



Beyond States and Markets: Families and Family Regimes in Latin America

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature on social policies and social development in Latin America recognizes the notion of welfare regimes as critical to our understanding of the social protection and well-being of individuals, granting thus a relevant role to markets, states, families and

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their interactions (Filgueira 2007; Martínez Franzoni 2007). Yet while states—through social, labor and regulatory policies, and their impact on employment, wages and access to goods and services—have received broad and in-depth scrutiny, families have been rather neglected. This chapter seeks to contribute to correct this blind-spot by looking at the structural trends regarding family change and at how they are fueled by—and interact with—markets and state transformations. Such trends and dynamics radically alter the capacity and role of families as units of social protection and of resource enclosure and distribution. Gender, age and family arrangements are transformed and create different family regimes with relevant implications regarding the capacity and type of protection families provide to their different members.

We believe that the academic neglect of families was also present in the policies of the left shift in Latin America. While the region saw major changes in social policy and social protection, much of these changes did not adequately incorporate the structural trends regarding family transformations, and in not doing so, missed a major opportunity to achieve deeper and more sustainable social transformations as well as more stable and robust political coalitions. Since we do not believe that the window of opportunity for a more egalitarian and inclusive road for development in the region is closed, it is paramount to understand the relevance of family transformations and the way in which a new wave of progressive policies and politics should take stock of them and tackle the challenges as well as leverage the opportunities that they bring about.

The final years from the end of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first witnessed a major transformation of the economic, social and political landscape in Latin America. Such transformations, which took place roughly between the late 1990s and the early 2010s, showed the potential of an epochal change: the end of conservative modernization as it was defined in Barrington Moore's seminal work (1993). The triumphs of electoral democracy, urbanization, educational attainment and increased exposure to new and broader consumption patterns had eroded the political basis of conservative modernization.

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While access to arenas and statuses that turn expectations into legitimate demands had expanded radically, access to the means to satisfy such demands had remained static (unequal and segmented) until the end of the century. The so called “shift to the left” in the region was the political outcome of this second crisis of incorporation (the first being the one that opened the doors to popular and populist political projects in the 40s and 50s). The “Washington Consensus” was indeed the last attempt during the twentieth century of incorporation under conservative modernization dynamics: pushing forth democracy, education and incorporation into market dynamics but leaving unchanged and at some points even deepening segmentation of opportunity, status and asset enclosure, along with dramatic patterns of inequality.

The turn of the century showed advances in public policies and in social outcomes that for the first time provided a true window of opportunity for more productive and egalitarian societies. Decreasing poverty, slightly declining income inequality, improved and expanded employment and access to transfers and services to popular sectors were indeed welcome changes. Yet these outcomes were dependent on five critical allies, some structural, some contingent and some policy-dependent. In the first place Latin America experienced an excellent external context regarding the prices of its commodities and this helped the economy and translated into employment. Secondly and as a positive legacy of the WC era, prices remained in most cases stable, thus the gains in wages and transfers were not undermined by inflation. Thirdly the state increased its fiscal capacity and commitment to social policy, almost doubling in 15 years real social per-capita expenditure. Fourth, the demographic transition placed most countries squarely within the demographic bonus when combined dependency ratios are at their lowest. Finally, education access, completion and credentials improved in most countries of the region, allowing for enhanced opportunity and increased productivity.

These five allies lost steam in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Growth slowed down, countries faced bottlenecks regarding employment growth (due to both productivity challenges and problems combining paid work with unpaid work in the household), limits with current tax regimes, the end of the easy phase of the demographic transition, and challenges in improving coverage in early childhood education and care services, and quality in education in general. Now, of course, all

countries are affected by the external shock of COVID-19 and the associated measures and fall-out. We will not speculate here on the future for now, but focus on the dynamics up until early 2020.

There are four fault lines directly related to families and family policy in Latin American social regimes that eroded the sustainability of both social and economic development during the left shift and eased the emergence of a new right wing coalition. If not confronted, such fault lines will continue to block a much needed shift in the politics and policies of the region.

First, women's incorporation into the labour market remained low and stratified, while men's incorporation as caregivers remained low across all social classes. This placed a bottleneck in terms of the gains that could be made both in terms of productivity and equality by the secular trends of women's incorporation into the labour market. The region was not able to overcome the 20 percentage-point gap in terms of women labour force participation, and that gap was mostly due to the fact that women from lower and middle income strata had reached a physical limit to balancing reproductive and productive work. The absence of a robust state led care system for early childhood and the persistence of a patriarchal distribution of care burdens undermined a route to development that could have been both more efficient and more egalitarian.

Second, the fertility patterns in Latin America have been showing some of the socially most segmented patterns. Countries moved quite fast into low fertility scenarios, but did so based on a low-low fertility of the middle classes and a still moderately high fertility of the poor. More evident still was the polarization in the timing and calendar of fertility among women from different social strata. While almost half of women aged 19 with only primary education have already been mothers, in women with tertiary studies this only happens around their 30th birthday. Thus the demographic transition in the region was fast but not convergent. Most of the biological reproduction of society is thus left to the poor and shouldered by women.

Third, family patterns have changed dramatically in Latin America and have done so in a very stratified manner. While upper-middle and high income families have moved into a dual earner model with very low and later fertility and with relatively stable marriage patterns, lower income families have become more unstable, with growing mono-maternal households, and still relatively high and especially earlier fertility.

Fourth, in a region with polarized fertility along income lines and stratified family change, there is an important role for a state that equalizes opportunity early on and protects the new vulnerable families. Yet in contrast to OECD countries where 50% of the consumption of children is provided by the state and 50% by the family of origin, in Latin America the data from the NTA project shows that 25% of children's consumption is financed by the state and 75% by their family (NTA).

Finally, though not a fault line in and of itself, we can see with some simple data the magnitude of the family revolution that took place in less than 25 years in Latin America. The nuclear male breadwinner family went from being roughly half of all households with children in 1990 to being less than one-third of them in 2013 (own calculations based on CEPALSTAT). At the same time female headed households with children moved from slightly more than 15% to one-third of all households with children (own calculations based on CEPALSTAT). What we consider female headed households increase due to a declaration effect (more extended and biparental households declare that the female is the head of the family) and from structural effects (there is an increase in households with children where there are no adult males spouses or partners).¹

Neither markets nor states adapted to this epochal change. Women's labour force participation and employment, while higher than in the past, remain far below that of men. Unemployment remains higher for women than for men. As we shall see below, while the state did adapt to some of these changes, increasing support and regulatory protection for women with children, the measures taken were neither sufficient nor effective in protecting lone mothers and/or in fostering dual breadwinner and dual care families. Finally, men—when in couples—did not change their commitment to non-paid household labour and care, leaving women overburdened with the double shift, and leaving them also more vulnerable to poverty together with their offspring.

¹The pace of change really picks up towards the end of the twentieth century. In just 15 years, nuclear male headed families lose almost 20 percentage points, while female headed households gain more than 10 percentage points.

9.2 FAMILIES AND THE UNBALANCED PATRIARCHAL CONTRACT IN LATIN AMERICA

Families remain a fundamental unit in critical social functions. They are material providers of social protection through the production of goods and services to their members, critical spheres in the provision of care and affection, and fundamental in the role of forging identities and a sense of belonging (Therborn 2004). Yet they can also be places where alienation, exploitation and neglect take place (Folbre 1982). Families cooperate in the shadow of conflict (Folbre 1986; Jelin 1998; Sen 1990). The balance between one and the other might have better or worse resolutions for the material and emotional well-being of all parties involved. Social and economic inequalities and state policies can strongly influence which of these functions prevail and—with them—the opportunities and traps for gender equality (Blofield and Filgueira 2018).

Within heterosexual families, gender relations are framed under what several feminist scholars have defined as the sexual or gender “contract” (Pateman, 1988). Such a contract entails explicit or implicit rules that govern gender relations, organizing duties and obligations between men and women. It also allocates different work (paid and unpaid), value, responsibilities and obligations to women and men. Grounded in the sexual division of labor, the gender contract does not only entail specialization, but also a hierarchical relationship between (male) breadwinners and (female) caregivers in charge of unpaid care and domestic work.² Such a hierarchy is represented as the natural order of things.³ Women’s overspecialization in unpaid care and domestic work leaves them equipped with less time and fewer skills to enter and succeed in the labor market (Iversen and Rosenbluth 2011), fewer and less desirable fallback alternatives than men in the event of marriage dissolution and, overall, less bargaining power within the family (Folbre 2012). Yet this does not mean that men hold all the levers of power and women none, or that both men and women agree upon the traditional patriarchal arrangement. To capture

² Gender here is understood as the social construction of features associated with male and female roles in society. The power of these features is such that they not only apply to heterosexual partnerships but extend to homosexual ones as well.

³ A key contribution of Pateman’s (1988) notion of contract is that it challenges a liberal notion of individual freedom to place subordination as the subject matter of contracts (and, through contract, marriage, for instance).

the dynamics that take place in the making and unmaking of families we need a bargaining model of the family and its members.

We incorporate some basic insights of—but also depart from—two central theories that have dominated the debate in families and family change in late twentieth-century academia: Becker's (1973, 1985, 1991) theory on the economics of families and many of the critiques that have built from there, and Van de Kaa (1986, 1994) and Lesthaeghe's (1994, 2014) theory of the second demographic transition.

Like Becker, we believe that families can partly be seen both as a unit of production of goods and services and as a unit of consumption and that the incorporation of time as a scarce resource and a budget constraint are useful notions to build a theoretical framework of families. Yet we veer away from Becker's unitary model of family that Becker champions and instead incorporate a combination of ideas from the collective model of family both in its cooperative and non-cooperative streams. Following Nancy Folbre and Amartya Sen, we claim that family members cooperate in the shadow of conflict. In Folbre's words:

Most of the games that people play have at least some cooperative dimension— some way of at least partially enforcing commitments. The dialectic between cooperation and conflict, however, is often convoluted. Many contracts, including commitments to democracy, are difficult to specify and enforce. Whether on the international, national, community, or family level, people who benefit from cooperation with one another also negotiate over their share of benefits. Bargaining is fractal, taking place explicitly or implicitly, sequentially or simultaneously, in a strategic environment structured by social institutions as well as technological parameters. (Folbre 2019: 13)

Such cooperation takes place through iterated bargaining processes in which adult members hold different preferences and power resources, and confront also distinct and asymmetrical fallback positions in the event of cooperative breakdown.

Because of the sexual division of labour men hold larger levers of power and lower demands on their time, creating asymmetrical outcomes in terms of welfare and in terms of within family bargaining power and fallback positions. The way the state regulates families and family members' rights and duties has usually provide a distinct advantage to men during marriage and in the eventuality of dissolution.

One vector of change in how men and women bargain and cooperate within families is thus strongly related to the assets and resources each one holds and can use to make relevant decisions on time allocation and asset distribution. These decisions have important intertemporal effects. Central among these decisions are those of reproductive choice and of entering or leaving income-generating activities. In addition, the way non-paid work is allocated—and who decides that—will also be central to the present and future power and resources that each member has.

The institutional and policy context will also strongly influence the differential fallback positions of men and women within families and thus affect their bargaining power while married or in union. In societies where family allowances are generous and granted to the primary caregiver and topped up in the case of mono-maternal households, where alimony and child support regulations and amounts are designed to protect separated women and where care systems are free or heavily subsidized of mono-maternal households, women's fallback positions and women's bargaining power within families will increase.

Folbre (2019) shows some of the insights suggested here through two illustrations (see Folbre 2019: 32–33), that establishes a function of production given by two cooperative members and the different potential allocations of such production; and a second one that shows the parameters to think about bargaining power and fallback positions of men and women.

The first one shows a production frontier a cooperative game of two agents in a marriage or union. For an equal allocation of the benefits of cooperation—if an altruistic patriarch is discarded—similar resources for the bargaining process are required. A critical aspect is how much either player in the cooperative game can expect to end up with (in terms of welfare) under the no clause or dissolution of the cooperative game.

As Folbre shows, the model casts a loaded dice against women. If one member alone can reach welfare levels similar under a no cooperation situation while the other cannot, why would the former accept a value in the curve below the value he can secure under no cooperation? The other member, usually the women, on the other hand holds a very weak fallback position, and thus will “feel” that a reasonable or at least an acceptable bargain is one that moves her beyond the low welfare level of no cooperation. Now if for any given reason (access to education, income generating activities, monetary transfers from the state) women

increase their welfare in the fallback position, they will also drive a harder bargain. If men lower their welfare expectation under a no clause situation, they will be more willing to accept a more balanced outcome in the bargaining process. Yet if these two movements do not take place at the same time, or if either partner is unable to perceive the change in their relative fallback positions then a non-cooperative outcome might dominate the solution.

Now let us consider a final situation, one that does not look upon the costs or gains of leaving a cooperative arrangement, but the costs and gains of entering cooperative arrangements versus not entering them. In this case, men or women might not want to enter into a cooperative arrangement because either assumes that the pay-off from such a move will be less than the level of welfare they can secure by themselves. Lower income men and women in general might have often been feeling precisely that, and this would go a long way in helping us make sense of falling marriage rates, later marriage rates, and informal cohabitation without reproduction. The gains from stable unions have become less evident for both men and women.

Here is where a narrow economic view will not do the job. For if in many ways the changing equation of gains and losses from cooperation and non-cooperation stems from structural changes that affect the resources (and expectations and calculations) that men and women have and make, in other cases a shift towards non-cooperation comes from a change in preferences of both men and women. Such changes are also related to structural factors but not in the same way that we assume changing parameters of the game with identical preferences. Here is where the second demographic transition has much to offer. In their view men and women value other things besides those that marriage can offer, and thus we witness an “undoing” of family. Furthermore, a third hypothesis that combines both strands could be made. Men and women will move away from stable cooperation if the normative ideals of what the responsibilities and rights of partners are, are felt as impossible to achieve given the current conditions.

Under the male breadwinner equilibrium men have the upper hand in the bargaining process and can impose their will since women face a fragile fallback position. As women gain control over choices and resources such an equilibrium is lost and it can lead to either breakdown of cooperation or non-entry into cooperative arrangements. Yet the breakdown of the

male breadwinner equilibrium can also come from the perceived impossibility on the part of men to honour the cooperative arrangement without major losses in their welfare outside such an arrangement. Or, more normatively, it can come from the loss of well-being that men perceive because of status inconsistency; normatively a patriarch, but substantively not. Finally, such loss of equilibrium can happen because men or women (or both) have changed preferences. They no longer value children and the status that comes from having children; they value freedom to pursue their individual projects. They no longer value stable partnership, but rather enjoy multiple low commitment partnerships.

These conceptual and analytical lenses allows us to tackle the issue of family regimes in Latin America and its transformation. The region has never fully provided the opportunities and resources for men and women to enter into the stable equilibrium of patriarchal family regimes. While patriarchy has been the dominant normative template both in the private and public spheres, for a large part of the region's population, especially lower income groups, such a domination model did not solidify around the male breadwinner family regime. This is because of three tentative factors.

The first factor is rooted in cultural patterns that shaped a particular understanding of patriarchy and male self-esteem. Many men in the region do not link their manliness to the idea of stable provider, but to the more restricted notion of making children. This was true both among lower income men and among men from the political and economic elites.

In the case of lower-income men, such cultural understandings could be traced back to the material impossibility for many men to become stable providers. If we look at the Western world, the ideal of the nuclear breadwinner family only became an alternative for the lower classes during the post-World War II period when full employment, the male family wage and the male breadwinner-inspired welfare state fully developed. This never happened in Latin America. Where such realities came closest to the industrialized West, the expansion of the stable male breadwinner nuclear family also went furthest and reached the lower classes. Yet, already starting in the 1970s and 1980s, the countries that had come closest to this model unravelled under the weight of the debt crises, the end of import substitution industrialization and the neoliberal attack on the state. In Folbre's model and terms, there was only a very short period and a limited reach of material conditions regarding lower

income men where they would consider a stable cooperative arrangement as welfare-enhancing.

On the side of elites, we have to go further back in history to understand a peculiar pattern of predatory patriarchy. While most men from the upper-middle and upper classes in Latin America saw the normative ideal of the breadwinner model as desirable, they also assumed that part of “being a man” implied extramarital sex. This was tolerated not as a deviation from the norm; rather, it was part of the norm. This can only be understood against the background of the enormous inequalities that plagued the region and that combined class and ethnic status. A large part of the rural male elites assumed as their right to force young women working in their haciendas, plantations or estancias into sex. In the urban milieu, though in a less drastic fashion, husbands and their sons would not feel shame or remorse in forcing the “empleadas” (female domestic workers) into sex. The fact that only recently, and still as a contested terrain, paternity recognition has become an issue on national agendas, shows how durable and embedded were these attitudes and norms (Blofield and Filgueira 2019).

The second factor relates to the persistence of very early unions and childbearing during the post-World War II period. This implied that women overspecialized in care and house work very early in their lives, while men did the same in the labour market. Thus as time passed, the bargaining power of men and women became increasingly unbalanced and their fallback positions radically different. Leaving the cooperative arrangement was costless- or less costly- for men than for women. With the crisis of import substitution industrialization and the rise in women’s educational credentials and labour market opportunities in the service economy, this dynamic slowly shifted, and women chose to break the cooperative arrangement. So, again, the conditions favouring a stable equilibrium, were either not present or rapidly eroded.

The third factor comes from the literature on the second demographic transition. Individual gratification, freedom and personal expressive preferences—as in the rest of the Western world—undermined the preference set that allowed for the patriarchal equilibrium. In the upper-middle and upper classes we also start witnessing an increase in informality, separation and family instability. Yet in those classes such trends were accompanied by lower and later fertility, increased incorporation of women into the

labor market and higher educational achievements. In lower and lower-middle classes these cultural vectors overlap with the historically unstable family patterns where women are mothers and men are breeders.

Thus, historically, we claim that Latin American gender relations have been embedded in an *unbalanced patriarchal contract*. On the one hand, men used to have, and in some cases still have, a monopoly on key decisions involving women's bodies and lives within and outside families. On the other hand, along with these entitlements, men continue to have and/or fulfil few duties in terms of income-provision and overall protection of partners and children that the patriarchal gender contract prescribes (and when we compare them with other Western counterparts). This unbalanced patriarchal contract can be seen in the historic low rates of marriage and high rates of informal cohabitation (Esteve et al. 2011), high and increasing rates of mono-maternal households, high rates of births out of wedlock and low levels of paternity recognition (Blofield and Filgueira 2019), and low rates of child support in contexts of conjugal breakup (Cuesta et al. 2018) This unbalanced patriarchal contract and the social inequality that cuts across it, continues to exert a strong mark affecting the pace, shape and type of change regarding families in Latin America.

The structural levers that uphold and reproduce gender inequality within the family have significantly eroded in the region in the last 20 years. Lower fertility and enhanced access to reproductive control (ECLAC 2009, 2016), expanded educational access and credentials (UN Women 2017) and an increased capacity to generate income and hold property (Deere and León 2001; Filgueira and Martínez Franzoni 2017; Gasparini and Marchionni 2015), have fostered women's economic, social and political empowerment (UN Women 2017). At the same time, a far more flexible reality and cultural mandate regarding the entering and leaving of conjugal relations has led to less sharp gender divides regarding the provision of cash and care within families (UN Women 2017).

9.3 A PROBLEMATIC TRANSITION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN FAMILY REGIME: DIVERGING FAMILY PATTERNS AND THE PERSISTENCE OF THE UNBALANCED PATRIARCHAL CONTRACT

Below we address the most important demographic and family trends that created in a short period a new landscape that was not properly addressed by policy adaptation in the region. At the lower end of stratification a dual pattern emerges: traditional male breadwinner models and mono-maternal households. Thus lower income groups remain stuck in inefficient traditional patriarchal arrangements or men abandon their role as providers, leaving women with the double of providing and caring for offspring. The middle classes increasingly move into an incomplete transition towards a dual earner (but not dual care) family with very low fertility and others become more unstable with a larger proportion of mono-maternal households and reconstituted couple households. Upper income and highly educated women are the only ones that at least to some extent move into the more modern and egalitarian family patterns of dual earning and dual care. Yet even among this strata they remain a minority. The other two shapes that we see increasingly are couples with no children, and women and men that neither marry nor reproduce.

Consistent with similar trends worldwide, fertility has decreased sharply, and in most countries in the region today, national averages are around or below replacement levels. In contrast to other regions in the world, however, fertility patterns differ radically across income strata, with very high teenage pregnancy and maternity rates among low-income women and girls, which make the region a global outlier (Lima 2018). Men and women kept making children, but especially in low income areas, while women became mothers, in many cases men did not become fathers and spouses (ECLAC 2016).

The trends in Latin America are distinct from all other western societies. While during the 1980s and 1990s, in most western societies births to women 30 years or older became the dominant share, and a drastic reduction of births by teenagers took place, in Latin America the opposite happened. With the exception of Eastern Europe (with a similar pattern until the 1990s), Latin America today stands alone as a region where most births (relative to other age brackets) take place in teenagers and very young women, as shown in Fig. 9.1.

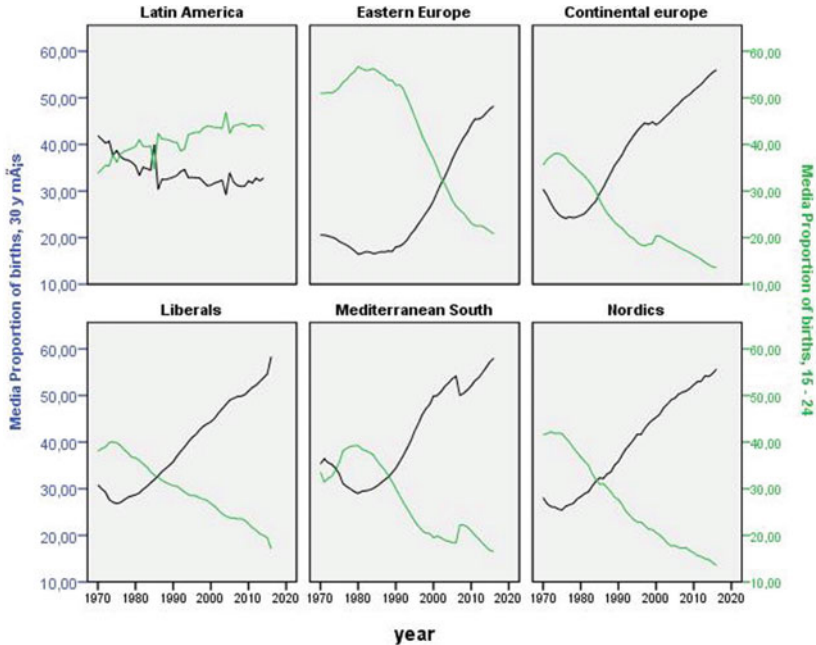


Fig. 9.1 Proportion of births (30 years and more) & proportion of births (15–24) by country group, 1970–2018 (*Source* Own elaboration based on OECD Family Database)

Marriage has radically decreased and union dissolution (whether divorce or separation) has increased. More sharply than in other regions, marriage has decreased and union dissolution (whether divorce or separation) has increased. To start with, marriage was never historically as high as in other regions (Therborn 2004). Instead, most two-parent families were families in which parents had cohabiting unions. Also, cohabitation was far more common in some Central American and Andean countries than it was in the Southern Cone (López-Gay et al. 2015). Still, marriage has also dropped in countries and high-income families where marriage used to be the norm (Esteve et al. 2011). An extreme example is Chile, where out-of-wedlock births went from 16% in 1960 to 73% in 2017. Figure 9.2 outlines marriage and divorce rates by country groups over time.

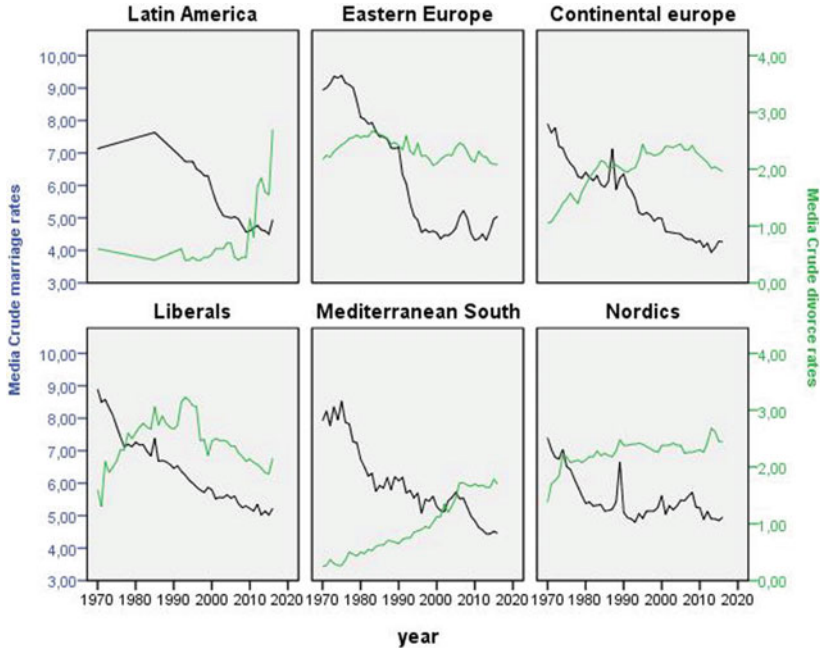


Fig. 9.2 Crude marriage rates & crude divorce rates by country groups, 1970–2018 (*Source* Own elaboration based on OECD Family Database)

At the same time, early unions (15–18 years of age), not only continue to be widespread but they have also increased during the past 25 years (UN Women 2019). The latest available data show that early unions reach a quarter (24.7%) of all women between 20 and 24 years of age. The interplay between teenage pregnancy and early unions is a key aspect of the growing socioeconomic stratification between families (UN Women 2019).

Accentuating a historical pattern, Latin America has the highest rate of children born out of wedlock worldwide (Lippman and Wilcox 2014). In fact, most children in the region are born outside of marital relations, as reflected by 65% of Costa Rican and Mexican children and 70% of Chilean children, according to OECD data. With 84% of all children born out of wedlock, Colombia shows among the highest rates of children born out of wedlock in the region. Because of the high prevalence of

cohabitation, out-of-wedlock does not mean that children lack a resident father, but a proportion of them do. There is much regional variation: while the Southern Cone countries reached relatively high levels of formal unions and births after wedlock during the second half of the twentieth century, most of the Caribbean and much of the Pacific and Central American countries show a strong pattern of informality and births out of wedlock throughout the twentieth century. After the 1980s, in the region as a whole, informality and births out of wedlock expanded, though at different rhythms. Here, both a traditional pattern of informality and a more modern pattern in the middle and upper middle classes on cohabitation seem to be at play (Esteve et al. 2011; López-Gay et al. 2015). What Fig. 9.3 shows is that births out of wedlock in Latin America are high when fertility is also still high, a pattern that is not seen in other

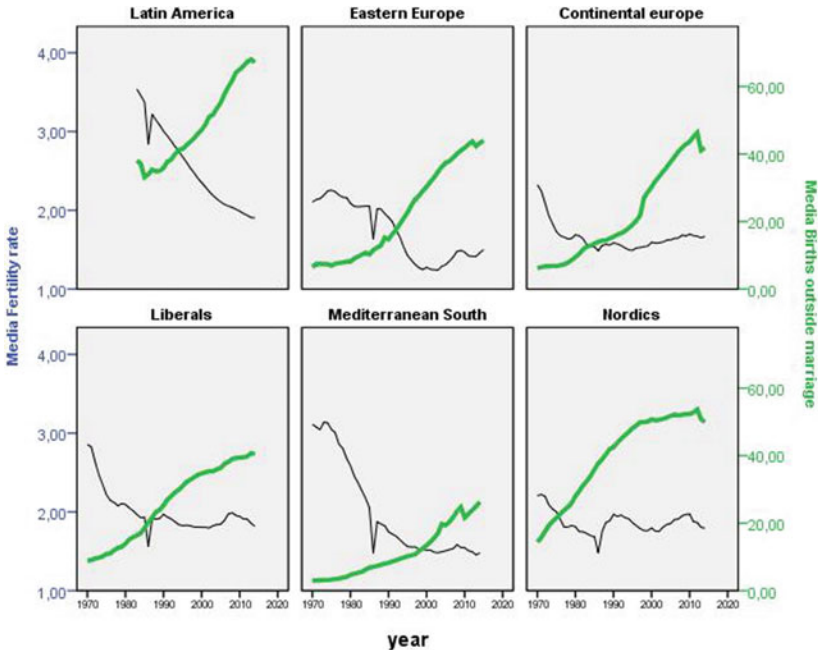


Fig. 9.3 Fertility rate & out of wedlock births by country groups, 1970–2018 (Source Own calculations based on OECD Family Database and World Development Indicators)

Western countries. Furthermore, as we reach the present, the region remains an outlier with levels of births out of wedlock higher than in all other regions.

A breadwinner father and a care-giver mother are no longer the “model” family in which children are raised, that is, the family that represents the most frequent family type. The incorporation of women into the labour market, the already increasing trends in separation and divorce, and changing cultural patterns have led to a radical decrease of the nuclear male breadwinner family (Ullman et al. 2014). While lower income families with children have a higher share of mono-maternal households and extended households with single mothers, when both parents reside in the household, male breadwinner models predominate. Thus either dominant configuration at the lower end of the stratification is inefficient and vulnerable. In the first case they are reliant on just one parent for income and care, and in the second case the sexual division of labour makes them both poorer and more vulnerable to market shocks. In upper income households with children, biparental families predominate, yet with two breadwinners. Furthermore, in the upper quintiles the share of families with children has dramatically declined. This responds both to a composition effect and to new behaviour in young men and women from richer families: single person households, non-kin and non-couple households and couples with no children have increased dramatically. The diversification of family structures includes the presence of same-sex partnerships.

‘Lone-mother households’ have increased, whether they are defined as households with a woman and her children and no one else⁴ (Chant 1997), or lone mothers living in extended households. Several factors account for this increase. Two prominent ones are union dissolution and migration. Either scenario can entail lone mothers’ lack of income support by the non-resident fathers of their children. One implication is the scarcity of time that lone mothers face if they are to simultaneously take care of income provision and caregiving. This “time poverty” reflects in the amount of paid working hours that lone mothers can perform.

⁴Lone mothers are women who bring up children on their own, regardless of why they are not living with the child’s father. Lone mothers are not defined by their civil status (as it is the case with “single mothers” and they need not be head of household nor the main economic contributor (Chant 1997).

Two other types of households have increased significantly: single person households and households where there are couples without children. The former went from 8.6% of all households in 2001 to almost 13% in 2017 (ECLAC 2019). This increase is due mostly to an ageing society where female single person households are quite important given women's longevity vis a vis males. The second type of household relates to the postponement of reproductive patterns and its increasing lag in timing with marriage or stable union. Such households have increased from 7.3 to 10.3% of all households (ECLAC 2019). In both cases such increases are much more pronounced at the higher end of socioeconomic strata. Indeed, single person households represent almost a quarter of all households in the richest quintile, while couples without children amount to 16% in the same income level. For those at the poorest fifth of the income distribution the figures are 5.8 and 5.7%, respectively (ECLAC 2019). Such trends, associated with the second demographic transition, are mostly present at the fourth and fifth quintiles of the income distribution, and largely absent in the poorest sectors of society.

Multi-generational, extended households remain a large proportion of households with children. While such households have decreased they still represent close to a quarter of all households with children. In many cases such households are matrilineal, with little or no participation of males, and in others they might also represent resource pooling strategies in contexts of scarcity. They also reflect at least partly a cultural tradition where the daughters are expected to care for their elderly parents. Extended households have become less prominent in better off families (though by no means insignificant: they remain 18% of all households in the fifth quintile), yet they remain particularly important at the lower end of the income distribution, and in many countries they still represent a relevant proportion of all households with children in the middle classes (between 32 and 26% of all households) (ECLAC 2019).

Demographic trends are embedded in considerable social inequality. Beyond fertility and early unions, most other relevant dimensions of family life—with the exception of the consistently low amount of time men across income strata dedicate to domestic work and care—are also embedded in substantial social inequality (UN Women 2017).

The three worlds of “sticky floors”, “broken ladders” and “glass ceilings” documented in UNW’s 2017 regional report, provide qualitatively different scenarios for maternal and paternal roles. These trends highlight how different the experience of motherhood is under different

scenarios of female economic empowerment. A high proportion of all mothers in the lowest two quintiles bring up children largely without an income of their own, with a weak presence of paternal duties, and with little state support. To the contrary, most mothers in the two upper quintiles have an income of their own, have the market capacity to buy care services and are, overall, in a better position to negotiate a more balanced combination of paternal rights and duties. In between, women exert motherhood under the constant threat of individual and collective shocks, pushing them down the social ladder. While less studied, we believe that the experiences of fatherhood might also prove to be quite different along different social strata. The scant data available does not show differences in terms of non-paid work in the households (UN Women 2017); however, the emerging research on paternity recognition and child support suggest that such dimensions are starkly different by socioeconomic gradients (Bucheli and Vigorito 2017; Blofield and Filgueira 2019). This is also true when we consider location or ethnic origin. Early motherhood, lower education, absent fathers and lone mothers are overrepresented among families with African roots and Indigenous families, as well as in families in the urban periphery. In rural areas, while this can also be true, the most critical difference with urban milieus is the lack of access that families have to infrastructure, utilities and services (ECLAC 2019).

In sum, Latin American families are as diverse as ever, with cross-national variations as well as within-country variations along class and racial/ethnic lines. The heterogeneity identified above speaks of a “dual transition” among families: while some, usually upper and middle-upper income families, tend to experience more egalitarian arrangements, others, usually low and middle-low income families, are stuck or even reverting towards more unbalanced patriarchal relationships, including increasingly absent males, accentuating the unbalanced patriarchal contract. These patterns have received some, but not enough academic and policy attention.

9.4 FAMILY POLICIES: PRESENT BUT NOT SUFFICIENT

Clearly, most if not all social and economic policies affect families. Indeed, the state performs three basic tasks, all of which affect families: regulating the behaviour of individuals and institutions; the collection of resources from individuals, families and organizations through taxation; and the

distribution and allocation of resources in the community (Filgueira 2007). However, we narrow it down here to highlight key policies that directly affect families.

First, how the state recognizes and regulates families—including marriage and divorce laws, reproductive rights and policies on intimate partner violence, child custody laws, and inheritance laws—profoundly affects how families are structured and the ways that they accomplish their tasks. Second, whether and how the state distributes a broad range of goods and services affects how families function (Blofield and Filgueira 2018). Here, we focus on direct policies that provide cash transfers and/or services to families, parents and children. Finally, policies on bodily integrity—both reproductive health and rights, and intimate partner and domestic violence—could be included under the core of family policies (*ibid.*).

9.4.1 Confronting Unbalanced Patriarchy: Lights and Shadows

In state recognition and regulation, legal provisions regarding union formation and dissolution (including provisions regarding early unions); maternal and paternal responsibilities in terms of the legal recognition, income provision and caregiving of their biological or adopted children within or out of wedlock; and male violence against women in the context of intimate relationships, all directly affect individual and family wellbeing.

In Latin America, as cohabitation has massively increased, legal recognition has followed suit, so that in most countries such unions now have the same rights as legal marriages (García and De Oliveira 2011). Moreover, over the past decades, laws that regulate partnerships have removed the last vestiges of formal inequality, and affirmed the principle of gender equality. During the last half century, legal regimes have also transformed the way parent–child relationships are regulated. A crucial matter is whether/how parental responsibilities over children transcend the specific arrangement, legal or not, between the parents. In other words, it is crucial to determine whether and how parental responsibilities become autonomous from conjugal relations. This is very relevant of course to children, but also to mothers as they are most likely primary caregivers.

A second crucial matter has to do with policies regarding paternal legal recognition, an issue that is especially crucial in Latin America, where

historically laws have vehemently guarded the rights of “legitimate” children and their parents over “natural” or “illegitimate” children and their mothers (Milanich 2015), against the backdrop of the high prevalence of out-of-wedlock children. Over the past century, there has been a sea-change in legal regulations regarding parents and offspring, away from protecting the interests of (wayward) fathers, to officially enshrining the principle of the best interests of the child (Milanich 2015; Blofield and Filgueira 2019). Legally, all children born within wedlock are considered to be the offspring of both spouses, and in most countries, laws have equalized parental responsibilities between married and cohabitating parents. The crucial element is parental, specifically paternal, recognition and responsibility in cases where the parents never cohabited, or have separated. Paternal legal recognition is important not only for the stigma that lack of such recognition carries with it in Latin America, but also because it is a necessary prerequisite for other formal paternal rights and responsibilities. Between 10 and 30% of children in Latin America are estimated to be born without a legally recognized father (Blofield and Filgueira 2019).

Following from this, the second dimension is parental rights and responsibilities in cases where the parents no longer reside together. Here, laws and policies on economic support for the child, in the form of child support payments, and custody and visitation rights, are crucial. In cases where couples have been married and get divorced, the establishment of custody, visitation and child support payments are regularly part of the divorce proceedings. However, in the case of informal relationships, whether and what kinds of formal procedures exist become paramount (McLanahan and Pettit 2003). A large proportion of children with non-resident fathers do not receive child support. In recent studies (Cuesta et al. 2018; Bucheli and Vigorito 2017; Castaño 2017), the preliminary estimates indicate a range where only 14% of children receive child support in Guatemala, up to 60% in Uruguay and 51% in Chile. An important implication is the downward mobility and/or poverty of lone-mothers.

Our own estimates based on the Luxembourg Income Survey provide similar estimates. Figure 9.4 shows that while the countries that we have data for have mostly improved, the region is far from an adequate level of child support for lone mothers.

While we see significant movement across Latin American countries over the past two decades on these issues, particularly regarding

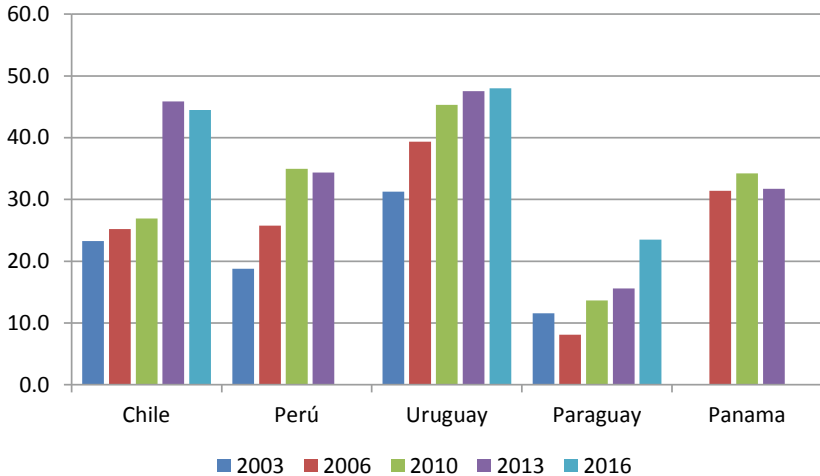


Fig. 9.4 Percentage of lone non-widowed mothers with children below 18 receiving child support (*Source* Own estimates based on special tabulations from Household Surveys, Luxembourg Income Study [LIS] Database)

more effective enforcement of child support, on the one hand, and maternal preference versus shared custody of children on the other hand (IPFF/WHR 2017; Martínez Franzoni 2019) the reality for many lone mothers, especially those from lower income groups, remains dire. In addition, the biological recognition of fathers has undergone transformations, hand in hand with the availability of DNA testing (Blofield and Filgueira 2019). Yet neither of these two critical areas were part of an integrated gender and class agenda of the left shift, and thus their impact was limited at best.

9.4.2 *Maternalist Redistribution Only Takes You so Far*

Second, state policy on providing transfers and services aimed at the material well-being of children and often of their primary caregivers, usually mothers, is part of the core of family policy. Here, legal provisions, policies and programmes, especially cash transfers towards families and children, post-birth parental leaves, and care services are central.

Since the turn of the millennium, state interventions aimed at children, and at women as mothers, have increased across Latin America, in several ways. First, cash transfers increased the proportion of women with their own income through Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) and extended pension coverage, improving women's access to old age benefits on their own terms (as compared to benefits obtained as dependents of their husbands) (Arza et al. 2018).⁵ While these reforms were the most far-reaching, they were also problematic. Indeed, the expansion of conditional cash transfers was linked to state demands of mostly maternal unpaid work. Under these programmes, monetary transfers were conditional upon children's school attendance and medical check-ups (Molyneux 2006; Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2012; Cookson 2018; Bradshaw and Viquez 2008).⁶

Second, some countries also increased the length and coverage of maternity leave, and others created or expanded Early Child Education and Care (ECEC) services. Such efforts fell short, however, if the aim was to reverse the trends towards increased inequality in family arrangements. National efforts to expand services took off modestly in most countries of the region, and only in the latter half of the first decade of the twenty-first century (Blofield and Martínez Franzoni 2015; Batthyány 2015; Rico and Robles 2016). Regional agendas placed them high, boosted by regional networking with a gendered focus (Esquivel 2016).⁷ Together with larger labour market participation, these developments have had a positive, transformative effect on women's lives. Yet overall, the levels of coverage remained low towards the end of the left shift and the stratification in such coverage quite high. The recent economic slowdowns and turn towards more conservative governments have reduced the prioritization of service expansion.

Meanwhile, fatherhood did not remain untouched, even if the emphasis on fathers' rights and responsibilities was generally much lower

⁵As a recent overview of the literature, this book chapter provides a more detailed discussion of scholarly work on the expansion of women's access to monetary transfers.

⁶We are not citing in here the rich body of research on the effects of CCTs upon women's access to economic resources and state demand of their additional unpaid work. Most scholars agree on the positive effect of the former—albeit the usually meager size of the transfers involved—and on the problematic character of the latter.

⁷Extensive reference to research on the subject conducted across the region can be found in Arza and Martínez Franzoni (2018).

than the emphasis on mothers. On the one hand, in a few countries fathers were the subject of policy reforms that extended or created paternal and/or parental leave at birth (Blofield and Touchton 2020; Lupica 2016; Rico and Pautassi 2011; Salvador et al. 2017). Two countries, Chile and Uruguay, established, in a regional first, the option of publically funded shareable parental leaves, while other countries established employer-funded, short post-birth paternity leaves (Blofield and Touchton 2020). On the other hand, a number of countries reformed family law, often to improve the low compliance with child support among divorced or separated fathers, and also often to give fathers more rights. Joint custody, a passionate demand by organizations of separated fathers, is a case in point. Finally, regarding biological paternity, some countries introduced changes in the burden of proof from mothers to fathers in the 2000s.

Finally, policies on bodily integrity—in the form of sexual and reproductive autonomy, on the one hand, and freedom from violence on the other—are fundamental aspects of individual and family well-being, and could be included under the core of family policies. States provide the framework in which couples bear—or do not bear—children, and the conditions under which this occurs, including whether it takes place without undue physical, financial, or psychological hardship. The state also plays an important role in ensuring (or not) the bodily integrity of individuals in terms of both reproductive autonomy and freedom from violence, within—and beyond—families. Both have significant consequences for family members on an individual level, as well as trends in family dynamics and wellbeing on a collective level.

- *Contraceptive methods and their effectiveness in reducing teenage pregnancy have increased in several countries:* Yet other countries have witnessed a rise of conservative policies, where policy-makers have been reluctant to promote measures seen as incorrectly promoting sexual and reproductive rights. At least three debates on sexual and reproductive rights are taking place in the region which directly affect the ability of women to control reproductive choice and the behaviour of males regarding such contested control: legal abortion, new contraceptive methods and subsidies, policies for making them known and available (eg. long term reversible contraception), and sexual education in schools.

- *Violence against women in the context of intimate relationships has been addressed by laws and policies across the region:* The region witnesses a new set of laws, national plans, specialized court agencies, among other relevant changes. Gender based violence constitutes a central mechanism by which males can and do exert power within families and the household. Massive public campaigns, sexual education, increasing police engagement in combatting such violence, growing systematic data and legal changes regarding the criminalization and penalties associated with domestic violence are changing the landscape, but not without major institutional, cultural and political resistance.

9.5 THE POLITICS BEHIND THE POLICIES

There are some clear overarching trends toward more egalitarian family law across the region, as well as an emphasis on anti-poverty policies toward children. Beyond this, policies and the politics of policies vary across countries and across policy types (see for example the special issue of *Social Politics* 2017, on gender equality policies in Latin America). Some areas have been more researched, such as anti-poverty cash transfers, and work–family policies, while other areas, such as paternity recognition, and child support policies, have received very little attention.

Some areas of family policy have also been the arena of significant collective action, both progressive and conservative. Organizations of separated fathers have been prominent drivers for collective action in terms of family law, particularly in terms of child support, on the one hand, and of children’s custody, on the other hand (UN 2011; IPFF/WHR 2017). In several countries, feminist organizations have led massive mobilizations against male violence. These mobilizations have included anti patriarchal men such as those who are meeting in Uruguay in 2019 and met in Argentina in 2018 under the *Encuentros de Varones Antipatriarcales* (<https://www.facebook.com/elva2018/>). Reproductive rights, especially abortion, have continued to be a source of deep polarization, as feminists have mobilized extensively for reform while religious and conservative forces have sought to stave off any change (Blofield and Ewig 2017).

Other areas, such as paternity recognition or parental leaves, have been the subject of less social pressure from below but nonetheless hold deep

implications for families, and require both policy and academic attention (see Martínez Franconi [2019] for a tentative typology of policy change and questions regarding the policy dynamics behind them).

Overall, agendas for policy continuity and/or change in the realms of child support, child custody, birth leave and violence are deepening tensions between different views regarding families and, by extension, regarding how the gender contract should look like. Some of these efforts can help balance out the gender contract; others can deepen the imbalance. Examples of the former are measures to prevent and punish domestic violence, or proactive policies on paternity recognition. Examples of policies that can deepen the imbalance are efforts to reduce state intervention in defining and enforcing child support by non-resident fathers, or policies that restrict girls' and women's access to reproductive services. Similarly, policies that support work-family reconciliation can alleviate the care crisis; however, policies that focus only on mothers may aggravate gender inequalities, while policies that promote paternal co-responsibility may alleviate them, at least over the longer term.

It is crucial for us to better understand both the drivers of policy change—in these different areas—as well as the implications of policy design, for the well-being of women, men and children. It is also a timely project, given that many issues are at the beginning stages of being politicized more forcefully—for example, paternity recognition and child support—and thus evidence-based analysis could be of utmost importance to social and political actors, as they mobilize around these issues in different national contexts. Such analysis would also help identify the risks of undoing progress already made, and potential strategies to avoid these risks.

9.6 IN CLOSING

The region shows continuities and dramatic changes in families, both positive and negative for gender, generational and socioeconomic inequality, that have yet to be properly understood. Moreover, the interaction of familial changes with the dynamics of markets and the actions of states requires better and broader research lenses. The interplay between social and gender inequalities has and will continue to have an impact on family arrangements and on how these arrangements shape gender relations. How politics, state policies and market dynamics respond to

these family transformations will in turn determine the future patterns and functions of families in the region.

What have been the structural bottlenecks that limit and place a ceiling on family forms and family trajectories that are friendly to women's empowerment and an egalitarian gender contract? How can an unbalanced patriarchal gender contract, on the one hand, become more balanced and, on the other hand, become post patriarchal? What is the menu of policies available to promote this aim and how should the menu vary across and within countries? These are the overarching questions that this chapter has only started to address. We make no claim to have answered any of them. But we do make a simple claim: the transformation of families should be considered a true silent revolution.

This revolution either deepens or was unable to revert two highly problematic features of our family regime: an unbalanced patriarchal contract and a divergence along income and class lines in how families reach more robust or fragile family arrangements to confront a transformed social and economic landscape. In this process, the upper classes and upper middle classes follow a consistent pattern: a move towards a more gender egalitarian division of labour, informal yet childless first unions, less and later fertility, and relatively stable levels of mono-maternality. At the other end of the distribution stable biparental families cannot move away from a traditional pattern in the sexual division of labour, while another proportion of families see the increasing disappearance of men as providers and caregivers.

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