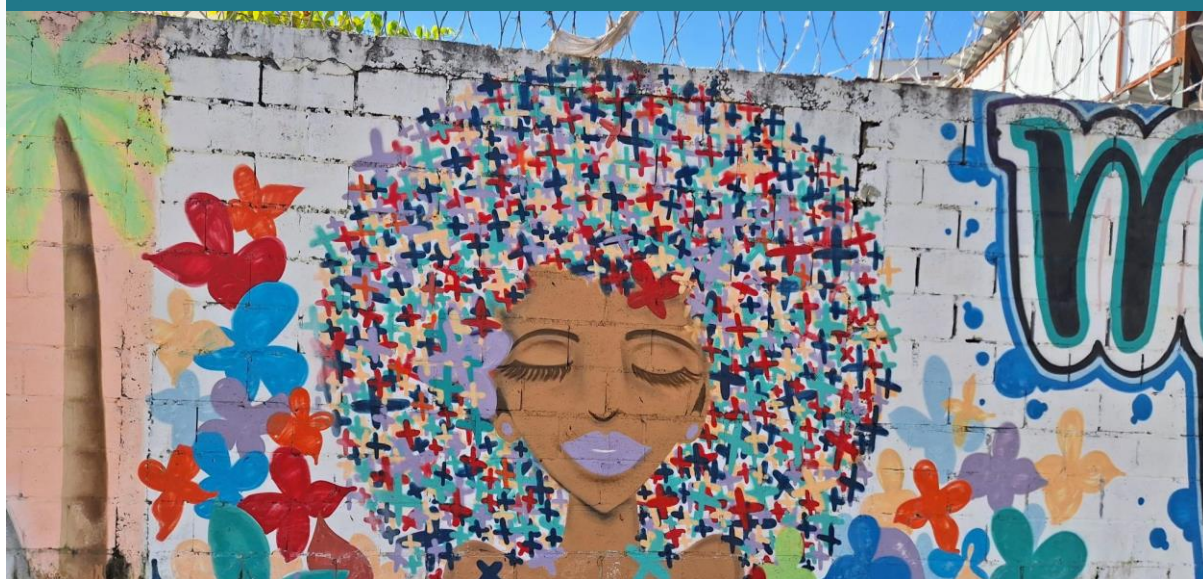# The role of gender norms in shaping the decision to migrate amongst Haitian migrants in Brazil

WORKING PAPER

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1. INTRODUCTION

Despite a long tradition of Haitian migration to destinations such as the United States (USA), France, Canada, and the Dominican Republic, Haitian migration to Brazil intensified following the 2010 earthquake (Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED), 2020; Muraro *et al.*, 2023; Queiroz Telmo Romano and Pizzinato, 2021). Brazil became an attractive destination for Haitians for several reasons. For example, president Luíz Inácio Lula da Silva visited Haiti and in a public speech said that Haitians were welcome to come to Brazil and that they would be received with "open arms" (Cogo, 2019:72). Similarly, former president Dilma Rouseff in her 2015 speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations said, "Brazil is a hosting country, a country formed by refugees. We have received… Haitians, men and women from the around the world… we have our arms open to receive refugees" (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2015).

Furthermore, Brazil's image of a prosperous country was shared in Haitian media and reinforced by Brazil's leadership role in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) (from 2004 to 2017) and its military presence during the 2010 earthquake (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Landry, 2018; Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017). The 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic games also contributed to an image of a country that was economically booming, with increased labour opportunities for locals and migrants announced by the Brazilian government (Muraro *et al.*, 2023; Yates, 2021). Simultaneously, migration restrictions for Haitians in the Dominican Republic, and in other traditional destinations for Haitian migration (the United States, Canada, and France) also played an important role in diverting migration journeys toward Brazil (Landry, 2018).

In addition to this broader context, the literature identifies that the decision to migrate is also influenced by other factors such as levels of poverty, the presence of social networks, households' or individual's aspirations, or gender and other intersecting inequalities (Massey *et al.*, 1993; Carling and Schewel, 2018; Hidrobo, Mueller and Roy, 2022). Recent literature on Haitian migration identifies how gender norms, the implicit informal rules that most people accept and follow as a result of the way we or others identify our gender, can play a role in Haitians' decision to migrate (Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019; Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; de Oliveira, Dias and de Oliveira, 2018; Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017).

For example, some literature observes that in the case of Haitian men, their migration decision can be linked to their role as breadwinners or a path towards adulthood and economic independence (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017). For Haitian women, however, migration decision-making can be interlinked more with expectations of their households and community towards them as women, wives, and daughters (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; de Oliveira, Dias and

de Oliveira, 2018); their position in the household (Handerson and Joseph, 2015); or to their perceived family responsibilities (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017; Mejía and Scapin, 2023). Some of these expectations and norms have their origins in the roles that have been assigned to women and men in the Haitian society and the unequal place that is given to women, as we will show in the context section.

However, other emerging literature suggests that some Haitian women are not following the conventional gender roles of migrating as daughters or wives (Izaguirre, Skov and Walsham, 2021; Lucas and Ituassu, 2022; Mamed, 2017). For instance, Izaguirre, Skov and Walsham (2021) found that 71% of migrant women are single; suggesting that they do not arrive through family reunification channels but migrate independently. Other studies have observed that insertion into the job market, taking into account the cultural universe of Haitian migrants, can represent paths of emancipation and changes in gender relations for Haitian migrant women. It can provide greater decision-making power in the home, given the possibility of sharing the household's livelihood rather than being financially dependent on their husbands (Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019).

In general, most of the literature on Haitian migration has overlooked the following factors influencing the decision of individuals to migrate: i) the role of gender and other social norms that motivate men and women to migrate or to stay back; ii) the presence of gendered social networks in the migration process; iii) the perception of migration as a family strategy with different social expectations for men and women (some exceptions are Handerson and Joseph, 2015; Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017); and iv) the ways that intersecting inequalities (e.g. race, class, age, sexual orientation) interact with gender identities and influence migration decision-making. All these factors need to be accounted for if we want to understand the ways that gender norms influence decision-making processes undertaken by women and men who migrate as members of their households and communities. Furthermore, very few studies have explored gender norms shifts once in Brazil (Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019; Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Dacilien and Melino, forthcoming; Izaguirre, Skov and Walsham, 2021). The evidence is uneven regarding whether gender norms change, how they change, and the directions of such changes.

This paper seeks to address these gaps. Although we acknowledge that Haitians have migrated to Brazil mostly for economic reasons, our main aim is to explore the tangible and intangible aspects of this migration by examining commonalities and differences between women and men through a norms and intersectionality perspective. We tackle the following research questions with a focus on Haitian migration to Brazil:

- How do gender norms influence the decision to migrate of Haitian women and men?
- Do Haitian migrants perceive gender norms change at destination? If so, how? Does this differ between men and women?

In doing so, this paper will contribute to the debate on the determinants to migration, which go beyond tangible or material factors, by demonstrating the importance that gender norms and intersectionality play (De Jong, 2000; Hidrobo, Mueller and Roy, 2022). It thus aims to contribute to efforts to understand the linkages between subjective or intangible factors and tangible factors shaping the migration decision-making process (Hagen-Zanker, Hennessey and Mazzilli, 2023; Mazzilli, Hagen-Zanker and Leon-Himmelstine, forthcoming), including MIDEQ research on decision-making on the Haitian-Brazil corridor (Guindani *et al.*, forthcoming). This paper will also shed light on what drives changes, or not, in gender norms upon destination (Bachan, 2018; Ferrant and Tuccio, 2015; Hidrobo, Mueller and Roy, 2022), with a focus on migration movements from Haiti to Brazil. Our analysis is based on data collected in 2021 drawing on in-depth interviews with 65 Haitians living in Brazil, alongside two focus groups in five Brazilian states - Rondônia, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Paraná, and Santa Catarina.

The paper proceeds as follows. We first outline the context, including an overview of Haitian migration to Brazil and a focus on gender norms and their accompanied inequalities in Haitian and Brazilian societies. This is followed by our methodology. Then, we explore the decision-making process of our participants by disentangling the tangible and intangible factors, while we pay attention to the divergence as well as the convergence of narratives between women and men from a gender norms perspective. Afterwards, the paper examines whether gender norms shift at destination and in what ways. We will also pay attention to the role of certain traits among participants such as class, gender, race, and other intersecting inequalities that may emerge. The conclusion highlights key findings and suggests future lines of research.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 OVERVIEW OF HAITIAN MIGRATION TO BRAZIL

Although Haitians have historically migrated within the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, the 2010 earthquake caused a surge in the number of Haitians choosing Brazil and other South American countries as their destination (Cela, Fidálgo and Marcelin, 2022; Yates, 2021). Over 161,000 Haitians settled or transited through Brazil between 2010 and June 2023 (Alto Comissaria do das Nações Unidas para Refugiado (ACNUR) Brasil, 2023). The Haitian population in Brazil was estimated to be around 143,000 in 2021 (Yates, 2021). Meanwhile, 83,000 Haitians held some type of legal documentation, based on needs of

international protection, by mid-2023 (Alto Comissaria do das Nações Unidas para Refugiado (ACNUR) Brasil, 2023).

The Brazilian government has opened opportunities for Haitians to regularize their status[1]. In 2012, Brazil began granting humanitarian visas for Haitians following the increase of arrivals after the 2010 earthquake (Fernandes and Faria, 2017). Later, the 2017 Migration Law adopted the principle of humanitarian reception as the basis for issuing visas and permits to enter Brazil, while it also guaranteed the right to family reunification (Guindani *et al.*, forthcoming). Interministerial Ordinance MJSP/MRE No. 38, which was released in April 2023, intends to make it easier for stateless individuals and Haitian nationals with familial ties in Brazil to get a temporary visa for the purpose of family reunion, as allowed by the 2017 Migration Law (Ministério das Relações Exteriores and Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública, 2023)

Despite this legal framework, Haitians face important challenges to migrate, to regularise their migration status and to reunite with their families in Brazil. For instance, there are barriers associated with travel to and from Haiti due to a lack of direct flights since the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of expensive flights, transit visa requirements and language barriers (Crawley, 2023; Melino and Desrosier, 2023). Government migration staff and the Brazilian army at Brazilian borders have discriminatory attitudes towards Black migrants who arrive on foot, including those holding humanitarian visas (Melino and Desrosier, 2023). Haitians have also faced difficulties securing the necessary documentation to be reunited with family members. Part of the requirements included showing evidence of economic dependency, written receipts that refugees had sent money abroad, that were difficult to gather (Nabuco Martuscelli, 2020). Furthermore, resolution number 27/2018 granted more power to Brazilian diplomats abroad to grant visas when they were not well trained on asylum and humanitarian topics (Ibid).

Haitians have entered the country through different routes, facing the dangers (e.g. diseases, sexual abuse, violence, health hazards) that come when crossing countries and the South American region – via air, road, river boat, and on foot (Rawlinson *et al.,* 2014; Beekma, 2015). Initially, Haitians migrated to Brazil by flying to Central or South America then transiting through several countries by land, to enter Brazil through Tabatinga (Amazon state) and then on to Manaus or to Brasileia (Acre state) and Rio Branco (Rawlinson *et al.*, 2014). With the introduction of the

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[1] Haitians benefit from two main programmes that aim to promote regular migration: 1) the Family Reunification Visa Programme (VITEM XI), targeting specific relatives (e.g. spouses, children, grandchildren, parents, siblings) of a foreigner with a resident permit living in Brazil (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2023) and; 2) the Humanitarian Visa programme (VITEM III) for Haitians and nationals from other countries (Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine) who have been experiencing serious instability, armed conflict, disaster or human rights violations. VITEM III grants residency initially for two years, with the possibility to obtain permanent residency. This programme also grants access to educational and labour opportunities in the country (Muraro *et al.*, 2023). However, the VITEM III programme expires in December 2024 (Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública/Gabinete do Ministro, 2023).

humanitarian visa, Haitians who benefitted from it began migrating through São Paulo subsequently relocating to smaller municipalities where work is more readily available (David, Rizzotto and Gouvêa, 2023). According to the Observatório das Migrações Internacionais, Haitian migrants are concentrated in the cities of São Paulo, Parana, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul (Observatório das Migrações Internacionais (OBMigra), 2017).

Some studies have shown that despite Haitians having high levels of education, they do not usually find employment in their field of training (Handerson and Joseph, 2015; Dacilien and Melino, forthcoming). Additionally, the opportunities available to Haitian women in the labour market are further restricted by the racial hierarchies that currently exist in Brazil, linking black or darker skinned women to domestic work (Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED), 2020).

Despite the image of Brazil as a country that was economically booming, the economy stagnated between 2014 and 2016, accompanied by political instability (Brinca and Costa-Filho, 2022; Marquetti, Hoff and Miebach, 2020; Muraro *et al.*, 2023; Yates, 2021)[2]. Several Haitians already experienced challenging work conditions with long working hours and lower wages compared to Brazilians. Lower wages were exacerbated by these crises and then the COVID-19 emergency. Furthermore, the 2018 election of former President Jair Bolsonaro, a conservative former military officer, stoked racist and growing xenophobic sentiments against migrants. All these events contextualise the accounts and experiences described by our Haitian participants during their interviews and focus groups.

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[2] Between 2014 and 2016, the Brazilian economy faced one of the worst recessions in its history mainly driven by from a combination of domestic factors such as distortions in the accumulation of production, subsidized credit that was poorly allocated, inadequate government spending and the dynamics with credit market friction (Brinca and Costa-Filho, 2022). The Brazilian economy remained in recession in 2016, with gross domestic product (GDP) shrinking by an estimated 3.6% the second consecutive year fall of more than 3.5%. Consequently, unemployment rose to an average of 11.8% in the third quarter of 2016, compared to 8.9% a year earlier; and the monthly wage lost 2.45% of its real value over the four quarters to October 2016. The total net public debt grew from 36.2% of GDP in late 2015 to 44.2% in October 2016 (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2016). Throughout 2015, the streets were taken over by right-wing sectors protesting against the government and calling for the impeachment of former President Dilma Rousseff. Segments of the workers and the middle classes gradually joined the protesters against Rousseff. With the deepening economic crisis and without political support, Rousseff was removed from power in 2016 (Marquetti, Hoff and Miebach, 2020).

FIG 1. TIMELINE OF RECENT SALIENT EVENTS IN HAITI AND BRAZIL
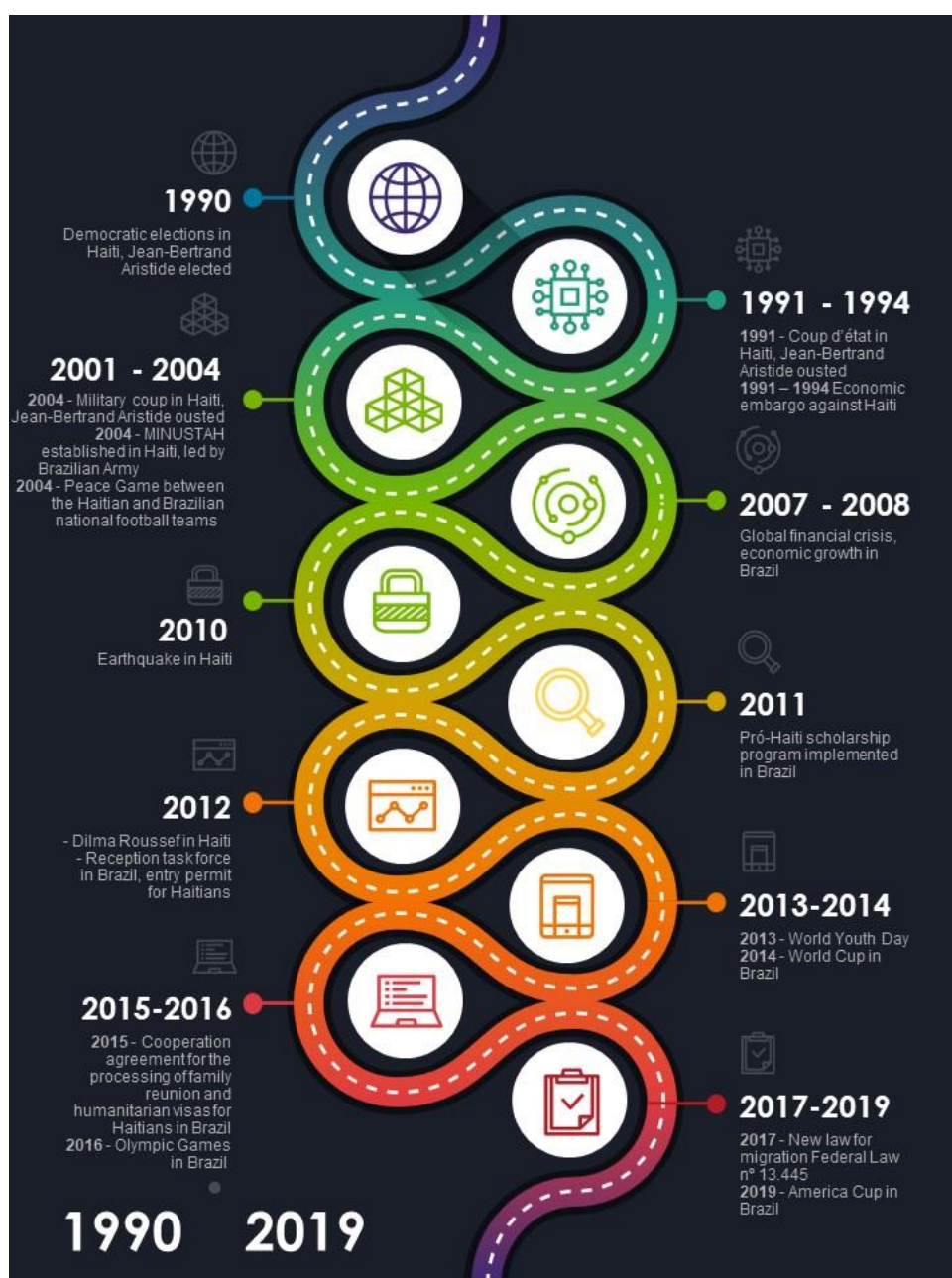
Source: (Guindani et al., forthcoming)

2.2 OVERVIEW OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN HAITI AND BRAZIL

HAITI

Although Haitian women represent more than half of the population (51%), they have been systematically marginalized politically, economically, and socially (Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED), 2017). The historical legacies of colonialism and impunity, accompanied with gender hierarchies,

in part explain the roots of gender inequalities in the country (Cela *et al.*, Forthcoming; Farmer, 2004). Furthermore, gender inequalities in several areas including education, gender-based violence, health, participation in the labour market, have been exacerbated with Haiti's political, environmental and economic crisis such as "country lockdowns" (peyi lòk[3]), the 2010 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic (Cela *et al.*, Forthcoming).

Haiti ranks lower on different gender indices compared to other countries in the LAC region. The Gender Development Index (GDI)[4] is designed such that the closer a country's GDI value is to one, the more gender equal it is. Haiti's 2021 GDI value is 0.898 compared to the LAC regional average of 0.963 (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). On the 2019 Social Institutions and Gender Index[5] (SIGI), Haiti has medium levels of discrimination with a score of 40. Discrimination is rated medium for the categories "discrimination in the family" and "restricted physical integrity" and discrimination is rated "low" for "restricted access to productive and financial resources" and high for "restricted civil liberties" (OECD, 2020).

The literature identifies gender differences in several areas, including education. For example, the education of boys is favoured in detriment of girls because boys are perceived to be more likely to economically contribute to their households. Girls in turn, get married and start a family at a younger age; reflected in Haiti's 8% teen pregnancy rate (Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED), 2017). However, data from the World Bank identifies progress in school attendance. In 2017, girls outperformed boys in terms of enrolment at all education system levels, except for primary education in urban areas, where gender gaps were minimal. For instance, girls had a net attendance rate of 65% in urban areas (compared to only 59% among boys) and 41% in rural areas (compared to 30% of boys) (The World Bank, 2023).

Other studies observe inequalities regarding women's engagement in the labour market. According to the World Bank, before the COVID-19 pandemic, women faced higher unemployment rates: about 23% of women in urban areas were unemployed, compared to 17% of men. During the pandemic, women were much more likely to leave the workforce than men, probably related to the unequal division

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[3] Peyi Lòk, or "country lockdown" officially began in September 2019 when political opposition groups joined forces to demand the Haitian government account for over USD 2 billion in missing funds from the Petrocaribe deal with Venezuela. Petrocaribe provided Haiti with oil at competitive rate with favourable repayment terms to facilitate investments in infrastructure, health, education, and agriculture (Cela et al., 2022:137)

[4] The GDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health (measured by female and male life expectancy at birth), education (measured by female and male expected and average years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and older); and income differentials (measured by female and male estimated GNI per capita)

[5] At the SIGI level, countries are classified into five categories based on their overall SIGI score: very low level of discrimination (SIGI <20); low level of discrimination (SIGI 20-30); medium level of discrimination (SIGI 30-40); high level of discrimination (SIGI 40-50); and very high level of discrimination (SIGI >50). At the dimension level, countries are classified into five categories based on their score in the relevant dimension: very low level of discrimination (score <10); low level of discrimination (score 10-25); medium level of discrimination (score 25-50); high level of discrimination (score 50-75); and very high level of discrimination (score >75).

of unpaid domestic work between men and women (The World Bank, 2023). Also, during the pandemic, Cela et al., (forthcoming) observed that women were more likely to work in the informal economy (60%) compared to men who were more likely to have their own business (36% men versus 9% women) or work for a company (43% men versus 20% women). Regarding women in managerial positions, women account for only 18%, compared to Jamaica (59%), and the Bahamas (52%) (OECD, 2020). Attitudinal data from SIGI also reflect the belief held by some that women should not participate in paid work. For instance, Haiti has the highest proportion of people opposing women's work (27%), compared with only 2% in Uruguay (OECD, 2020).

Women are also disadvantaged regarding access to productive and financial resources. Haiti follows customary and traditional practices that favour the inheritance of assets passing from fathers to sons as there is a preference for the eldest male, and sometimes other male siblings, over female siblings for inheritance (OECD, 2020). For instance, only 8% of women in rural areas, where agriculture is the dominant sector, own land, compared to 14% of men (The World Bank, 2023). Similarly, women's access to, and usage of, banking services is limited (27%), although the proportion of men is also low (29%).

Regarding physical integrity, women and girls suffer various forms of violence and exploitation including demands for sexual favours in exchange for grades, university admission, to secure money or gifts, or employment (INURED, 2020:10-11; the World Bank, 2023). The World Bank (2023) identified that 75% of women had experienced sexual harassment at work or school. Girls are more likely to be exploited in the informal economy. One example is the higher representation of girls in Haiti's *restavek* system in which child labour is used in exchange for housing, little or no pay, and in-kind compensation such as clothing or food (Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED), 2017). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated violence against women and girls. One study observed that among 510 surveyed households, 42% of all respondents reported that gender-based violence had increased during the pandemic (Cela *et al.*, Forthcoming).

In terms of women's reproductive health, according to SIGI, access to family planning is a challenge faced by several Haitian women. In 2019, on average, 38% of in-union women of reproductive age (15-49 years) reported having an unmet need for family planning, a figure that was higher to the global average of 12% (OECD, 2020). The World Bank (2023) identified that women have limited access to reproductive health services, such as skilled birth attendants and birthing facilities, and limited control and agency regarding decision-making about their health care. In 2017, women in Haiti had the second-highest maternal mortality rate of any country in the world outside of Sub-Saharan Africa with a lifetime risk of maternal death of 1 in 67 (The World Bank, 2023).

In terms of political participation, women continue to have little presence in the country's political scene (Toussaint, 2011; INURED, 2017; Dacilien, 2019; Clesca, 2020). For instance, women's representation in parliament is only 3% in Haiti compared to an average of 30% in the LAC region (OECD, 2020). Despite this, in a World Bank study (2023) some women and men showed significantly more progressive attitudes regarding women's political participation as 78% of women and 80% of men disagreed with the statement "men make better political leaders than women do".

It is important to mention that some of the unequal gender norms have been reinforced by laws. For instance, whereas males must reach adulthood in order to legally marry, females may legally marry during adolescence, or from the age of 15. Domestic violence and rape were only criminalized as recently as 2005, while policies against sexual harassment and exploitation are non-existent (INURED, 2020:10-11). Haiti is the only country in the LAC region where women have different rights to finalise a divorce or annulment. For instance, Article 1248 of Haiti's Civil Code infringes on the rights of divorcées as it states that if the wife does not formally request division of the communal property within three months and 40 days of the divorce resolution, such division shall be deemed declined in favour of the husband (OECD, 2020). Women's legal inheritance rights are also jeopardized, particularly for women who are widows or in informal unions. Haitian law does not recognise nor establish inheritance provisions in the case of plaçage, informal, de facto unions, which constitutes the most common form of cohabitation for couples. The fact that only 12% of couples living together in Haiti are legally married impacts women's capacity to access their inheritance. The law challenges women with the right to terminate a pregnancy as it prohibits abortion under all circumstances (Ibid).

As we will show in section 4 and 5, these inequalities that characterise Haitian society accompanied by women's lack of decision-making may, in one way or another, influence the decision to migrate.

BRAZIL

Brazil is perceived as a non-racist country, in part, because it did not have segregationist laws like the Jim Crow Laws (USA) or the South African Apartheid. Brazil's racial democracy, however, is a myth that has been more than debunked by numerous authors[6] and by actual data, as we will show.

Similar to Haiti, Brazilian society is also shaped by coloniality and the unequal system it brought in different domains, including gender. As highlighted by Lugones (2007) the Euro-Christian invasion of the Americas brought a sex-gender

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[6] Melino (2020) provides various examples of institutional mechanisms that the Brazilian state has used to keep black populations, formerly enslaved and then "freed", excluded from the country's socio-economic dynamics.

modern/colonial system. The definition of "who" are women, who they relate romantically and form family with came from a cisgender and heteronormative imposition from the ruling classes of Europe (Oyěwùmí, 2017). The colonisers also looked at women as being part of the "products" (Quijano, 2000) that capitalism, as a world-system (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992), needed for consolidating itself. The social position of women, as demonstrated by Federici (2004), was degraded by centuries of active work in societal lives and norms in Europe itself, thus shaping the role of women as subaltern to men. When speaking of women as part of the colonised people, they were even less considered as women or individuals, and more as social lives reproducing "machines" (Oyěwùmí, 2017). Therefore, racialised women inhabit an intersectionalised (Crenshaw, 1989) social position of great disadvantage in Brazil (IBGE, 2019; IPEA, 2019). That is not to say that racialised men are not at a disadvantage when compared to white men, which is the case of Haitian men. In Brazil, systemic racism, sexism (Bento, 2002), and cis-heteronormativity are severe (Melino, 2017) and it also shifts in relation to the economic class and the nationality of migrants (Tonhati and Macedo, 2020).

As data from the IBGE (2019) shows, women in Brazil earn only 77.7% of men's salaries in the same job, and only 34.7% of managerial positions are held by women. Their participation in the labour market is also lower: 54.6% of women aged 25 to 49 with children up to three years old were employed in 2019, compared to 89.2% of men in the same position. They are also more educated, 25.5% of women have completed higher education, compared to 18.3% of men aged between 25 and 34 (IBGE, 2019). Black women suffer the dictates of inequality even more violently in terms of indicators; the difference in income between black and white workers has remained at the same distance for 15 years. From 2018-2019, black women earned an average of R$1,471 per month, 57% less than white women (IPEA, 2019).

Gender-based violence is also of concern, affecting black women more than their white counterparts. For instance, the rate of female homicides in the country has risen by 4.72% in the last ten years inside homes (IPEA & FBSP, 2023). The death rate per 100,000 women is 4.3 for black women and 2.4 for non-black women. Black women die 1.8 times more often than non-black women (Ibid). The COVID-19 pandemic also had effects on the violence suffered by women during the period of social isolation. In addition to the challenges related to the health, social, economic, and political crisis, the state of Rio de Janeiro continued to have high rates of lethal and non-lethal violence against women (Willadino et al, 2022). The same study noted that the rates of reporting domestic violence offences, both spousal and family, during that period were down. One possible reason was that women did not feel safe leaving their homes to go to public facilities, both because of the threat of the virus and because of the effective restraint of their partners, husbands, fathers, and family members (Ibid). Another reason was that women faced challenges to access the virtual services created by the government to report cases of violence. For instance,

several of the women interviewed in that study mentioned that the lack of access to an exclusive mobile phone with privacy was a factor that prevented them from keeping in touch with support and solidarity networks, as well as accessing anti-violence services (Ibid).

We would also point out, based on this research, that cases of violence against black and impoverished women, in general, were significantly higher than those against white and wealthy women. This is not because some are targeted more than others, but because the latter have other support networks, in addition to public services and civil society organisations.

Race and class in Brazil are inextricably linked. Being black in Brazil, also means being poor, or at least being more economically vulnerable than white people. There are, of course, poor white people in the country, but as we have seen from both historical and recent data, the black Brazilian population has not been socio-economically integrated into the state (IPEA, 2019). They did not have access to land and labour at the end of the formal slave system. In addition, they do not have access to quality education, to employability opportunities and they continue to have worse housing conditions, access to health care, access to public transport and very precarious social assistance programmes (Ibid). The worsening of economic conditions was already underway before Jair Bolsonaro was elected president in 2018 but intensified dramatically during his administration.

It is therefore against the backdrop of a structurally patrimonialist, racist, sexist and LGBTIphobic society that Haitian migrants arrive in the country. They are received with all the stigmas faced by Brazil's black, female and LGBTI+ populations, as well as facing extra challenges due to xenophobia and language barriers.

3. METHODOLOGY

Our analysis is based on primary qualitative data collected in 2021 drawing on in-depth interviews with 65 Haitians living in Brazil, alongside two focus groups.

Purposive sampling was used to enrol participants in the study, with support from Haitian researchers from the UNIperiferias/MIDEQ team. All interviews and focus groups were conducted by Haitian interviewers and supervised by senior Haitian researchers from the UNIperiferias/MIDEQ team. The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP/CONEP)[7] responsible for evaluating national projects that involve other human beings[8]. All interviews and focus groups followed the recommendations of the Research Ethics Committee such

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[7] Comitês de Ética em Pesquisa (CEPs) / Comissão Nacional de Ética em Pesquisa (CONEP)
[8] https://www.gov.br/pt-br/servicos/submeter-na-plataforma-brasil-de-projetos-de-pesquisa-envolvendo-seres-humanos-para-avaliacao-etica

as guaranteeing the anonymity and confidentiality of data, authorisation from participants to record interviews and the use of their data for this study.

The respondents

Among the 65 Haitians interviewed (all of them above 18 years old), 21 were women and 44 were men. The age range of participants was between 16 and 65 years old, with the average age being 33 years old. The period in which participants arrived in Brazil ranged from 2008 to 2020. Almost half of those interviewed are from Haiti's Western Department (where the country's capital is located). Regarding participants' children, 50.7% of the total said they had between one and five children, and 85.3% of them said their children were living in Brazil.

Among the 21 Haitian women interviewed, 62% (13) were working with five of them also studying; 38% (8) were only studying. In total, 12 of them were studying higher education or had already completed it. Nine had completed or incomplete high school, and two were completing high school in Brazil. Among the 44 Haitian men, (30%) (13) were not working, but nine were studying higher education (undergraduate or postgraduate). 70% (31) said they had some type of paid work. Among them, nine were also studying. Of the total, 9% (4) were neither studying nor working during the interview period.

Concerning the interviewees' monthly income, 17% (11) chose not to report it; 4.5% (3) claimed to have no personal income; 21.5% (14) was paid the equivalent of one minimum wage (R$ 1,212/ USD$ 238.77) (seven of them were students who received scholarships between R$ 400.00 and R$ 600.00 (USD$80 and USD$120). 49.2% (32) declared having a personal monthly income between R$1,300 and R$3,500 (USD$197.06 and USD$689.71); 12.3% (5) had a personal monthly income between R$5,000 and R$7,000 (USD$985.26 and USD$1379.42) – these informants arrived before 2015. The average salary of the 65 participants was R$1,870.00 (USD$368.39) equivalent to 1.7 of the minimum wage.

Analysis

We analysed a total of 65 interviews. The individual interviews were divided into thematic groups related to five work packages with which the Haiti-Brazil corridor was linked including migration decision-making (25), gender (20), racial issues (20), communications and technology (16), and relationships between migrants and intermediaries (16). The interviews were carried out in the cities of Porto Velho, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Braço do Norte and Foz do Iguaçu, in five different Brazilian states. We also used data emerging from two focus groups carried out on the topics of gender and decision-making. One of them took place in the city of São Paulo (with four men and three women) and the other in Rio de Janeiro (with seven women). We developed a coding structure around migration decision-making using the following

themes: education, economic reasons, security / political instability, imagination, family reunification, public policies, and other personal aspirations. Interviews were coded manually and entered into Microsoft Excel. Data from the coded segments was summarised according to agreed themes and the analysis also explored differences emerging from different variables, including city/location, age, gender, and occupation. The analysis was then written up in the agreed working paper format.

We analysed the decision to migrate not only through drivers related to tangible material aspects such as income, but also by considering the intangible aspects that shape the migration decision and are worth exploring (Hagen-Zanker, Hennessey and Mazzilli, 2023), especially the role of gender norms. Although our analysis differentiates tangible and intangible aspects of the migration decision-making process, we acknowledge and unpack the ways that subjective factors are connected both to each other and to tangible factors (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2023).

We aimed to give importance to material factors on their own given that Haiti is an example of how structural inequalities partly originated by colonial legacies and the economic exploitation of the Global South have driven people to migrate (Cela, Fidálgo and Marcelin, 2022). At the same time, analysing subjective factors from a gender norms lens gives us an opportunity to explore the intangible elements that matter in decision-making, are hard to measure, are complex and overlap constantly with material factors (Hagen-Zanker, Hennessey and Mazzilli, 2023). However, we are aware that there is not one factor that influences migration decisions and that material/objective and subjective/intangible factors are not dichotomous, but interconnected, since it is impossible to dissociate or separate them and impossible to make decisions without considering several factors as a whole.

Evidence base

Looking at the evidence base, once the coding of the interviews had been completed, it was possible to see the main reasons that drove the decision to migrate of our female participants (see figure 2).

FIG 2. MAIN FACTORS INFLUENCING MIGRATION DECISION-MAKING AMONG HAITIAN WOMEN
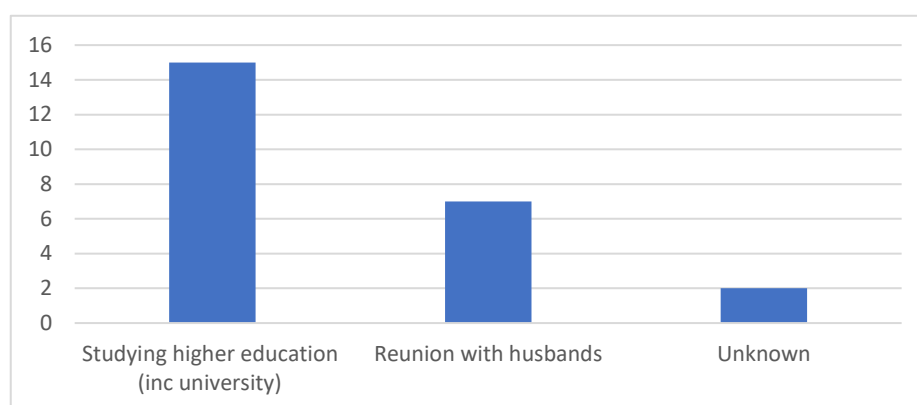
Most of these women migrated because they already had other family members in Brazil (father, mother, brothers, cousins or uncles). Those who were attending university studied dentistry, economics, administration, medicine, history, nursing, international relations, architecture and urban planning, and pedagogy. Two women did not say what their motivation was, but one of them led an organisation that advocated for the empowerment of black women and migrants in Brazil.

In the case of men, most stated their main motivation to migrate was work and studies. Of the 44 men interviewed, 18 were studying at the time of the interview, they were studying engineering, administration, international relations, geography, and chemistry, among others. Similar to the women interviewed, they also had a relative living in Brazil.

Limitations of the study

A few limitations merit discussion. The first concerns the language in which the study was designed and conducted. As mentioned, the study interviewed Haitians who were able to speak Portuguese, excluding those who were Creole speakers, due to the lack of time for translation and subsequent transcription for data analysis. This means that, for instance, the perspectives we present might represent those of women who are more educated and have more agency in their lives, reflected in their ability and initiative to learn a new langue. Similarly, although transcriptions were directly transcribed into Portuguese, there might be potential inaccuracies on the ways that data was transcribed and interpreted by the study team.

The second potential limitation concerns women's participation. Along with the alleged reason of insecurity or shyness due to lack of language skills, another factor that made it difficult to carry out more interviews with women was the fact that in some cases married women had to obtain their husband's authorization in order to participate in the study. A final limitation relates to the information that was asked during focus group discussions. We did not ask participants in focus groups their

age, occupation, or other important demographic characteristics. This would have allowed us to distil more the information that came out from the focus groups, but the research team did not want to make participants feel uncomfortable by asking those details when there was less rapport than during in-depth interviews. Future studies can focus on first establishing rapport with focus group participants, when and if time allows, to allow such personal details are not missed. When presenting quotes from focus group discussion participants we make use of pseudonyms to protect their identity.

4. THE ROLE OF GENDER NORMS IN THE DECISION TO MIGRATE

In this section we first present the literature on Haitian migration to Brazil that explores the migration decision-making process from a gender norms perspective. We then present our empirical data, discuss it and situate with the existing literature.

4.1 INSIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE

Before presenting the literature on Haitian migration to Brazil from a gender norms lens, it is important to briefly mention the turn in migration studies from an economic perspective to recognising the importance of other subjective dimensions such as gender. Previous theories of migration (e.g. neoclassical economics, New Economics of Labour Migration) had mainly analysed the objective and material aspects that individuals take into account when deciding to migrate, such as salary and/or income differentials. A parallel but closely interconnected literature arises from the so called "emotional turn" in migration studies (Gray 2008; Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015) focusing on those subjective or intangible aspects around the decision-making process, such as imagination around the idea of migration, emotions and feelings or beliefs and values (Hagen-Zanker, Hennessey and Mazzilli, 2023). As part of these domains, recent literature has also observed that gender norms play an important role in the decision to migrate. For example, gender norms can motivate women to stay back as main caregivers of household members or they can also encourage women to migrate to change their lower position in society or to escape gender-specific discrimination (De Jong, 2000; Ferrant and Tuccio, 2015; Hidrobo, Mueller and Roy, 2022).

The literature on Haitian migration to Brazil examined through a gender or intersectional lens is limited (Izaguirre, Skov and Walsham, 2021), but expanding. We know that although initial migration to Brazil was dominated by men, particularly during the 2010s, migration of women has increased as Haitian social networks in Brazil have strengthened (Handerson and Joseph, 2015; Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017; Queiroz Telmo Romano and Pizzinato, 2021). The increase in visas for family reunion is a clear mark of this increase and the importance that Haitians give to

family reunification as a motive for migrating (Landry, 2018; Mejía and Scapin, 2023). As Cazarotto and Mejía (2017:179) described in their study of Haitian migration to Vale de Taquari, Rio Grande do Sul:

> *Female migration aims to reunite family... Wives play a structural role in the migration process, as they provide stability to the lives of their partners. The presence of women is decisive for the success of the migration process. In the hierarchy of family roles, the wife plays a very important role in men's lives.*

Studies on Haitian migration through a gender lens also shifted from a perception of men and women with personal and sociocultural traits that shaped their migration decisions (e.g. men as risk takers and women as guardians of stability) to a growing interest in the ways that migration affected women and gender relations (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; de Oliveira, Dias and de Oliveira, 2018).

From a gender norms perspective, some studies have observed that the significance or aim of the migration project changes depending on gender. While men migrate influenced by their role as breadwinners and their desire to achieve financial independence (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017), women perceive migration as a family project, especially when they have children (Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019; Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017; Queiroz Telmo Romano and Pizzinato, 2021). Some of these women decide to migrate with their children (Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017), while others migrate by themselves (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Dutra, 2017). In these cases, female relatives who stay in Haiti (mothers, sisters or sisters-in-law) are responsible for the children of the migrant women who send remittances to the household (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Queiroz Telmo Romano and Pizzinato, 2021b).

A crucial, yet still very much debated point in the literature on Haitian migration concerns women's autonomy in decision-making. Some literature has found that women have no autonomy in the decision to migrate due to existing hierarchical and patriarchal gender norms that permeate their lives and family decisions in Haiti. For example, Mejía and Cazarotto (2017) found that women in their study, who migrated between 2012 and 2014 to the Taquari Valley, did not show signs of autonomy in different fields of their lives, including in their migration decision, and were unable to decide about their lives independently of their male partners. They observed that husbands migrated first and once husbands acquired financial stability, they brought their wives and at times their children too (Ibid). This trend of women migrating as companions is echoed by other studies on Haitian migration to Brazil (Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019; Dacilien and Melino, forthcoming; Leão *et al.*, 2018). Even in cases where women migrated alone, the decision and the capability to migrate was supported by male relatives (husbands, brothers, parents) who

financed migration to Brazil with the expectation that women would send remittances back to Haiti (Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017).

In contrast, other studies indicate women are gaining more independence around their migration decision (Handerson and Joseph, 2015; Mamed, 2017; Queiroz Telmo Romano and Pizzinato, 2021). For example, a literature review by Lucas and Ituassu (2022) on migration of Haitian women to Brazil identified that some women perceive migration as an "act of protagonism and autonomy" with the purpose to challenge their lower economic and social position in Haitian society compared to men. Through ethnographic fieldwork in Manaus, Handerson and Joseph (2015) found that some couples invested in funding the migration of wives, rather than husbands, when wives had higher chances of employment and were in a better position to settle and bring their husbands. The same study observed that other women make the decision independently and are supported by friends who are also migrants and lend them money to finance their migration costs. Similarly, a study by Mamed (2017: 144-145), based on interviews with Haitian women working in the meat industry across the Centre-South of Brazil, observed that even though migration was observed as a family project, women had independence in their decision and personal aspirations to fulfil in Brazil:

> *Many immigrated following their parents or partners, but a significant number also immigrated independently or as heads of families, motivated by basic aspirations to work, obtain sufficient income to stay in Brazil and, mainly, guarantee financial remittances necessary for the family's survival in the homeland [Haiti].*

Personal networks become even more important for Haitian women who migrate alone, as relatives and friends play a crucial role hosting them and supporting them to settle and finding a job (de Oliveira, Dias and de Oliveira, 2018).

4.2 UNDERSTANDING THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF HAITIAN MIGRATION TO BRAZIL FROM A GENDER NORMS LENS

When discussing the decision-making process of Haitian migrants through a gender lens, we first present material or tangible factors that influence the decision to migrate – namely, those that can be measured such as economic reasons, human capital considerations, or the importance of legal migration status. We then present the analysis of subjective or intangible factors – that is, those that are more unobservable or not measurable including those that we found were influenced by gender norms (e.g. imaginations) and a deeper assessment of the role of gender norms on the migration decision-making process for both women and men.

MATERIAL AND OBJECTIVE FACTORS

The main material element emerging from our data is related to economic deprivation. Both men and women observed that the difficult economic situation in Haiti drove their migration decision, echoing the findings of other studies on Haitian migration to Brazil (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Queiroz Telmo Romano and Pizzinato, 2021). Particularly, the 2010 earthquake exacerbated participants' poor living conditions and Brazil emerged as an attractive destination due to positive perceptions around its thriving job market (see also Guindani *et al.*, forthcoming on Haitians' perspective of Brazil before migrating). In the case of men, their decision to migrate was motivated by their ability to find a better-paid job that would lead to economic independence and their ability to shape the direction of their lives.

> *"The economic difficulties, back in Haiti I was working but my salary was barely enough to survive and I could not save enough to make my dreams come true… I saw those who lived outside of Haiti… they were able to build a house, buy a car, they have a family that lives very differently from someone who lives there in Haiti. These things pushed me to make a decision to leave everything and migrate." (Male, 42, student and works at framing business, Santa Catarina)*

Women also shared that their migration decision was strongly influenced by their desire to work and improve their economic wellbeing (as mentioned, 62% of female participants were working). For some, this objective was strongly coupled with norms around family responsibility, particularly towards their children. This echoes the existing literature that found Haitian women perceive migration as the means to improve their economic situation and that of their children (Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019; Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Queiroz Telmo Romano and Pizzinato, 2021). However, 62% (13) of our female respondents did not have children, showing that for some women, particularly those that are single, their decision to migrate is taken around individual aspirations (Izaguirre, Skov and Walsham, 2021; Lucas and Ituassu, 2022; Mamed, 2017).

Although men also mentioned they migrated to help their families, women with children were more vocal about supporting them financially.

> *"… I have to work, I have more responsibility, now I have three children. I have to send money there [to Haiti] for one child and provide for two children here [in Brazil]." (Female, 37, works at framing company, Santa Catarina)*

However, some families were split up between Haiti and Brazil. For instance, some women migrated with their husbands but had children from previous marriages in Haiti, while others migrated with only part of their children. Women felt conflicted or had competing feelings about their responsibility.

"It's a problem … because once I made food here, I didn't know what my son would eat in Haiti." (Female, 56, working at meat factory, Santa Catarina)

These findings show that while the decision to migrate to join someone's partner or family is very important for some women, at times different types of relationships can compete with each other (Hagen-Zanker, Hennessey and Mazzilli, 2023). For instance, some women may prioritise maternal over romantic love (Ibid). Others may find their maternal relationships, and economic resources, are divided and compete between each other when children are located in different locations or countries, as in the case of some of our female participants.

Public policies (particularly, access to Brazil's humanitarian or student visas) was another important material factor that shaped migration decisions. In their study of Haitian migrants in Brazil, Guindani *et al.* (forthcoming) observed that migration to Brazil was perceived as a "practical decision" because the visa requirements were more simple to meet compared to other destinations and because relatives already living in Brazil could support potential migrants to meet the financial requirements and the transition. In line with their findings, we also observed access to a regular migration status had different intrinsic value for women and men. Women considered a regular migration status would allow them to access jobs, leading to their ability to fund their studies and /or support or build a family.

"I heard that in Brazil I would have the opportunity to have a document… I wanted to have a document, I wanted to have a better job, I wanted to build a family because without documents, how am I going to be able to work and build a family." (Female, 37, working at restaurant with husband, São Paulo)

Women also mentioned they valued Brazil's policies regarding access to education, shelter and health, although they did not specify details, and these were not mentioned as determinants to migrate. In contrast, men observed that their legal status would allow them to work, to study, and to "*move freely*".

"People are free to walk around without the police sending them back home as they do in the United States and in the Dominican Republic. Everyone here is looking for their own work, their own dreams." (Male, focus group participant, São Paulo)

Again, although some men considered their regular migration status would allow them to work and send remittances to their family in Haiti, they were less vocal about the wellbeing of their children, compared to women. Regardless of gender, we observed that the importance of a regular status was frequently mentioned by participants who had experience of prior migration in countries where they lived irregularly (e.g. Dominican Republic, French Guyana).

Human capital accumulation emerged as another important material factor driving the decision to migrate for both women and men, particularly among young respondents in their twenties and thirties. The accounts of participants revealed that higher education was perceived as the means to achieve upward social mobility and status. This is explained by the fact that in Haitian society education "has a symbolic representation of advancement" and at times brings more prestige than economic wealth (Antoine and Amaral, 2022:8). Both young women and men stressed they migrated to Brazil because they had more opportunities to study given that they could access public higher education and scholarships, something that was more difficult to achieve in Haiti. For instance, some of our participants took advantage of educational programmes that offer scholarships to migrants, such as the *Programa de Estudantes-Convênio de Graduação* (PEC-G programme)[9] and the scholarships offered by the Federal University of Latin American Integration (UNILA). There was a perception among study participants that education in Brazil was more accessible (not only financially but also in terms of the number of spaces available) than in Haiti or the Dominican Republic, and crucially more prestigious.

> *"I wanted to immigrate to Brazil because of the university. This has more weight than staying there in the Dominican Republic where I was studying a technical course. I saw that here in Brazil I would have a chance to go to university… then I will be able to say that I have achieved this degree [international relations] at this university and everyone would be like 'wow, it's a huge thing' because everyone knows that going to a federal university in Brazil is not easy." (Female, 31, student, Paraná)*

Overall, we observed similarities and differences regarding the tangible factors that drive the decision to migrate among Haitian women and men. We observed that for women and men improving their economic situation was an important migration driver, although for married women this was coupled with norms around family responsibility. Married women also experienced emotional and financial conflict when they had children in the two countries. The Brazilian legislation on humanitarian and student visas was another important material factor that influenced the decision to migrate for women and men, but with different intrinsic value. Having a regular migration status was important for women to study, access jobs and again, support their children financially. For men, a regular status was also perceived as the means to work, but they were less vocal about the wellbeing of their children. Finally, education was an important factor for both women and men, especially young participants, as the means to achieve upward social mobility and status.

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[9] PEC-G is a cooperation program between Brazil and countries in Africa, Latin America and Caribbean. Its goal is to give young students from these countries an opportunity to undertake their full undergraduate studies at Brazilian universities.

INTANGIBLE OR SUBJECTIVE FACTORS

Several subjective and intangible factors emerged from the accounts of our Haitian participants. At times, these factors surfaced in similar ways between men and women but most of the times these were different and, crucially, shaped by gender norms.

One important intangible factor shaped by gender norms was imagination. Imagination is personal, but it is not shaped in a vacuum (Hagen-Zanker, Hennessey and Mazzilli, 2023). Socio-economic aspects such as gender or age can shape what individuals imagine in relation to their migration decision (Teo, 2003). Other important factors around imagination shape the decision to migrate of Haitians in Brazil, as shown in the study by Guindani *et al.*, (forthcoming), although we add further nuance to this by analysing imagination from a gender lens. Young participants, women and men aged 20-30 years old, frequently imagined Brazil as a destination that would allow them to achieve their personal and material aspirations (job, education, overall economic wellbeing).

Our data shows that imagination, in relation to the decision to migrate, was in part male driven, probably because migration from Haiti was dominated by men during its first stages. Although several factors shape the imagination in relation to the decision to migrate (see Guindani et al., forthcoming, for details), what men imagined of Brazil was in part shaped by conversations or images from other men (relatives, friends) who lived in Brazil. Women's imagination was also shaped by other men (husbands, cousins, friends) – somehow giving to men a "hegemony" over imagination.

"As my husband was here before, he told me about some things that were here: the positive and negative points, I had an idea…". (Female, 38, student and small-business owner, São Paulo)

"My husband told me everything about what it's like here, what the job is like, everything." (Female, 37, works at framing company, Santa Catarina)

"My [male] friends said to me 'here in a month of work you will be able to make $600 dollars' I said oh, Brazil is better in this case, and they really made that money." (Male, 36, student, Paraná)

Once social networks in Brazil strengthen, imagination around migration seemed to have become less gendered. For instance, one migrant woman during a focus group in São Paulo observed that what she knew about Brazil was influenced by a male friend, but once she migrated, she spoke to her brother and male cousins about her life in Brazil and encouraged them to migrate.

Looking at gender norms more closely, our data revealed these persisted in the migration decisions taken by participants and emerged differently for women and men. Gender norms around physical integrity influenced migration decision-making. The violent situation in Haiti and the possibility to live in a safer and more peaceful setting was highlighted by participants. This is similar to other studies that have observed that the worsening insecurity and violence in Haiti has motivated migration both within the LAC region or to the United States, at times, through dangerous routes (Duffard Evangelista, 2019; Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED), 2020). Both women and men had a perception that "*everyone is afraid in Haiti*" and mentioned their fears of being robbed. However, women also mentioned they, in part, migrated due to fears of being sexually abused if they were robbed or assaulted.

"… I was robbed several times leaving college. So, my father was really tired of the situation and didn't want me to stay in the capital [Port-au-Prince] alone anymore..." (Female, 31, student, Rondônia)

This finding is supported by other studies that observed Haitian women considered safety in the regions where they migrated as an important factor shaping their migration decision (de Oliveira, Dias and de Oliveira, 2018).

Gender norms around autonomy in the decision to migrate, vis-à-vis the influence of other family members, affected women and men differently, while we also observed differences regarding age and marital status. Those that voiced more independence in their decision to migrate were older and married men. Single women also seemed to have slightly more autonomy in their decision to migrate. For example, three single women in their late twenties and early thirties who migrated for educational purposes, mentioned it was their decision to migrate, although they were financially supported by their parents or relatives (usually men) who were already living in Brazil. This shows that although some women may have independence in their decision to migrate, the financial role that male relatives play to make their migration aspirations achievable is important. This finding echoes the observations made by Ferrant and Tuccio (2015) who noted that gender inequalities may constrain the "capability" itself for women to migrate when they are financially dependent on men.

Less autonomy was observed in the case of young women and men, whose parents played an important role and encouraged their migration or even took the decision on their behalf.

"My mum said… you are leaving the country to study abroad, we have already bought everything for you to go." (Male, focus group participant, Rondônia)

"… basically it was his decision [father]. I was kind of forced. I didn't choose to migrate to Brazil… Today, I can say that it was one of the best decisions he made…" (Female, 31, student, Paraná).

Some literature has identified the important role that parents play in encouraging children to migrate (Massey *et al.*, 1993) or to delay their migration as children complete their studies (Chae, Hayford and Agadjanian, 2016). For instance, Mexican fathers with migration experience in the USA may encourage their sons to migrate (Massey *et al.*, 1993). Haitian youth in Brazil operate in a similar context, although not only sons but also daughters were motivated to migrate. Furthermore, Haitian parents encouraged migration of their children not only when parents had migrated with family reunification purposes, but also when they stayed put, as they envisioned their children's migration as the means to achieve higher levels of education and a safer environment.

Less autonomy was also observed in the case of married women, who observed it was usually their husbands who took the decision on their behalf or who influenced it to some extent.

"After a while [in the Dominican Republic] my husband came here [to Brazil]. Then he applied for my visa to come here, to come live with him... because he didn't want to stay here alone. When he returns from work he has to have his dinner, during the weekend he needs someone to go out with, I have to stay by his side." (Female, 37, works at framing company, Santa Catarina)

As the quotes above illustrate**,** married women migrated in part influenced by norms around family responsibility. Married women had a perception that it was their "duty" to protect the stability of their families and to follow their husbands' desire for them to accompany them in their migration project. The role of women as husbands' companions is similar to those reported by the emerging literature on Haitian migration to Brazil from a gender lens (Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019; Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Dacilien and Melino, forthcoming; Leão *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, for married women, the decision to return to Haiti or to re-migrate to a third country seemed to be decided by their husbands.

"I stopped creating this expectation of migrating again because my husband is not going to leave Brazil. So, I don't know until when [I will stay] because we are a family. I can't decide by myself...." (Female, 37, working at restaurant with husband, São Paulo)

Norms around autonomy in the decision to migrate were at times accompanied by norms regarding who migrates first**.** Women usually migrated after their male relatives. In the case of married women, wives followed their husbands who migrated

first and, once their husbands gained financial stability, they financed their wives' migration.

> *"For me the decision was the man migrates first because when I arrived, it was very difficult for me… First my husband arrived and after three years, he brought me here. It was better because during the first two years he helped me with everything… I had no problem with eating, sleeping, dressing, going out to church, wearing nice sandals ..." (Female, 56, working at meat factory, Santa Catarina)*

In the case of single women, they received financial support from their male relatives (fathers, uncles) and migrated after their brothers or male cousins who offered them accommodation and support during the initial stages. In the case of men, they indicated they financed their own migration. Some saved their own money, others borrowed money from close relatives, or intermediary agencies, or took a bank loan.

Participants also shared their views regarding gender norms around the ability to migrate, or whether migration was easier for men than women. Some participants considered there were no differences on this between women and men. Others observed migration, particularly through irregular pathways, was easier for men because they were more able to cope with the physical risks associated with the migration journey.

> *"I think it's easier for a man to make this decision because it's a difficult path. He has to cross five or seven countries to get to Brazil. It makes both the woman and her family a little scared, thinking that rape could happen, several things that would make her unable to reach her destination…" (Female, 31, student, Paraná)*

Some women also observed that it was more difficult for women to migrate because "*the majority of women depend [financially] on a man*", so they had less economic resources to fund their own migration. This echoes findings from Senegal where women would find it difficult to find support from men working abroad, unless in rare cases these men were their own family members (Bachan, 2018). Other women noted it was more challenging for women to migrate due to their children, as they are responsible for their care, while men are not affected by gender norms around domestic chores or caring responsibilities. These findings are similar to those from Thailand where women have less intentions to migrate, compared to men, due to their perceived care responsibilities (De Jong, 2000).

Summing up, we found that subjective factors played a very important role on the migration decision-making of Haitians in Brazil, and we observed important differences mediated by gender norms. For instance, although the imaginary of

Brazil as a destination influenced women and men, imaginations were male driven, at least during the initial waves of migration. Regarding gender norms around physical integrity, women voiced their concerns around sexual assault. We also observed gender norms around autonomy on the decision to migrate. Older and married men voiced more autonomy along with single women, although some of these women depended financially on men relatives to achieve their migration aspirations. Youths and married women seemed to have less autonomy in their decision, and married women's decision was accompanied by norms around family responsibility. Participants also observed norms around "who migrates first" and the ability to migrate: the general perception was that women migrated after male relatives, and that men were in a better position to migrate due to their ability to finance their own migration and being less affected by norms around domestic chores and caring responsibilities.

5. THE ROLE OF MIGRATION IN SHIFTING GENDER NORMS

As in the previous section, we first present an overview of the literature that discusses changes (or lack of) in gender norms as a result of migration to then analyse our empirical data.

5.1 INSIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE

A few studies have explored whether gender norms remain the same or shift as a result of the migration process in Brazil, although the evidence on the topic is unclear. Some studies suggest that rigid gender norms and roles persist, in part because unequal gender norms are also present in Brazilian society, as we discussed in the context.

Looking at the literature on Haitian migration to Brazil, specifically at Cazarotto and Mejía (2017) and Mejía and Cazarotto's (2017) studies of Haitians migrating to Vale de Taquari in Rio Grande do Sul, they observe that migration does not shift unequal gender norms that position Haitian women in an inferior position compared to men, especially when they are married. According to the authors, husbands continue making decisions regarding women's lives from clothing to health visits or the attendance of social gatherings. Mejía and Cazarotto, (2017:7) argue that married women do not take independent decisions and migration does not free them from "*family repression*".

Some studies find that women are considered companions to their husbands in the migratory process and carers of other household members at destination (Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019; Mejía and Scapin, 2023). Other studies suggest that this position leads women to a lack of financial independence.

For instance, Muraro *et al.* (2023), in a survey with 404 Haitians living in Mato Grosso (373 men and 79 women), found that 41.6% of women reported having no income, while a non-specified portion reported living on their husbands' or partners' income. Similarly, Leão *et al.*, (2018) in their survey also in Mato Grosso (370 men and 70 women) found that "*a large proportion of women*" depended on the income of their husbands or partners, of which 41% mentioned having no income.

Other evidence suggests that although women remain in charge of unpaid care, looking after children and other members of the family, and domestic work (e.g. cleaning, cooking), they are also expected to work and contribute to household expenses (Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019; Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017).

Women joining the labour market could lead to positive changes such as greater autonomy, increased decision-making in the household. However, the literature observes that gender norms around women's lower skills, traits and value of their work, compared to men, persist. For example, several studies have identified that women and men usually perform gendered jobs. Most women work in food and cleaning services, beauty and the healthcare industry (Handerson and Joseph, 2015; Observatório das Migrações Internacionais (OBMigra), 2017; de Oliveira, Dias and de Oliveira, 2018; Landry, 2018; Leão *et al.*, 2018). In contrast, men worked in construction, mechanics, electricians, the wholesale sector, or the meat processing industries, poultry and pig slaughtering (Ibid). These professions respond to gendered understandings of the skills and personal traits that differentiate women and men in a hierarchical patriarchal structure (Leão *et al.*, 2018; Mamed, 2017). For example, women's work is traditionally considered "lighter" and men's work "heavier and more complex" (Mamed, 2017). These results correspond to the professions held by our participants, as we will show in the next empirical section.

Other literature has observed that when Haitian women work, their salaries are lower than those of men, they also receive less training in job security, and they have no experience in the activities they carry out (Leão *et al.*, 2018). Another study found that Haitian women face greater challenges to find a job given that some recruiters have prejudices against them and prefer to hire men.

Employers, when faced with the frequent pregnancies of Haitian women, avoid hiring them. The leader of Haitians in one of the municipalities commented that the largest employer no longer wants to hire women because they have started working and become pregnant (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017:185)

Lack of change in gender norms is also reflected in other life areas in Brazil such as language. For example, the study by Queiroz Telmo Romano and Pizzinato (2021), with Haitian migrants in Porto Alegre, observed that men spoke Portuguese,

while some women had difficulties or did not speak the language. Failure to express themselves in the language of the host country contributed to their dependency and subordination of men, as also observed in another study (Mejía and Cazarotto, 2017). Queiroz Telmo Romano and Pizzinato (2021) suggested women's difficulty to speak Portuguese was related to their limited access to formal education in Haiti in a language (French) beyond what Haitians usually speak in the household (Creole). However, the study overlooked the fact that migrant women and men may have similar levels of education. For instance, our female participants were highly educated: out of the 21 women, 12 were studying university and all of them had some level of high school. In the case of our male participants 18 out of the 44 were studying university and 9 had completed some level of high school. Indeed, our findings show that Haitian women are mainly responsible for unpaid care and domestic work activities (echoing the findings of Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida, 2019; Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017), which may preclude some from participating in activities that are not income generating such as language courses.

However, other literature, although limited, suggests that gender norms can and do change at destination, although in unexpected ways. For example, some studies have observed that Haitian women retract from social spaces that were of their domain in Haiti. Cazarotto and Mejía (2017) observed that roles in Haiti that were performed by women, taking children to the doctor, to school or to day-care, were performed by men in Brazil because women were less likely to "integrate" into society, although the authors did not explain the challenges that women faced when withdrawing from these spaces.

Compared to the literature above that finds persisting gender norms in the labour market, other studies have observed that when women start working and find relatively desirable jobs, they increase their ability to take part in household decisions. For example Amorim De Araújo and Pinho De Almeida (2019:126) observed that:

> *[Women's] insertion into the job market, taking into account the cultural universe of Haitian migrants, can represent paths of emancipation and changes in gender relations, through greater decision-making power in the home, given the possibility of sharing the household's livelihood and leaving the condition of financial dependence on her husband.*

However, the same study notes that Haitian women's entry into the labour market in Brazil can cause feelings of "impotence" and the perception of men that they are unable to fulfil their duty as providers of their families, given that in Haitian culture men are placed as providers of the home.

Apart from the above study, the literature on Haitian migration to Brazil has not explored in more depth *how* gender norms change in migration contexts. However,

studies on gender norms change suggest that joining the labour market leads women to have greater financial independence, having positive shifts in various areas such as: greater autonomy in decisions at the individual level (health and reproductive issues); greater influence in the household (ability to influence investment priorities, childcare, work schedules); greater influence at society (through business investments in return to their homeland); or freedom from violence (Bachan, 2018; Ferrant and Tuccio, 2015; Harper *et al.*, 2020).

When norms are more supportive of women working, men may increase their support with undertaking care and domestic work (Harper et al., 2020). However, when women initially increase their income, men can feel a lesser control over household resources and decision-making, at times leading to intimate partner violence (Bobonis, Castro and Morales, 2015). In other occasions, women may be criticised for not performing their domestic roles "properly" if they are also doing paid work (Harper *et al.*, 2020).

Other literature identify that migration enhances women's self-esteem because they perceived themselves as able to travel independently and to make their own income (Bachan, 2018). Women can also become "agents of change" towards new gender norms when they return to their homeland and become role models for other young women (Ibid). Prior migration experiences are also seen as a significant predictor of future intentions to migrate for women (De Jong, 2000). However, Ferrant and Tuccio (2015) in their analysis identified that when the share of female migrants is too low, positive effects on discriminatory norms towards greater gender equality are less likely.

As we will show in the next section, shifts in gender norms are not linear nor in one direction. Shifts in norms can be unpredictable, and while there is progress in some areas, in others, shifts may be limited. As noted by (Harper *et al.*, 2020:132) shifts in norms "often ebbs and flows".

5.2 LIFE IN BRAZIL: POTENTIAL SHIFTS OF PERCEPTIONS AROUND GENDER NORMS

As highlighted above, gender norms are an important factor that drive the economic, social and political inequalities that women face in Haiti. However, women in Brazil are also affected by harmful gender norms in several areas of their lives, while in both societies these norms are in part inherited from their colonial past. Haitian women in our sample experienced but also, importantly, some of them contested gender norms in different ways after migration. We also observed that women's perceptions and experiences regarding changes, or lack thereof, in gender norms were, in part, mediated by their marital status, but also by other factors, such as age, education levels or social class.

Several women in our study voiced their perceptions towards positive shifts in gender equality once in Brazil, as explained by one focus group participant:

"I think Haitian women are rethinking gender relations. I will never give my husband the best piece of chicken like my mother used to do… after I arrived in Brazil, I discovered approaches that opened my eyes to issues of inequality between men and women and I tried to open the eyes of my compatriots." (Female, focus group participant)

This stance was shared by many of the migrant women during the focus groups. The accounts of participants revealed important shifts in different kinds of gender norms that we will try to unpack. For example, some women highlighted changes regarding norms around freedom of movement accompanied by reduced fears of assault.

"There are no people who harass you... I live here, I go out to work. Then if I need something at the supermarket, I go and buy it, I go to church and come here. I'm not ashamed of anything." (Female, 56, working at meat factory, Santa Catarina)

Gender norms around dress and outward appearance also appear to have changed after migration.

"Here in Brazil it is different… A right [for a woman] to be the way she wants, with her own body, to dress the way she wants… There aren't so many prejudices when a woman wears [tiny] shorts, or shows her bra… Brazilian woman, live better." (Female, 27, student, Rio de Janeiro)

Both of these changes could have been driven by less stringent gender norms around purity and modesty. For instance, in Haiti, norms around respectability and acceptable womanhood are reflected around values of decorum and religiosity (Schwartz, 2015). These values may be reflected on modest clothing and norms that comply with social or moral rules in the public sphere, as observed in other Caribbean contexts (Leon-Himmelstine, Samuels and Stavropoulou, 2019). As a result, women in our study perceived more freedom to move and dress as they wished once in Brazil.

However, it is important to notice that perceptions around broader freedom of what clothes to wear and a safer environment in Brazil is mediated by intersectionality. Brazil bears different inequalities in its states, cities, and even within the same city. Those inequalities are accompanied by individual factors such as age, race, social class, gender identity, sexual orientation or physical appearance even for Brazilian women (Willadino *et al.*, 2022). For example, women with larger bodies are mocked if they wear tiny shorts, as are thin women in some scenarios. Gender

norms around acceptance of gender-based violence seem to change as participants indicated that violence towards women was less acceptable in Brazil.

"In Haiti if a man beats a woman for any reason, people don't think it's serious, it's often even "acceptable" because there's no law that defends women in these cases of violence, "there's nothing to be done". But in Brazil if a man beats a woman, it causes a big problem." (Male, focus group participant, São Paulo)

When participants mentioned that in Brazil gender-based violence is less tolerated, they did so referring to Brazilian Federal Law 11.340/2006 that creates mechanisms to prohibit domestic and family violence against women. This law, however, as many others in Brazil, is not always enforced, as shown in numerous studies (see Melino, 2017, 2023; Melino, et al, 2022; Willadino et al., 2022). However, the literature shows that progressive legislation has the potential to change norms and practices as laws can help to shift norms around what is or is not socially acceptable (Harper et al., 2020).

Gender norms around paid work being men's primary responsibility also seem to shift. Female participants observed that in Brazil "*women work, they don't depend on men*", compared to Haiti where women's work in informal and irregular jobs and their economic contribution is less valued and not recognised (Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED), 2017; Cela, Fidálgo and Marcelin, 2022; Cela *et al.*, Forthcoming). Despite the fact that the conditions of their jobs in Brazil were not ideal, these jobs were often perceived as more desirable than working in agriculture or casual labour, as was the case of some of our participants back in Haiti. It has been shown that structural economic shifts can lead to greater labour force participation among women (Harper *et al*., 2020). In the case of our participants, migration and the need to have additional incomes in the household to reduce economic hardship seem to have led to shifts in norms around greater labour force participation among women.

Although women from Haitian families, as well as low-income Brazilian families, participate in the labour force, the "conquest" of the labour market for women is only perceived as an achievement by upper class women in Brazil. As noted, race and class in Brazil are intrinsically connected. Therefore, black Brazilian women, who historically have fewer access to economic resources, have continuously worked outside their homes (Gonzales, 1984[10]).

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[10] Lelia Gonzales (1935-1994) is a Brazilian intellectual, author, activist, professor, philosopher and anthropologist. She is a reference in gender, race and class studies and debates in Brazil, Latin America and around the world, and is considered one of the main authors of black feminism in the country, and she has a great importance to Brazil's feminist and black women movements and academia.

The ability of women to generate income by themselves seems to have led to greater self-esteem and increased perceptions of having greater autonomy and influence in their own lives, family, and society.

> *"[...] I work here, I have my money, now we don't depend on anyone, it's better for me, I don't depend on anyone." (Female, focus group participant, Rio de Janeiro)*

These outcomes echo the literature on gender norms which suggests that increased financial independence leads to perceptions of greater autonomy and influence at the individual and household level (Bachan, 2018; Ferrant and Tuccio, 2015; Harper *et al.*, 2020), challenging power hierarchies in the household and societies (Bachan, 2018; Xhaho, Çaro and Bailey, 2021).

Another participant, Anna (26, living in Rio de Janeiro), shared this perception. She felt that "*a black migrant woman can be whoever she wants*" in Brazil. For her, being an empowered black woman gives her the control to achieve her dreams. Rose, a female focus group participant in Rio de Janeiro, shared the same courage and determination of Haitian women, in general, when facing Brazilian's structural racism and sexism.

> *"Negative things such as racism or prejudice are not in my dictionary because if I believe on these, I won't do well. If you have the capability and the right, you can get what you want, not only in Brazil, but throughout the world… I've already sold water at the traffic lights and today I have my own hair braiding salon." (Rose in Dacilien and Melino, forthcoming)*

This greater sense of autonomy, independence and a greater self-esteem can also be explained by the high levels of education of most migrant women in our study. It has been highly documented in the gender norms literature that higher levels of education lead to important shifts in areas such as self-esteem, greater voice in household decision-making, higher earnings and standards of living, and women's higher aspirations for their future work and family live (Marcus and Page, 2016; Wodon *et al.*, 2018; Harper *et al.*, 2020). The evidence is clear that in particular, secondary and post-secondary education (levels achieved by most of our participants) drive such changes (Marcus and Page, 2016; Wodon *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, for several of our participants, women and men, migration became the means to achieve higher levels of education, including university degrees or specialised technical courses. It is possible that greater levels of education and the migration experience itself exposed participants to new knowledge, new skills (e.g. critical thinking, communication) and ideas, leading to more equal gender norms, as has been documented in the education field (Ibid).

However, other gender norms have remained unchanged after migration. This is the case around norms in relation to women's engagement in the labour market. Despite positive changes towards women's ability to generate an income, it is important to mention that most women performed "female-gendered" occupations (nurse, seamstress, assistants, hairdressers), while men worked in "male-gendered" occupations (drivers, mechanics, construction), echoing the findings of other studies (Handerson and Joseph, 2015; de Oliveira, Dias and de Oliveira, 2018; Landry, 2018; Leão *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, women observed that, compared to men, their salaries were lower and they faced more difficulties securing employment.

"It's more or less faster for men to find a job, but for women, it's a little difficult for us to find a job. And even if we find a job, there is a raise at work and it doesn't work for us, it's as if we weren't working." (Female, 37, working at slaughterhouse, Santa Catarina)

"Men can work in hotel management and I can too. What's the difference? If I can study, I have the same right. But men think they're the boss, women don't even have the right to speak. We should have the same rights, not just on paper. If you have a voice, they say you are authoritarian." (Female, focus group participant, Rio de Janeiro)

The last quote above illustrates the difficulties that Haitian women face when they join the Brazilian labour market (Cazarotto and Mejía, 2017; Leão *et al.*, 2018). This is a structural and unequal reality that Brazilian women face (Melino, 2017). It also illustrates that when women show certain behaviours that are not acceptable at work, such as being outspoken, they can be questioned or accused of being "authoritarian" (Leon-Himmelstine, Samuels and Stavropoulou, 2019). Our findings confirm that accessing the job market is not automatically empowering – particularly if someone is working in unequal conditions (Harper *et al.*, 2020).

Similarly, our data suggests norms around unpaid care and domestic work assigned as a responsibility of women persist. Some men indicated they favoured a shift towards a more equitable division of labour, and some indicated they contributed themselves to household chores, although they did not provide details on these perceptions and the extent of their involvement. This was illustrated by Dinorise, a female focus group participant talking in relation to her husband.

"They teach us that the responsibilities of the house belong to the woman. However, upon arriving in Brazil my husband was the one who worked on the streets. He (the husband) did what he was supposed to do to take care of us, but after a while, who got a job? Me. I'm working very hard, I come home at midnight every day, I get up early, my husband stays at home now to cook food, wash, iron clothes, he has to help me (laughs)." (Female, focus group participant, Rio de Janeiro).

The other women participating in the focus group began to laugh, saying that if they were in Haiti, the husband would never agree to stay at home to take care of the children and to do the housework, even if he was unemployed. This is because that scenario would bring shame and mockery (Toussaint, 2011). Perhaps even in Brazil, Dinorise's husband was still a case of mockery, reflected in the laughs of the other women and Dinorise herself.

Global evidence suggests that in cases where households adopt more egalitarian divisions of labour or where men take primary responsibility for the household, this is often because the woman has greater earning power, or because there is no woman in the household to take on that role (Harper *et al.*, 2020). In other words, despite migration and apparent shifts towards egalitarian attitudes, the norm that unpaid care and domestic work is a female responsibility seems to persist. However there seem to be differences in what families actually do, mediated by what is more strategically convenient in economic terms, and what participants perceive to be the "right" thing to do, as observed in the case of Dinorise's household. Most women who commented on this topic highlighted they still had a greater burden of care and domestic chore responsibilities compared to men.

> *"When a Haitian woman arrives in Brazil, the mentality is that if a man and a woman work, the expenses should be shared equally but that's not fair because the woman does other things in the house; she washes clothes, makes food, cleans, and in Haiti it's not like that." (Female, focus group participant, São Paulo)*

"Traditional" gendered norms about care and domestic work appeared to be strongest when families had young children. Women indicated that worries and responsibility around the wellbeing of their children take up a consistent mental and physical space in their life, echoing the findings of Cazarotto and Mejía (2017). This may be the case because childcare might not be affordable to migrant households, other relatives (or fathers) are not available to provide it, or mothers of young children might prefer to combine childcare with their paid jobs as to not lose their additional income.

However, being in control of unpaid care and domestic work activities may not necessarily be disempowering. For instance, migrant women in Senegal perceived that economic and social empowerment went hand in hand with traditional gender norms, especially domestic responsibilities (Bachan, 2018). This more gradual approach was seen as a strategy to gain approval from the male population and accept not only migration but also the involvement of women in the labour market (Ibid). For our participants, it is unclear if they were pursuing this strategy, but they were certainly not dissuaded by their husbands to stop working as long as they also continued with their traditional roles in the household.

To summarise, migrant women in our study observed important changes towards gender equality. Particularly, we observed potential shifts of perceptions around gender norms in areas such as: i) greater freedom of movement; ii) dress and outward appearance; iii) less acceptance of gender-based violence; iv) greater acceptance of women in paid work; v) autonomy and decision-making.

These changes can be explained by several factors led by the migration process such as a new economic household structure, the achievement of higher levels of education, exposure to different norms around purity and modesty and more progressive legislation. We observed limited norm change in two main areas: women's engagement in the labour market and norms around unpaid care and domestic work assigned as a responsibility of women.

6. CONCLUSION

Complementing the literature that explores material and objective aspects that drive the decision to migrate in the Haiti-Brazil MIDEQ corridor (Guindani *et al.*, forthcoming), this paper has explored the connection of both material and subjective factors to gender. We have done this by empirically examining the accounts of 65 Haitians (44 men and 21 women), aged between 16 to 65 years old, and who migrated to Brazil between 2007 and 2020.

We observed that women and men did not react to material factors (e.g. alleviation of economic deprivation, human capital accumulation, public policies) in the same way, but were rather influenced by gender norms. For example, women were more vocal than men regarding the importance of improving their material situation for the benefit of their children, coupled with norms around family responsibility. Similarly, although for both men and women with regular status allows them to work and study, for women regular status also correlated with their ability to support their children or to build a family.

We also provided empirical evidence on the intangible or subjective aspects that drive migration decision-making, allowing us to explore in more depth the role of gender norms. We found that participants imagined Brazil as an attractive destination to achieve their material aspirations, but those imaginations were often male-driven. What men and women imagined about Brazil was shaped by conversations or information shared by other men; male friends, husbands, brothers, male cousins. However, this seemed to have shifted as more women migrated to Brazil and they also became sources of information and imaginations about Brazil as a destination.

We then looked at gender norms more closely and we observed five gender norms related to the decision to migrate:

- Physical integrity: women mentioned having physical safety in mind, including fears of being sexually abused;
- Autonomy in the decision to migrate vis-à-vis the influence of other family members: autonomy around migration decision-making was mediated by individual factors such as age, marital status, and having children;
- Family responsibility: some married women observed it was their "duty" to accompany their husbands and to protect the stability of their families, while others considered the wellbeing of their children;
- Who migrates first: women usually migrated after their husbands or their male relatives who financed their migration, while men financed their own migration unless they were young and supported by their parents;
- Ability to migrate: some participants considered migration easier for men because they could cope with the physical risks associated with the migration journey and because women depended financially on men to migrate.

Another sphere explored in the interviews and focus groups was participants' perceptions regarding *if* and *how* gender norms change upon migration. We observed positive changes in the following areas:

- Greater freedom of movement;
- Dress and outward appearance;
- Less acceptance of gender-based violence;
- Greater acceptance of women in paid work and;
- Greater autonomy and decision-making

Our analysis suggests that several factors, led by the migration process, seem to trigger the above changes such as a new economic household structure, the achievement of higher levels of education, exposure to more relaxed ideas around purity and modesty and more progressive legislation in Brazil, particularly that attempts to protect against gender-based violence.

However, our data also shows that Haitian women have not perceived changes in other gender norms, in part because these are also part of Brazilian society. This was the case of women's engagement in the job market. Similarly, we observed that norms around unpaid care and domestic work assigned as a responsibility of women seemed to persist. Thus, independence and empowerment come with a cost as Haitian migrant women in our study still bear the double burden of working both within and outside of the household, echoing findings of other studies in different contexts (Xhaho, Çaro and Bailey, 2021; Krieger and Salikutluk, 2023).

The significance of our findings for migration studies are the following. Our findings have shown that the decision to migrate was made beyond the economic dimensions and that gender norms played a crucial factor in the purpose and meaning that women and men gave to their migration project. Similarly, we have shown that changes in gender norms upon migration are not linear nor unidirectional. Gender norms are also present at destination. While there is change in some norms (e.g. paid work), there may be limited change in others (e.g. unpaid care and domestic work), limiting transformative change for gender equality.

The main policy message emerging from our findings is that understanding migrant's motivation to migrate and their integration into host societies cannot be complete without introducing a gender norms perspective. Policies and initiatives that consider gender norms will be needed at different sectors (health, employment, education) if decision-makers want to address poverty and the structural barriers that prevent women and men, including migrants, from reaching their full potential.

Finally, future research would undoubtedly benefit from an in-depth exploration of *how* and *why* norms change upon migration. It would be particularly interesting to explore how women and men negotiate and adapt to new norms at destination including how attitudes, but most importantly how practices, change. Another potential subject of inquiry could be the role of norms regarding who migrates first (e.g. fathers, mothers, older siblings), what order is followed by other household members and who stay back. Understanding this could help us to gain more understanding on the strategies used by households not only to cope with shocks and stresses, but also to maximize the full potential and wellbeing of its members.

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Suggested citation

Cover image

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Funding

Licence information

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