, we contrast the goodness of fit⁴ of a model with one latent class against the models with more latent classes. Separate analysis for each Latin American country demonstrates a dimension with three classes emerging from the data⁵. A Latent Class Analysis with the pooled samples is then conducted in order to verify whether, again, a structure of three classes emerges from the data.

Probably due to our large sample, it was not possible to find a best fit in terms of BIC for the pooled data. It is a common phenomenon that within very large datasets, fit indices continue to improve (even BIC) when adding classes. For this reason, with the pooled data, we chose to analyze the drop in BIC in order to define the number of classes. The results are presented in Figure 1.

⁴ Because of the large sample sizes, we used the BIC as the model selection criterion, which penalizes for sample size (for more details see McCutcheon (2002)).

⁵ Separate results of each country available upon request.

Figure 1. Drop in BIC in Latent Class Analysis for seven Latin American countries



Considering that the decrease in the BIC levels off from the three-classes-models onward, we can assume that the three-classes model fits our data better than the others. We can continue the measurement invariance tests with the model with three classes.

As declared previously, the level of measurement equivalence in the data is specified by the degree of homogeneity in the model with a better goodness of fit, in this case, the smaller BIC (Kankaras et al., 2011). Table 3 presents the goodness of fit for the various multiple group models which were estimated.

As presented in Table 3, the partially homogeneous model best fits the data (BIC=514,907.5). Therefore, the loadings in the measurement model are invariant over countries, but the intercepts are not. It means that values in the conditional response probabilities are different across countries, but the relationship between the latent construct of gender relations and the observed variables are the same, guaranteeing cross country comparability (Kankaras et al., 2011). In other words, if we would have two types of family decision making, one in which women decide more often about visits to family or relatives and another in which men decide about this issue more frequently, the proportion of decision made by women or men can be different across countries, but the structure of the classes - decisions mostly made by women or men - is similar. This similarity guarantees that the same concept is being measured across Latin American countries, and that a comparison among them is meaningful.

Table 3. Goodness of Fit of the Three Latent Classes Models

Test	Model	LL	BIC(LL)	Npar	df
(1) Measurement Invariance	Complete Heterogeneity	-367833.6	738439.1	251	2010
	Partial Homogeneity	-256829.8	514907.5	113	2148
	Structural Homogeneity	-270039.6	540598.3	47	2214
(2a) Item-level analysis: Intercept invariant	Partial Homogeneity	-256829.8	514907.5	113	2148
	Who usually decides how the money you earn will be used	-262657.4	526363.9	95	2166
	Decision about health care for yourself	-260506.6	522128.7	101	2160
	Decision about making major household purchases	-257356.2	515827.9	101	2160
	Decision about making purchases for daily household needs	-257574.8	516265.1	101	2160
	Decision about visits to your family or relatives	-256931.9	514979.1	101	2160
(2b) Item-level analysis: Slope invariant	Partial Homogeneity	-256829.8	514907.5	113	2148
	Who usually decides how the money you earn will be used	-258388.7	517959.0	107	2154
	Decision about health care for yourself	-266771.3	534746.2	109	2152
	Decision about making major household purchases	-272908.1	547020.0	109	2152
	Decision about making purchases for daily household needs	-272127.7	545459.1	109	2152
	Decision about visits to your family or relatives	-269171.7	539547.1	109	2152
(3a) Covariate: Age	Partial Homogeneity	-256829.8	514907.5	113	2148
	Age on Classes	-256597.7	514487.4	117	6666
	Age on Classes and Indicators	-255931.1	513397.3	139	6644
(3b) Covariate: Education	Education on Classes and Age on Classes and Indicators	-254835.2	511271.7	145	26987
	Education and Age on Classes and Indicators	-253349.5	508664.8	178	26954
(3c) Covariate: Type of union	Education and Age on Classes and Indicators, Type of Union on Classes	-199233.5	400455.6	184	49202
	Education, Age and Type of Union on Classes and Indicators	-199102.5	400550.2	217	49169

Note: LL: Log-likelihood; BIC: Bayesian information criterion; Npar: number of parameters; df: degrees of freedom.

Considering that the source of invariance could be found in a non-invariant item, we performed an item-level analysis. Sections 2a and 2b in Table 3 show the item-level analyses, both in terms of invariance in intercept and slope parameters. The BIC values of both models, without interaction or direct effects, are smaller than the values in the partially homogeneous model. It indicates that the source of invariance is not situated at the item level. This possibly indicates that differences within Latin American gender relations are a feature of gender relations across the countries⁶ being researched.

Next, in order to verify whether gender relations in Latin America differ over generations, educational levels and type of union, we include 'age', 'education' and 'type of union' as covariates in our model (sections 3a, 3b and 3c in Table 3). Comparing the goodness of fit of the partially homogeneous model with the models in which age has a direct effect (3a) on the types of family decision making (classes), and with the model in which age has a direct and also an indirect effect through the observed indicators on the types of decision making, one can see that the later one is a better fit for the data. Similarly, the inclusion of a direct and an indirect effect of education (3b) on the indicators and on the types of family decision making improve the goodness of fit of our model even more. Finally, the best model's goodness of fit is found for the model (3c) which includes a direct and an indirect effect of age and education and a direct effect of the type of union on the types of gender relations. Subsequently, it is possible to attest that family decision making differ according to the age, educational level and the type of union of the respondent.

Finally, after estimating a proxy to measure gender relations in terms of family decision making in Latin America and attesting its comparison over countries, the last three steps refer to a substantive interpretation of this construct, its differentiation in terms of education, age and type of union, and the comparison of class sizes across countries. The item response and covariate probabilities and class proportions obtained for the partially homogeneous model with age, education and type of union as covariates are shown in Table 4.

⁶ In order to verify whether the exclusion of second or higher order unions affect our findings, the same analysis was performed with the full sample. Results are very similar (not shown, but available upon request) and indicate that decision making in reconstituted families does not differ from intact families. In addition, the focus on first unions does not bias our outcomes.

Table 4. Item and covariates response probabilities and class proportions

Response Probabilities	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Who usually decides how the money you earn will be used			
Respondent alone	0.28	0.45	0.26
Respondent and husband/partner	0.29	0.14	0.15
Husband/partner alone	0.01	0.01	0.04
Respondent not working	0.41	0.4	0.55
Decision about health care for yourself			
Respondent alone	0.32	0.78	0.36
Respondent and husband/partner	0.64	0.18	0.17
Husband/partner alone	0.04	0.05	0.47
Decision about making major household purchases			
Respondent alone	0.02	0.52	0.05
Respondent and husband/partner	0.94	0.34	0.08
Husband/partner alone	0.04	0.14	0.87
Decision about making purchases for daily household needs			
Respondent alone	0.29	0.92	0.36
Respondent and husband/partner	0.69	0.05	0.05
Husband/partner alone	0.03	0.03	0.59
Decision about visits to your family or relatives			
Respondent alone	0.08	0.67	0.21
Respondent and husband/partner	0.89	0.28	0.31
Husband/partner alone	0.03	0.05	0.48
Covariates			
Age			
Younger than 26 years old	0.24	0.21	0.3
Between 26 and 36 years old	0.37	0.36	0.33
Older than 36 years old	0.39	0.42	0.37
Education			
No education	0.03	0.03	0.07
Primary	0.37	0.35	0.5
Secondary	0.41	0.46	0.34
Higher	0.19	0.17	0.08
Type of Union			
Marriage	0.54	0.53	0.43
Traditional Cohabitation	0.19	0.2	0.28
Innovative Cohabitation	0.17	0.16	0.19
Blended Cohabitation	0.1	0.11	0.09

(Table 4 continuation)

Latent Class Proportions			
Brazil	0.51	0.25	0.24
Bolivia	0.52	0.39	0.09
Colombia	0.54	0.31	0.15
Dominican Republic	0.56	0.28	0.16
Honduras	0.45	0.28	0.26
Guyana	0.47	0.43	0.1
Peru	0.55	0.31	0.14
Latin America	0.51	0.34	0.15

Note: Entries are conditional probabilities for MGLCA

The third class confirms our hypothesis that husbands and partners still dominate the family decision making when the woman is less educated. Class three includes women who affirm that most decisions in their household are made by their husbands or partners alone. These are younger, lower educated and typically unemployed women.

We can only partially confirm our hypothesis that husbands or partners tend to make decisions about important household issues by themselves. Looking at the indicator regarding decision making about major household purchases, one can see that this item groups a high portion of decisions made by husbands and partners alone. However, this item also groups the highest divide of joint (respondent and husband/partner) decisions, which can be evidence of a movement toward greater gender equality.

We cannot confirm our hypothesis that younger women tend to make decisions by themselves, while older women have their decisions mostly made by their husbands or partners. As Table 4 indicates, although a slightly higher proportion of younger women are found in the group in which the decisions are mostly made by men, in general it is not possible to differentiate the construct of family decision making with regard to women's age.

The hypothesis about gender relations in different types of union was also only partially confirmed. In line with our hypothesis, while married women have more egalitarian relationships, making decisions by themselves or jointly with their husbands, women living in the traditional cohabitation tend to have household decision made by their

partners. Conversely, it is not possible to attest that decision making in modern types of cohabitation differs.

The final step is to analyze the latent class proportions by country. We can see that in all countries the majority of women declared that they make joint decisions with their husbands or partners. The second, more expressive group in all countries is that in which women make decisions by themselves. The cluster grouping the smaller proportion of women is the one where the decisions are declared to be made by husbands or partners alone. Guyana is the country where women's solo decisions are taken more frequently. Bolivia and Peru present the highest proportion of joint decisions while Honduras and Brazil show the highest proportion of husbands and partners solo decisions.

6. Conclusion

Increasing gender equality is one of the factors related to changing family relations. However, the measurement of gender relations in developing countries remains confined to case studies of limited samples due to the absence of comparable large scale surveys on the topic. This research gap is especially visible when the gender relation aspect under analysis is female participation in family decision making.

This study has utilized questions from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) for seven Latin American countries to identify the construct of gender equality in family decision making, its differentiating factors in terms of age, education and type of union, as well as its measurement equivalence across these countries. The results indicate that the DHS items can be reliably used for measuring gender relations and that this construct can be meaningfully compared across Latin America.

Considering the increase in women's educational opportunities and participation in the job market, one could expect that higher educated Latin American women demonstrate active participation in family decision making. However, the patriarchal model of family is not completely obsolete in the region, and traditional gender roles are still visible. In this sense, we used the theoretical background of women's 'incomplete revolution' (Esping-Andersen, 2009; McDonald, 2000, 2013) to anticipate that women's empowerment in

family decision making would be more visible among younger and higher educated women especially regarding personal issues or minor household decisions. According to this theoretical framework, women's empowerment is more visible in socioeconomic spheres (individual-level institutions) and among higher educated groups, while among lower social classes and in the domestic sphere of family life, old forms of organization, such as the patriarchal model, are still playing a more dominant role.

In accordance with our hypotheses, we found that women's participation in family decision making is more evident for higher educated women, especially on private issues and minor household decisions. Additionally, the indicators with smaller proportions of women's solo decisions are the ones regarding important economic decisions, such as decisions about large household purchases. This is in agreement with the idea that changes in the direction of higher egalitarianism between women and men are happening faster for women with higher human capital and in individual-level institutions than in family-level ones.

Considering the historical coexistence of marriage and cohabitation in Latin America, and the increasing incidence of modern types of cohabitation among higher educated groups in the region, we set out to verify if gender relations differ according to type of union in the region. Four types of union were considered, marriage and three types of cohabitation previously identified: the traditional and two considered modern, which are called innovative and blended. The traditional cohabitation, commonly found among the lower social classes, was expected to show less egalitarian relations between woman and man than marriages and also than the modern types of consensual union. Our results confirm that women in the traditional cohabitation have less decision making power than women in the other types of union. Marriages are also found to be more egalitarian in terms of family decision making. However, it was not possible to differentiate the modern types of cohabitation in terms of gender relations.

Another important finding was that in every country the majority of women relate a predominance of decisions made jointly with their husbands or partners or even by themselves alone. It is evident that some egalitarianism is emerging from DHS data. However, in accordance with the idea of incomplete revolution, gender relations in Latin

America are social-class sensitive, or in the words of Esping-Andersen (2009), they indicate a 'bipolar scenario'. While the upper social classes show more egalitarian gender relations, traditional forms of decision making are predominant among the lower social strata.

The information provided in this study can be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at improving women's status and empowerment among the lower social classes in Latin America. Considering that the improvement of women's status would help reduce poverty and improve overall societal development via more investment in their children's education, health, and overall wellbeing (UNDP, 2013), women living in traditional cohabitation relationships deserve the attention of policy makers.

A number of caveats need to be noted regarding the present study. First, the cross-sectional design of our data does not allow for cause-effect interpretations. In this sense, we cannot demonstrate the social forces behind improvements in gender relations. Second, our sample is limited to women in reproductive ages (15-49 years old), which limits the analysis of cohort change. Third, our results are limited to women's answers. Accordingly, we do not have information about husbands/partners' evaluation about the decision making in their household, which can differ from the views of women. Fourth, information on women's income and time use in terms of division of household tasks would enrich this analysis enormously. Finally, extra information on couple's homogamy would help to better explain the level of gender equality of couples living in different types of unions.

Our findings contribute to the sociological and demographic research on gender relations in several ways. First, we show that, as in fully developed countries, women's education is an important feature of couples with more egalitarian gender relations in Latin America. Second, it was shown that the idea of women's incomplete revolution is applicable to developing countries as well. Finally, the validity of the family decision making construct is attested and researchers can use this construct and other indicators provided by the DHS to identify the remaining associations related to it. In addition, further research is encouraged to verify if the construct of family decision making can be meaningfully compared among other developing countries covered by the DHS.

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Appendix 1 Data description⁷

Proportion of partnered women by marital status in Latin America

Country	First union: Marriage [†]	First union: Cohabitation [†]	Higher order Marriage	Higher order Cohabitation	Total
Bolivia	5992 59.1%	3255 32.1%	220 2.2%	678 6.7%	10145 100%
Brazil	5230 52.6%	2887 29.0%	338 3.4%	1484 14.9%	9939 100%
Colombia	8346 30.5%	12627 46.1%	794 2.9%	5629 20.5%	27396 100%
Dominican Republic	2812 18.3%	6773 44.1%	619 4.0%	5169 33.6%	15373 100%
Honduras	4696 40.1%	4732 40.4%	470 4.0%	1805 15.4%	11703 100%
Guyana	1617 54.3%	823 27.6%	169 5.7%	368 12.4%	2977 100.0%
Peru	4043 42.3%	4372 45.8%	218 2.3%	921 9.6%	9554 100.0%
Latin America	32736 37.6%	35469 40.7%	2828 3.2%	16054 18.4%	87087 100.0%

[†]: Selected sample

⁷ Listwise deletion for missing values

Who decides how to spend money

Country	Respondent alone	Respondent and husband/partner	Husband/partner alone	Respondent not working	Total
Brazil	3142 43.3%	1117 15.4%	261 3.6%	2739 37.7%	7259 100.0%
Bolivia	2130 26.8%	3003 37.8%	166 2.1%	2655 33.4%	7954 100.0%
Colombia	11231 65.7%	2956 17.3%	283 1.7%	2630 15.4%	17100 100.0%
Dominican Republic	2033 22.4%	1769 19.5%	167 1.8%	5097 56.2%	9066 100.0%
Honduras	1685 19.0%	1639 18.5%	82 0.9%	5454 61.6%	8860 100.0%
Guyana	377 16.5%	320 14.0%	30 1.3%	1563 68.3%	2290 100.0%
Peru	2403 40.7%	1234 20.9%	93 1.6%	2172 36.8%	5902 100.0%
Latin America	23001 39.4%	12038 20.6%	1082 1.9%	22310 38.2%	58431 100.0%

Final say on own health care

Country	Respondent alone	Respondent and husband/partner	Husband/partner alone	Total
Brazil	6002 82.5%	856 11.8%	418 5.7%	7276 100.0%
Bolivia	3349 37.3%	4749 52.8%	888 9.9%	8986 100.0%
Colombia	13319 74.2%	2890 16.1%	1741 9.7%	17950 100.0%
Dominican Republic	2904 31.3%	5281 56.9%	1092 11.8%	9277 100.0%
Honduras	2592 28.4%	4621 50.6%	1911 20.9%	9124 100.0%
Guyana	823 34.6%	1363 57.4%	190 8.0%	2376 100.0%
Peru	4346 58.4%	1825 24.5%	1268 17.0%	7439 100.0%
Latin America	33335 53.4%	21585 34.6%	7508 12.0%	62428 100.0%

Final say on making large household purchases

Country	Respondent alone	Respondent and husband/partner	Husband/partner alone	Total
Brazil	1299 18.0%	3896 54.0%	2015 27.9%	7210 100.0%
Bolivia	1189 13.2%	6393 71.1%	1404 15.6%	8986 100.0%
Colombia	4149 23.1%	9570 53.3%	4231 23.6%	17950 100.0%
Dominican Republic	1062 11.5%	5944 64.1%	2267 24.4%	9273 100.0%
Honduras	871 9.5%	4866 53.3%	3387 37.1%	9124 100.0%
Guyana	607 25.5%	1493 62.7%	283 11.9%	2383 100.0%
Peru	1457 19.6%	4376 58.8%	1606 21.6%	7439 100.0%

Latin America	10634 17.1%	36538 58.6%	15193 24.4%	62365 100.0%
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Final say on making household purchases for daily needs

Country	Respondent alone	Respondent and husband/partner	Husband/partner alone	Total
Brazil	2734 37.9%	3142 43.5%	1341 18.6%	7217 100.0%
Bolivia	5747 64.0%	2796 31.1%	439 4.9%	8982 100.0%
Colombia	7720 43.0%	7233 40.3%	2997 16.7%	17950 100.0%
Dominican Republic	3119 33.6%	4565 49.2%	1590 17.1%	9274 100.0%
Honduras	3256 35.7%	3659 40.1%	2209 24.2%	9124 100.0%
Guyana	1188 49.8%	1012 42.4%	184 7.7%	2384 100.0%
Peru	4317 58.0%	2420 32.5%	701 9.4%	7438 100.0%
Latin America	28081 45.0%	24827 39.8%	9461 15.2%	62369 100.0%

Final say on visits to family or relatives

Country	Respondent alone	Respondent and husband/partner	Husband/partner alone	Total
Brazil	1945 27.2%	4170 58.4%	1028 14.4%	7143 100.0%
Bolivia	2532 28.2%	5721 63.7%	730 8.1%	8983 100.0%
Colombia	5194 28.9%	10530 58.7%	2226 12.4%	17950 100.0%
Dominican Republic	2808 30.3%	5369 57.9%	1093 11.8%	9270 100.0%
Honduras	2609 28.6%	4887 53.6%	1627 17.8%	9123 100.0%
Guyana	775 32.6%	1414 59.5%	189 7.9%	2378 100.0%

Peru	1699 22.8%	4743 63.8%	995 13.4%	7437 100.0%
Latin America	17562 28.2%	36834 59.1%	7888 12.7%	62284 100.0%

Highest educational level

Country	No education	Primary	Secondary	Higher	Total
Brazil	40 0.6%	4131 57.4%	2321 32.3%	699 9.7%	7191 100.0%
Bolivia	537 6.0%	4472 49.7%	2540 28.2%	1450 16.1%	8999 100.0%
Colombia	418 2.3%	5503 30.7%	8418 46.9%	3611 20.1%	17950 100.0%
Dominican Republic	440 4.7%	3843 41.1%	3205 34.3%	1861 19.9%	9349 100.0%
Honduras	805 8.8%	6210 68.0%	1765 19.3%	358 3.9%	9138 100.0%
Guyana	53 2.2%	644 26.9%	1559 65.1%	138 5.8%	2394 100.0%
Peru	362 4.9%	2694 36.2%	2727 36.7%	1656 22.3%	7439 100.0%
Latin America	2655 4.3%	27497 44.0%	22535 36.1%	9773 15.6%	62460 100.0%

Age

Country	Younger than 26 years old	Between 26 and 36 years old	Older than 36 years old	Total
Brazil	1584 21.7%	2678 36.8%	3023 41.5%	7285 100.0%
Bolivia	2038 22.6%	3463 38.5%	3498 38.9%	8999 100.0%
Colombia	4031 22.5%	6370 35.5%	7549 42.1%	17950 100.0%
Dominican Republic	2755 29.5%	3158 33.8%	3436 36.8%	9349 100.0%
Honduras	2959	3309	2870	9138

	32.4%	36.2%	31.4%	100.0%
Guyana	584 24.4%	815 34.0%	995 41.6%	2394 100.0%
Peru	1392 18.7%	2720 36.6%	3327 44.7%	7439 100.0%
Latin America	15343 24.5%	22513 36.0%	24698 39.5%	62554 100.0%

Type of Union

Country	Marriage	Traditional Cohabitation	Innovative Cohabitation	Blended Cohabitation	Total
Brazil	4850 66.6%	970 13.3%	981 13.5%	484 6.6%	7285 100.0%
Bolivia	5854 65.1%	1387 15.4%	887 9.9%	871 9.7%	8999 100.0%
Colombia	7458 41.5%	4191 23.3%	3496 19.5%	2805 15.6%	17950 100.0%
Dominican Republic	2770 29.6%	3575 38.2%	2411 25.8%	593 6.3%	9349 100.0%
Honduras	4602 50.4%	2678 29.3%	1457 15.9%	401 4.4%	9138 100.0%
Guyana	1586 66.2%	353 14.7%	259 10.8%	196 8.2%	2394 100.0%
Peru	3678 49.4%	1548 20.8%	1315 17.7%	898 12.1%	7439 100.0%
Latin America	30798 49.2%	14702 23.5%	10806 17.3%	6248 10.0%	62554 100.0%