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# Occupation as a gender reproducer: an approach to hegemonic masculinity

*Ocupação como reprodutora de gênero: uma abordagem da masculinidade hegemônica*

**La ocupación como reproductora del género: una aproximación a la masculinidad hegemónica**

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The study of occupation has been very diverse in Occupational Science. Within its multidimensionality, the study of socialization processes through occupation been relevant, particularly in the study of gender. **Objective:** To identify the meanings associated with hegemonic masculinity in the narrative of young adult men. **Methodology:** This exploratory-descriptive study used a qualitative methodology with a hermeneutic approach. The sample was of an intentional type and was made up of five young adult men living in Santiago de Chile. The in-depth interview was used to produce information, which was applied in two sessions. The content analysis strategy was used for the analysis. **Results:** Three categories emerge from the analysis: (a) power and dominance in masculinity; (b) transmission of masculinity through occupation; (c) masculinity, heterosexuality, and homophobia. **Conclusion:** How hegemonic masculinity is exercised is through occupation. The men interviewed are aware of the imposition of a hegemonic masculinity, identifying the logic of power that men are forced to abide by through mechanisms of coercion and violence expressed in daily occupations in a game of permanent acceptance and rejection. Occupation is how gender is constructed and gender is reproduced through occupation.

**Keywords:** Masculinity, Activities of Daily Living, Gender Identity, Occupational Science.

## Resumo

**Introdução:** O estudo da ocupação tem sido muito diversificado na Ciência Ocupacional. Dentro da sua multidimensionalidade, o estudo dos processos de socialização através da ocupação tem sido relevante, nomeadamente no que diz respeito ao estudo do gênero. **Objetivo:** Identificar os significados associados à masculinidade hegemônica na narrativa de homens adultos jovens. **Metodologia:** Este estudo exploratório-descritivo utilizou uma metodologia qualitativa com abordagem hermenêutica. A amostra foi do tipo intencional e foi composta por cinco homens adultos jovens que vivem na cidade de Santiago do Chile. Para a produção das informações, foi utilizada a entrevista em profundidade, aplicada em duas sessões. Para a análise, foi utilizada a estratégia de análise de conteúdo. **Resultados:** Da análise emergem três categorias: (a) poder e dominação na masculinidade; (b) transmissão da masculinidade através da ocupação; (c) masculinidade, heterossexualidade e homofobia. **Conclusão:** A forma de exercício da masculinidade hegemônica é através da ocupação. Os homens entrevistados estão conscientes da imposição de uma masculinidade hegemônica, identificando as lógicas de poder que os homens são obrigados a cumprir através de mecanismos de coerção e violência expressos nas ocupações quotidianas, num jogo permanente de aceitação e rejeição. A ocupação é a maneira pela qual o gênero é construído e o gênero é reproduzido por meio da ocupação.

**Palavras-chave:** Masculinidade, Atividades Cotidianas, Identidade de Gênero, Ciência Ocupacional.

## Resumen

**Introducción:** El estudio de la ocupación ha sido muy diverso en la ciencia ocupacional. Dentro de su multidimensionalidad, el estudio de los procesos de socialización, a través de la ocupación han sido relevantes, particularmente en cuanto al estudio del género. **Objetivo:** Identificar los significados asociados a la masculinidad hegemónica en la narrativa de varones adultos jóvenes. **Metodología:** Este estudio exploratorio-descriptivo empleó una metodología cualitativa con un enfoque hermenéutico. La muestra fue de tipo intencional y estuvo compuesta por cinco varones adultos jóvenes que viven en la ciudad de Santiago de Chile. Para la producción de información se utilizó la entrevista en profundidad la que se aplicó en dos sesiones. Para el análisis se empleó la estrategia de análisis de contenido. **Resultados:** Tres categorías emergen del análisis: (a) poder y dominio en la masculinidad; (b) transmisión de la masculinidad a través de la ocupación; (c) masculinidad, heterosexualidad y homofobia. **Conclusion:** La forma en que se ejerce la masculinidad hegemónica es a través de la ocupación. Los varones entrevistados son conscientes de la imposición de una masculinidad hegemónica identificando las lógicas de poder que los hombres son obligados a acatar a partir de mecanismos de coerción y violencia expresados en ocupaciones cotidianas, en un juego de aceptación y rechazo permanente. La ocupación es la forma en que se construye el género y el género se reproduce a través de la ocupación.

**Palabras clave:** Masculinidad, Actividades Cotidianas, Identidad de Género, Ciencia Ocupacional.

## Introduction

Occupational science has been called upon to assume a critical and reflective stance, based on the contribution that gender could make to understanding occupations and their relationship with the health and well-being of individuals (Alonso-Ferreira et al., 2022; Angell, 2014; Goodman et al., 2007; Huff et al., 2022; Huot & Rudman, 2010; Morrison et al., 2021, 2023; Wada et al., 2010).

In particular, several studies in occupational science have examined masculinity and its relationship with occupation., for example, focusing on the choice of occupations in relation to gender understandings, where occupational balance is involved (Wada & Beagan, 2006); studying how masculinity is "performed" through body-centered occupations, understanding that occupation shapes gender (Beagan & Saunders, 2005); analyzing how gender-based divisions of tasks and roles operate within the same profession, generating differences for men and women (Evans, 2004); or exploring the influences of context on occupational choices for non-heterosexual men (Avillo et al., 2015).

Many of these studies demonstrate how gender permeates the entire practice of occupations, while occupations simultaneously reproduce and create gender. Thus, these aspects influence the construction of individuals' occupational identity, which delimits their occupational choices (Cerón & Morrison, 2019).

Thus, delving into the relationship between occupational science and the understanding of gender, particularly in the construction of masculinities, becomes crucial. Occupational science, as a discipline focused on human occupation and its complexities, has the potential to offer a unique and situated perspective on the interactions between daily occupations and social constructions of gender. Exploring this relationship through occupations allows for a more specific understanding of the social and cultural dynamics that influence individuals' gender identity (Huot & Rudman, 2010; Morrison et al., 2023).

This discussion highlights the urgent need for advancements in the field of occupational science within the gender and masculinities debate. As the ongoing transformation of gender discourses questions sexist gender norms and recognizes diverse forms of expression, it demands a more nuanced approach that occupation could provide. By integrating a more reflective understanding of gender, other disciplines such as occupational therapy can engage in different dialogues with occupational science, aiming to develop a more critical approach in supporting individuals in their daily occupations.

In this context, this research aims to examine gender socialization processes in different men based on their life experiences and occupational narratives, with an emphasis on their experiences with the imposition of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus, the guiding question of this research is: What meanings and praxis associated with hegemonic masculinity are identified by the interviewees?

Next, the main theoretical aspects that support this research are presented.

## Theoretical Aspects

### Patriarchy and gender

In feminist literature, the concept of patriarchy has been used in heterogeneous ways, but there is a consensus around its core conceptualization, understood as the system of

power and domination of men over women (Lerner, 1990). The heterogeneity in its application is reflected in the various dimensions that scholars have identified, such as its manifestation at the family level or on a broader scale, involving the relationship with the State, or in private and public spaces. While some patriarchal dynamics are clearly evident in the private sphere, such as in family relationships, others operate at an institutional and political level, linked to the State (Federici, 2018). By exploring the complexity of patriarchy, one can examine how these interconnected dimensions contribute to the reproduction and maintenance of gender hierarchies. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how patriarchy manifests itself at different levels of society, addressing both family dynamics and broader power structures.

Thus, patriarchal culture has bestowed upon men a superior status compared to women (Lerner, 1990). Women have been considered not only ideologically inferior but also their roles, spaces, productions, discourses, etc. (Facio & Fries, 2005; Federici, 2018; Lerner, 1990; Rodríguez, 2001). From a naturalistic conception, this hierarchical social organization stems from the belief that the characteristics we exhibit in our ways of feeling, thinking, and relating correspond to biological, physiological, and genetic typologies inherent to sex, which, in that context, are defined as an innate aspect of the individual's nature, rather than a category assigned at birth (Andrade, 2016).

However, this perspective is not a constant and permanent notion in human history. From a historical perspective, the shaping of power relations between men and women and other groups consisted of a process that spanned 2,500 years (Lerner, 1990). Thus, patriarchy could be understood as the culmination of that process, expressed in a daily life based on the valuation of power and control, considered socially desirable characteristics, as well as competition, domination, and exploitation of nature and people, where white, European, middle-class, and cisgender men often have greater privileges (Haraway, 1991; Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 2003). This occurs at different levels and with a variety of justifications that affect women with particular violence (Segato, 2003), as well as men and dissident individuals who do not represent these values, placing them in a category of subordination (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

In Latin America, the intersectionality of patriarchal power structures has been highlighted, involving not only gender relations but also factors such as race, class, and sexual orientation (Segato, 2003). Segato's work (2003) is crucial in examining the deep roots of gender-based violence in Latin America. She addresses violence not only as an individual phenomenon but as a structural and systemic phenomenon rooted in the patriarchal and colonial dynamics of the region. Segato analyzes how forms of gender-based violence are intrinsically linked to the social construction of masculinity and femininity, as well as to broader power relations. She emphasizes the need to understand these forms of violence from an intersectional perspective, considering not only gender but also race and class.

In this patriarchal framework, gender becomes a system of norms and expectations that dictate how individuals should behave and be perceived based on their gender identity assigned at birth (Lerner, 1990). These norms reinforce the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, perpetuating rigid roles and hierarchies that place men in a position of superiority over women. Gender, as understood in this context, becomes a crucial tool for the reproduction and maintenance of the patriarchal system, imposing

normative models of masculinity and femininity that limit individual expression and reinforce gender inequalities (Federici, 2018). This intricate relationship between patriarchy and gender is manifested in the reproduction of stereotypes, predefined roles, and social expectations that shape individuals' identity and experiences within this power structure (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

In this context, which is shared by the majority of the Western population, reason, objectivity, achievement, and private property are considered the most relevant aspects of human experience, primarily assigned to men, while other experiences that occur in the course of an individual's life and are part of their interactions are disregarded (Lerner, 1990). Thus, the masculine representation that best embodies those values is *hegemonic masculinity*.

## Masculinities

Masculinity can be understood as a socialization *process* that affects all individuals perceived by society as men and some dissidents[1] in their relationship with themselves and with others (Fuller, 2020). It is understood as a configuration that arises from practices occurring within the complex interplay of sex/gender/culture throughout individuals' life trajectories, and from which social relations are organized and regulated, hierarchically ordering masculinity above femininity and dissidence. This configuration is transversally present in different societies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Grollmus, 2012).

This structure exists in both concrete and symbolic terms and is expressed in economic, political, affective, and sexual aspects, among others, through the various institutions that make up society (Facio & Fries, 2005). Masculinity exists as a relational phenomenon (Sabo, 2000). In understanding masculinity, it is not possible to isolate men and masculinity, as it is in relation to others that it is reciprocally constructed and built upon a subordinated femininity that "[…] reinforces male power and hierarchies dominated by men in various institutional contexts" (Sabo, 2000, p. 5).

In relation to this, Demetriou (2001) states that masculinity is expressed in two forms and functions: external and internal. In the first, male domination is manifested over women in all everyday spaces, both public and private, and is legitimized by the idea that women and their productions are inferior to those of men. Simultaneously, the second form corresponds to the domination of one group of men over others.

In this regard, Giacaglia (2002) refers to Gramsci's concept of *Hegemony* to describe a group of men who impose their ideas on the rest of society's groups, either by repressing them or by creating a cultural network of institutions that manipulate the dominated group through various mechanisms, promoting the idea that this form of organization is necessary for the common good. The subordinate group participates in the agreement, albeit also questioning and rejecting it. Later, Connell will export this idea of hegemony to the organization that patriarchal culture has imposed, giving rise to the concept of *Hegemonic Masculinity* (Demetriou, 2001).

This concept brings dynamism and heterogeneity to the notion of masculinity by defining the experience of gender identity as diverse; there is not one masculinity, but

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[1]Example: Lesbian Masculinities (Lacombe, 2006).

rather *diverse masculinities*. It must be recognized that within this experience, there are power differences among men (Demetriou, 2001; Grollmus, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity operates as the benchmark for evaluating male behavior, creating distinction, grouping, and therefore, questioning, stigmatization, and devaluation of those who do not conform to the imposed model of masculinity (Fernández, 2012).

In other words, despite the diversity of masculinities, gender mandates impose male domination among themselves, demanding the expression of qualities considered "more masculine" than others, such as virility, violence, and achievement. This masculinity operates as an imposed ideal, defining guidelines for the expected behavior of men in affective, family, work-related, among other contexts, to which they must conform, whether they agree with them or not (Cerón & Morrison, 2019; Demetriou, 2001). Hegemonic masculinity would impose on men to be strong, heterosexual, active, and providers for the household (Beagan & Saunders, 2005; Campos, 2007; Vigoya, 2001). Risk is culturally defined as desirable. As mentioned, a man must think of himself and be seen as strong and independent, both physically and emotionally (Sabo, 2000).

## Methodological Framework

A *qualitative method* is employed, under an *exploratory design*, understanding that reality cannot be understood in neutral and objective terms, but rather from the experience of the individuals, which is always subjective (Valles, 1999). Furthermore, a *hermeneutic approach* is used that validates the researcher's interpretations of the phenomenon, allowing the researcher to use a historically constructed episteme to make interpretations based on language and access the symbolic world of the individuals studied (Crôtte, 2011). It is worth mentioning that in this process a *double hermeneutics* is generated: the individual who accesses his internal world makes an interpretation of it based on his own episteme; whoever investigates receives this interpretation and simultaneously carries out the same process. In this way, the knowledge generated is socially constructed from the relational exchange between the researching individual and the researched (Crôtte, 2011).

The participants were five young adult males. Women are not included in the study, although gender is considered a relational phenomenon, since it is interesting to know, specifically, the experience of masculinity in men. This, considering the need to increase the volume of research on masculinity. It is important to mention that this work is part of a broader research project that aimed to study the practice of yoga in men in Chile. Thus, that study focused on the analysis of the meanings of yoga practice and this second part on the analysis from a gender perspective. Therefore, the research subjects were men who practiced yoga.

In this way, a snowball sampling technique (also known as chain sampling) was employed (Valles, 1999), because the aim was to identify men who practiced yoga, which is not very common in the Chilean context. The initial call was made through social networks. A message was posted on Facebook indicating the search for individuals willing to discuss masculinities and yoga for research purposes. Subjects were selected based on their responses to the message: they lived in Santiago de Chile, had time for two face-to-face meetings, practiced yoga at least three times a week for at least a year, and possessed literacy skills necessary for information production techniques. In the first

meeting, the informed consent forms were read, explained, and signed, before proceeding to the interview process. Due to specific inclusion criteria and operational limitations in the fieldwork, intentional samples were not conducted to allow for comparison between groups based on sociodemographic variables.

For data production, *in-depth interviews* were used, defined by Robles (2011) as a series of face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants aimed at understanding in detail the meaning of the interviewees' experiences in their own words. To achieve this, two in-person interviews were conducted with each participant.

The interview was constructed based on one of the objectives of the research project mentioned above, which is to *identify the meanings and practices associated with hegemonic masculinity*. The questions address various domains related to the construction of masculinity, from the influence of childhood and adolescence to society's expectation of how men should act towards women and each other. In addition, topics such as the expression of care, perceived social restrictions on aspects such as health and parenting, and the influence of paternal relationships on the formation of masculine identity are explored. In summary, the questions seek to understand how interviewees have internalized and experienced the expectations and norms associated with hegemonic masculinity throughout their lives.

After transcribing the interviews, a content analysis methodology based on Valles (1999) was applied. This approach involved a series of systematic steps. First, a pre-analysis was carried out, which consisted of an initial and superficial reading of the information collected from the interviewees. Subsequently, we proceeded with the material exploration stage, where thematic categories were identified and generated from phrases and keywords emerging in the data. Finally, the treatment and interpretation of the results was carried out, grouping the text units corresponding to each category according to the methodology proposed by Caregnato & Mutti (2006). This process guaranteed rigor and consistency in the analysis, allowing the generation of significant inferences from the textual content.

The implications and ethical safeguards of this research were reviewed and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Chile, on September 5, 2018, as recorded in Minutes No. 078 Project 098 -2018.

## Results and Analysis

The analysis process included the identification of units of meaning, their grouping into general categories and the subsequent subdivision of these categories into more specific themes. Thus, three general categories emerged, namely, (a) power and dominance in masculinity; (b) transmission of masculinity; and (c) masculinity, heterosexuality and homophobia, emerged organically during this process, reflecting the significant and relevant dimensions that were highlighted in the experiences shared by the participants. Thus, the formation of these categories was the result of an inductive review of the data, seeking that the categories accurately and completely capture the complexities and variations in participants' perceptions of masculinity. Prior to the presentation of the categories, a brief description of the participants is made.

**Characterization of the interviewees**

Below, biographical aspects of the interviewees are summarized, with the aim of contextualizing the subsequent analysis. Data related to demographic characteristics are included, such as age, sex and place and family of origin and/or current. Furthermore, the characterization refers to the masculinity references of each participant, as well as their sexual orientations, as they are relevant for the subsequent analysis.

*Interviewee 1 (I1)*

A 30-year-old man born in Quilpué, residing in Santiago for 3 years. He is the eldest son of a couple who separated during his childhood. He has one brother who is 3 years younger and lives in Quilpué, with whom he has an occasional but good relationship. He identifies his father, teachers, grandparents, and uncles as male role models during his childhood. He identifies as heterosexual and lives with his partner.

*Interviewee 2 (I2)*

A 32-year-old man, the youngest son of a marriage where the father is deceased. He has one brother and two sisters, who are 15 to 20 years older than him. He was born and raised in Santiago, where he currently lives. As male role models during childhood, he identifies his father and a cartoon called "Saint Seiya"; during adolescence, he looked up to artists with androgynous characteristics, openly declared gays or lesbians, such as Brian Molko (lead vocalist of the band Placebo), Morrisey, or Madonna. He mentions not having had friends in his childhood and adolescence, only female friends. He identifies as homosexual and lives with his partner.

*Interviewee 3 (I3)*

A 34-year-old man born in Concepción, Argentina. He has been living in Santiago de Chile for 4 years. He is the second child of a marriage; his mother is a housewife, and his father, a lawyer, worked traveling outside the city for long periods, being absent. His male role models during childhood were artists like Freddie Mercury and Ricky Martin. He identifies as homosexual and lives with his partner.

*Interviewee 4 (I4)*

A 28-year-old man, the only child of an unmarried mother, with an absent father throughout his life. He was raised by his maternal grandmother, an aunt, his mother, and his step-grandfather. He grew up with an uncle who is 1 year older, whom he sees as a brother figure. He identifies his step-grandfather and his uncle's father as the main male role models during his childhood and youth. He identifies as homosexual, currently without a partner.

*Interviewee 5 (I5)*

A 38-year-old man, the youngest son in a heterosexual biparental family, with 2 older siblings, 5 and 3 years older, respectively. He was born and raised in Santiago, although he lived in Valdivia for 1 year when he was 5 years old. Upon returning, he lived in his uncle's house for a year. He identifies his uncle and father as male role models during his childhood. He identifies as heterosexual. He was previously married and is currently single.

**Power and dominance in masculinity**

Below, the concept of power and dominance is developed as an expression of dominant masculinity, through citations and characteristics recognized in the literature as part of hegemonic masculinity.

*Division of labor according to sex/gender*

In this subcategory, the division of roles within the family nucleus is evidenced, organizing occupations by gender. Even explicit prohibitions (such as the explicit prohibition of men doing dishes, for example) are apparent. These prohibitions are unquestionable in daily life, due to the consensus around hegemonic masculinity, where imposition by men occurs by articulating the institutions that compose society (in this case, the family) to indoctrinate the dominated groups, promoting the idea that this form of organization is natural and is subordinate to the common good (Angell, 2014). These notions are present in the accounts of all interviewees, who mention the limited time some men dedicate to household chores and childcare. Sometimes, the experience of friends with children is mentioned, where few assume their care ("wearing the skirt"), a mandate of this type of masculinity.

> *He* [his grandfather] *didn't do anything in the house; he had this dominance of arriving and being served, having his bed made, having the cleaning done, and having his meal ready. So he never contributed domestically to the household, he always had a leadership role within the family. Despite my grandmother also working, she still had to take care of the house* (E4/Interview 1).

This account reflects a concrete manifestation of hegemonic masculinity, where traditional gender roles and an unequal distribution of responsibilities are evident. The grandfather's lack of contribution to household chores, even though the grandmother also worked, highlights the rigidity of gender roles and the persistence of dominance patterns and service expectations associated with hegemonic masculinity.

*Providers heads of household*

Another characteristic of the division of occupations by gender is the obligation of men to be providers for the family from the outside, as expressed below: "*My mom was always at home doing mom stuff and my dad was always outside*" (I1/Interview 1).

The division of roles and occupations according to gender is a mandate considered a historical form of imposition and dominance by men, through which they hold the categories of economic provider for the household, while simultaneously preventing women from participating in the public sphere. This division of roles created a marked distinction of social spaces according to gender, limiting women to the private sphere and the functions of household administration, as well as the care of children, the sick, and men; all activities considered invisible and of lesser value (Facio & Fries, 2005). This imposition forced women to depend economically on men, who, in turn, were assigned their place outside the home. The public sphere allowed men economic growth (at the expense of a daily life sustained by women), offered them opportunities, and enabled them to develop professional, political, and scientific careers, participating in and influencing society in areas where power is expressed: economic, political, legal, among others (Federici, 2018).

The references of the interviewees clearly express the perception of the division of roles according to gender. The accounts depict fathers as heads of households, economic providers, and distant from the home; unlike mothers, who, along with other women (sisters, grandmothers, aunts), formed the references of the permanent adult world during childhood.

### Relationships with peer groups

Another social space where power, dominance, and/or superiority are expressed is within the relationships among men. In hegemonic masculinity, power relations are not only established with women but also with other men (Demetriou, 2001), where patterns of behavior are imposed through coercion and violence upon other men, questioning and stigmatizing other forms of masculinity deemed subordinate.

The accounts of the interviewees express experiences of direct, coercive, and violent domination by other men in their environments. Gender is always a relational phenomenon, and within internal hegemony, interactions among men demand the constant demonstration of attributes associated with manhood from a patriarchal perspective. It is considered, and as the interviewees report, that the development of these relationships is bidirectional: first, men learn through the occupations of other men, although also from women, what behaviors they must exhibit to be considered as such and avoid exclusion. Then, these occupations are reproduced in their relationships with their peers.

Men do not have many alternatives to express their disagreement in the face of group pressure. This frequently occurs, maintaining the questioning of one's own masculinity, while also requiring the necessary demonstration of manliness in the daily relationships established. Therefore, many times, they must participate in collective occupations that exert violence or domination over others: "*Yes, we were quite aggressive... yes, we fought... and all that* [with peers at school]" (I5/Interview 1). The quote shows the normalization of these practices. The interviewee describes the relationships established with his schoolmates, where violent games, insults, and mockery exist with a certain level of normalization, similar to findings in different studies (Garda & Huerta, 2007).

### Strength and invulnerability

In this subcategory, it is noted that the strength demanded of men from an early age functions as a strategy to belong to a reference group and thus be part of the norm and avoid exclusion. Therefore, it is proposed to consider the exhibition of strength through violent occupations (explicit or covert) in the face of the threat of submission.

> [The man] *wants to continue with that outdated rule of patriarchy, that the man is tough, doesn't cry, is macho... I think that in the long run, they end up not letting you live as you want to live, because you have to live under appearances to feel comfortable, and continue with the stereotype that society requires you to demonstrate* (I3/Interview 1).

For the participants, socialization is characterized by violent gestures. The explicit or silenced prohibition of not crying implies an early restriction on the child's relationship with his emotional world. Martínez (2013, p. 191) points out, "[…] from a very young age, young men are taught not to express those feelings that […] are classified as weak, as that would make the one expressing them vulnerable, and in some way feminize them". Thus, men's difficulties in expressing a certain configuration of their emotions, i.e., part of their affections, are the result of the lessons learned throughout life. This mandate, along with those that seek to provoke the adoption of violence by children and adolescents in their occupations, is considered a socio-cultural attribute specific to men, with institutional validation for its existence and justification (Garda & Huerta, 2007).

As the narratives indicate, "men don't cry" is a patriarchal demand that seeks to keep men unchanged, disregarding their emotions as part of the human experience. In this way, the patriarchal system ensures that, even though they may be emotionally affected by situations they experience, men are able to meet the demands imposed on them through stereotypes, such as through the development of occupations related to work, economic development, effort, violence, etc. (Campos, 2007).

The testimony of interviewee (3) highlights the tensions associated with traditional expectations of masculinity, demonstrating how these norms can impose restrictions and generate internal conflicts. This individual narrative underscores the need to further explore how these personal experiences reflect contradictions and transitions in the formation of hegemonic masculinities over time.

This raises the question of how social constructions of gender, particularly stereotypes of masculinity, affects the authenticity and quality of life of men. By examining these individual experiences more closely, it may be possible to identify the ways in which men face dilemmas between meeting traditional expectations and seeking to live authentically in accordance with their own needs and desires.

In this context, it is valuable to explore how these tensions influence mental health (Aguayo, 2022), interpersonal relationships, and men's ability to express and manage their emotions.

### Rejection of self-care occupations

Another characteristic expressed in hegemonic masculinity is the rejection of self-care occupations because they are mandated as exclusively feminine.

This subcategory refers to the prohibition for men to take care of their own bodies, for example, by using facial or body creams. Experiences of ridicule by others regarding these occupations are recounted, serving as a system of social control of hegemonic mandates, where shame or fear of judgment operate as the unconscious adoption of these mandates.

The obligation to be strong implies not only exhibiting strength or skill but also avoiding showing vulnerability. The binary system establishes the division between strength and vulnerability, attributing the latter to women, which forces men to think of themselves and present themselves as invulnerable, deeming self-care unnecessary.

> *A man who combs his hair and goes to the hairdresser... is gay... and he's never been gay, he's straight, but he likes to smell good and dress well, comb his hair well* (I2/Interview 1).

This quote complements the previously mentioned idea by associating self-care with femininity. Patriarchy mandates that these practices be exclusive to women, and that men who practice them be considered feminine or even homosexual, and therefore, devalued as men (Avillo et al., 2015; Facio & Fries, 2005; Martínez, 2013).

Finally, the interviewees recognize that the lack of self-care occupations, neglecting one's own body, or the obligation to feel and appear invulnerable is also expressed in the resistance to seeking healthcare services when needed. This highlights the significant influence of culture on health by defining the expected attitudes and practices of men, leading to the idea that seeking medical or psychological help, as one of the interviewees describes, represents vulnerability, a non-masculine trait (Campos, 2007).

## Transmission of masculinities through occupations

This category expresses and analyzes the various references identified by the interviewees in which they observed masculine behavior during their childhood and adolescence expressed through occupations: within the family; play; institutions such as school; and among peers.

### *The family*

> *Once, it happened that, to my older brother, when he was about 5 years old,* [his paternal grandfather] *gave him a glass of wine. So that he could become a man... and he, being so little, went crazy, started running around, as if he entered into euphoria, and then ended up lying down as if sleeping* [laughs] *and... it was always like the anecdote* (I5/Interview 1).

The quote clearly illustrates a process of gender socialization through activities carried out within the family, where hegemonic masculinity is reproduced. The grandfather engages in this activity in complicity with the rest of the family, who normalize the episode, disregarding the effects on the child.

On the other hand, this subcategory also describes how several women participate in the socialization processes of hegemonic masculinity. The idea that the adult male is the

authority figure is reproduced through different practices or limitations of activities or through punishments.

Although there are several experiences of resistance, the internalization of hegemonic masculinity expressed through activities allows us to understand it as necessary for the common good, in an internal and external movement of acceptance and rejection of the interests of the dominant group.

*Play*

In this section, the importance of play as a cultural expression of gender mandates is described. The construction of masculine identity occurs through multiple agents of socialization and does not depend solely on the presence or absence of paternal and/or maternal figures, as culture - as a system - transmits its meanings in all social groups that share it (Grollmus, 2012; Martínez, 2013).

From the perspective of occupational science and occupational therapy, play has been identified by various authors as the most relevant occupation in childhood. As an occupation, play is understood as a spontaneous activity of human beings, rooted in the culture in which individuals are immersed (Gerlach & Browne, 2021; Lagos et al., 2017; Lucisano et al., 2022; Mora et al., 2020; Pastore & Barros, 2015; Zogogianni et al., 2022).

Participation in the free interaction provided by play during childhood allows individuals to interpret reality, experiment with social behaviors, and acquire different roles that they will perform throughout their adult lives. Moreover, they learn rules such as the gender mandates of the culture in which they are situated (Aravena et al., 2017).

This quote illustrates how participants received both explicit and implicit information about which games were allowed and prohibited based on their sex/gender.

> *What they did prohibit me from a lot* [...] [was] *doing certain 'girly things'* […], *like playing with dolls... watching certain cartoons, things like that... At school, the teacher liked it when I played soccer… and well, I didn't like it, but she made me do it once... I think it was so that I would become more masculine* (I2/Interview 1).

In this quote, there is explicit prohibition of playing with toys or engaging in activities attributed to girls, while also exemplifying the control mechanism exercised by adults who impose activities like soccer, recognized by all participants as a "masculinizing" occupation, even against their will.

> *I'm Argentine, so what was considered manly was basically playing soccer… like if you were a boy, I remember playing with toy cars was for boys, and playing with dolls was for girls* […]. *I used to play with dolls with my best friend anyway, but of course, it didn't go beyond our environment. It didn't even go beyond the environment of our mothers, who saw it the same way* (I3/Interview 1).

This quote reveals another context in which play is also used as a means of gender normalization, through the imposition of permitted toys while repressing free exploration. The quotes reinforce the idea of football as a vehicle for the socialization of

masculinity in childhood, also revealing the notion that the interviewee had early on of hiding games that transgress the patriarchal mandate.

Previously, it was mentioned that masculinity restricts self-care, leading the interviewees to note a tendency to hide in order to carry out actions for this purpose, such as using sunscreen or facial creams, without exposing themselves to social punishment. That is, some men may recognize self-care as a necessity, but to satisfy it without sanction, they must do so in secret. This same strategy is evident in the interviewee's account, showing that the search and exploration are inherent to human beings, regardless of sex/gender. As for behaviors carried out in secret, it is observed that there is a learning of shame or fear, which begins in childhood through play and is reinforced throughout life, according to the social response to these behaviors.

The construction of gender identity is characterized by constant transformation and the integration of attitudes that have been socially labeled as masculine and feminine, although there are more possibilities (non-binary individuals, Trans, among others). In itself, identity construction constitutes a historical and symbolic development in which individual and collective experiences are mixed, giving rise to an identity that is characterized by being unstable, changing, contradictory, and dynamic, and which, to be such, requires the active and free search for experiences in which children come into contact with themselves, their emotional and intellectual worlds, as well as with others (Avillo et al., 2015; Beagan & Saunders, 2005). However, once play is normed based on patriarchal culture, the free exploration it represents is restricted, interfering with the natural process through which children construct their subjectivity.

The accounts of the interviewees account for what has been mentioned so far, and allow us to recognize the importance that play had as a means of transmitting patriarchal culture, being an element that, in their childhood, regulated their activities. In the quotations, associations are observed a priori that are transmitted to the interviewees from different sources to consciously or unconsciously indicate to them which gender they should identify with and which games were considered valid or prohibited. Occupations such as football, playing with cars, and fighting games are identified as direct messages from parents, teachers, or media, as normed occupations of masculinity, while playing with dolls, sewing machines, or kitchens (all aimed at caring for, either another, or the home), are identified as girls' games, and therefore omitted or prohibited.

### Institutions, the school

For the purpose of analysis, the school institution will be delimited to the figures of authority that represent the adult-centric cultural world in this space and, therefore, transmit dominant discourses. Peer groups will be addressed in another section, due to their importance in the construction of masculinity, according to what the interviewees have indicated.

> *The teachers had different ways of punishing you* [...]. *There were teachers who were violent. I even had a teacher who would slap us on the head. It wasn't heavy-handed, but he would hit us and say, 'You're not a tough guy? Don't cry!'* (I1/Interview 1).

This quote reflects the reproduction, within the school, of violent behaviors that convey a clear hegemonic message, with normalization and complicity among adults. Other accounts are similar and show the role of teachers in the transmission of hegemonic masculinity. As mentioned earlier, culture is reproduced in institutions and social groups, and especially, the establishment of hegemonic masculinity is violently transmitted through the various forms described by the participants: verbal intimidation, violation of will by imposing socially preconceived activities as masculine, blows, exposure, and humiliation in front of peer groups. Violence within this cultural framework is transmitted through the occupations performed and is inscribed as a daily, obvious, and irrational discourse, present in relationships of all kinds (political, romantic, parental, etc.), as a form of communication that encompasses people participating in the culture regardless of gender, however, for men, violence becomes a way to access power, by dominating, competing, and winning, all goals established as mandates of this style of masculinity (Garda & Huerta, 2007).

This dynamic occurs between dominant and subordinate groups. Although the subordinate group "accepts" subjugation (not necessarily consciously or agreed upon), the psychological and emotional discomfort it brings is expressed through a hidden script where disagreement is voiced. Both scripts share spaces in everyday life and interact, potentially opening certain gaps and transforming the hierarchical system towards situations of greater equity, or, conversely, intensifying subjugation and producing deeper inequities around hegemonic masculinity expressed in occupations (Demetriou, 2001).

## Peer groups

The process of gender identity formation occurs through socialization, with feedback from others allowing individuals to generate theories that facilitate understanding the codes and meanings of daily experiences, to access acceptance from others, ultimately representing the collective. In this sense, significant early relationships function as "criteria images" that essentially regulate, but do not completely determine, the subsequent processes of making and fitting through which the individual constructs knowledge about themselves and the world (Henríquez, 2011, p. 30). This highlights the importance of primary reference figures during childhood and adolescence in the construction of a gender identity more or less aligned with the pre-established models of masculinity by the dominant culture. The following quotes illustrate some interviewees' understanding of the material and symbolic formation of peer groups, as not all individuals who share a physical space or similar ages are necessarily peers.

> *When you're a teenager, you're very susceptible. All emotions are on the surface, and the last thing you want to feel is rejection. And even less if it's from another man [...]. Obviously, you're going to want to identify more with a man than with a woman* (I.1/Interview 1).

> [...] [men among themselves are] *like drier, rougher, like hugs and patting, right? and also a bit like a pack. Like the pack of men [...]. Sometimes I think it's*

> *like one's need to identify with something, to belong to something bigger* (I5/Interview 1).

In these quotes, the participants highlight the importance of belonging to a peer group during adolescence, which must be composed of other men. This is significant for these interviewees, who also identify as heterosexual, because according to them, only men form the peer group, while women do not represent a reference for them. Additionally, both quotes refer to the expectations they perceive imposed by the group, such as competition with other groups, showing characteristics of virility that are expected to be displayed by peers, exerting pressure and control among men.

In the gender distinction, the peer group acquires "[…] dimensions of equipotency, equivalence, and equiphony for and among men" (Rojas, 2005, p. 207), so only those who are considered equal (both symbolically and materially) are validated in the influence they can have on other men. These men are equivalent in power, value, and therefore represent valid discourses. In this gender-based group distinction, misogyny is not necessarily experienced as aggression towards women, but rather through ignoring them, forming the "unthought-of" (Rojas, 2005, p. 207).

> *Regarding playing soccer] It's great to shout, compete, as a group.* [...] *It must be like in one's DNA, like in the arena, right? The arena, the battle, the war. Facing each other, measuring up, like when you're a kid, through play, strength, like we all have that alpha male, who wants to come out and be the goal scorer, or the goalkeeper who saved the goals. It satisfies that instinct to compete* (I5/Interview 1).

The normalization of hegemonic masculinity accounts for cultural transmission, where "human nature" would explain the need for competition. It's not just about belonging to the peer group, fitting into it, and feeling represented in it, but also about standing out by always being in competition and being the best.

> *I've always had a good experience with women, so my classmates kind of... that bothered them a lot. It wasn't a game of competing with them... however, they saw it that way,* [...] *and they started to exclude me. They had their group* [...] *always this game of competition, and not only with that, but also with everything, like in sports,* [...] *academics* (I4/Interview 1).

> *Also, this thing about drinking* [alcohol] *as well, like 'hey, have a drink, if you're a man, right?'* (I.1/Interview 1).

These quotes express experiences of struggle and competition as part of the codes inherent to the peer group in different occupations, such as drinking in a group or the process of romantic relationships. The individual who belongs is constantly challenged, and not responding to the challenge implies being isolated. The risk of isolation represented by not following the guidelines of the peer group is significant and can be perceived as a threat, not only of exclusion but also of violence from the dominant group. This situation is in line with other experiences in the Chilean context (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2020; Morales-Ortiz et al., 2021).

In the case of the other interviewees, the formation of the peer group was different. The assumption posed is that the difference is explained by sexual orientation. Those who declared themselves to be homosexual experienced expressions of hegemonic masculinity through exclusion and violence from other children and/or young people in their environments.

> *In elementary school, I was bullied a lot... but not in high school, but they did isolate me and I could never have friends [...] my classmates were very respectful, but they still isolated me... like I wanted to have a group of friends [...] I would arrive and they would fall silent. That's when I would leave. In the end, I made friends again [...] there I began to understand and said 'okay bye' [...] 'I'll find people like me eventually'* (I.2/Interview 1).

As mentioned, the transmission of gender mandates from childhood, especially through play, leads the interviewees to an early understanding of hierarchies in relationships between men, and between men and women (Aravena et al., 2017). The form and internal function of masculinity mandate the group of men to validate hegemonic masculinity and reject masculinities defined and understood as subordinate (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The accounts of adult homosexuals show exclusion based on homophobia, expressed through harassment, isolation, and violence, revealing the mechanisms of social control of patriarchal culture in men who, through mockery, isolation, and physical violence, make it clear that the hierarchical position within the group is one of submission and exploitation. These situations of discrimination based on sexual orientation constitute *occupational apartheid*[2] situations that tend to affect historically excluded groups (Fuentes-Barahona et al., 2022; Morrison et al., 2020; Pollard et al., 2009).

Furthermore, it is noted that the impression of living in a small town results in the official and hidden scripts of patriarchal agreement receiving less influence from external cultural models that allow for the modification of customs. As indicated by a third interviewee, regarding the ways in which men relate in rural contexts:

> *An affectionate hug in rural areas, where there is much more machismo, is very rare to see among friends, even among parents, among family members, father and son, or between siblings* (E4/Interview 1).

The above allows us to add that the formation of peer groups was different between those who fulfilled hegemonic mandates and those who did not. The latter participated in heterogeneous peer groups that included women, becoming part of those not taken into account, which form an absence that does not reach to be detected as such (Rojas, 2005).

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[2] Occupational apartheid refers to the separation of groups of people by limiting or denying their adequate and meaningful participation in daily activities. This separation is based on criteria such as race, color, disability, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs, and other characteristics. Originating from political influences, its systematic and predominant consequences have negative impacts on social, cultural, and economic aspects, jeopardizing the health and well-being of individuals, communities, and societies as a whole (Kronenberg & Pollard, 2006).

*Heterosexuality and homophobia*

As has been mentioned, the demonstration of "active heterosexuality" corresponds to an important prevailing mandate of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, homophobic attitudes are identified in dominant groups. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the closed nature of the hegemony of masculinity, from which diversities are ignored, and closed and homogeneous categories are produced, leading not only to situations of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination against those men who disregard heteronormativity, but also those who express their masculinity in diverse, non-hegemonic ways (Rojas, 2005).

> *Look, that girl is looking at you. And you have to look at her and flirt, otherwise, you're not a man. You're a fag* (I.1/Interview 1).

This quote allows us to recognize that, in the interviewee's experience, being a man and being openly heterosexual were seen as correlations (orientation and identity are considered a single dimension). The occupation of "conquering" entails strong social pressure regulated by peers, where it is expected that the male takes the initiative in a process of romantic relationships. Moreover, not participating in these occupations implies that "one is not man enough", which automatically leads to the labeling of being homosexual, which is named with the insult: "fag" [queer], a pejorative term that includes any difference with hegemony.

The narratives of homosexual participants express their view regarding groups subordinated by hegemonic masculinity. The pressure exerted reproduced heteronormative behaviors alongside the ignorance of their sexual orientation until the end of the school stage, when the recognition and validation of their homosexuality and their experiences of counter-hegemonic masculinity began. For example, one of the participants engaged in the patriarchal cultural framework and formed peer groups, recognizing the codes of heteronormativity[3].

> *I questioned that a lot and it was also very difficult for me because* [at] *parties outside of school, my classmates were interested in getting to know girls, going out with them, seeking some kind of romantic relationship… and that was also very shocking for me* […], *one of the strongest things from the definition of gender is how to validate yourself as a man, to conquer a woman* (I.4/Interview 1).

The interviewee expresses the discomfort that learning these codes caused him. Socialization from hegemony implies practices that violate the child or young person, which are accepted due to the importance of belonging to the peer group (Demetriou, 2001; Fernández, 2012). On the other hand, he points out how one of the necessary discourses to identify oneself as a man is participating in occupations of romantic

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[3]Heteronormativity can be conceptualized as a system of interactions in which sexuality is presupposed to be inherently heterosexual and limited to cisgender individuals (Bell, 2009). In this context, heterosexual attraction and relationships are considered normative and desired by all members of society. This system of relations creates dichotomies in addressing sexuality, establishing contrasts between heterosexual and homosexual, as well as in understanding gender, presenting polarities between masculine and feminine (Barker, 2014).

conquest towards women[4], reflecting the material and symbolic understanding of these within the patriarchal cultural framework, as they are not considered peers but rather objects through which masculinity is proven (Cerón & Morrison, 2019; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Other accounts highlight normalized homophobia. A direct relationship is established between gestures ("feminine behaviors," "delicate") and homosexuality, leading to the understanding that one is facing a "non-man" subject, who integrates the group of the subordinated (Fuller, 2020). In some narratives, there is a mention of the period of life between 5 and 6 years old, where the early installation of the gender mandate is reinforced; and in others, the forms that homophobia takes are described, including mocking, exposing, humiliating, or physically and/or verbally abusing another person, or making fun of this within the peer group. All of these actions negatively affect the LGBT collective (Morrison et al., 2023).

## Discussion and Conclusions

This study explored the construction of male gender identity from the experiences of the interviewees, aiming to provide elements for the analysis of the phenomenon, which can be expanded upon in future research. In this sense, it is acknowledged that the sample is insufficient to draw generalizable conclusions to society as a whole, which is not the aim of a study with these characteristics.

Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize that, in the analysis process, aspects were addressed from the perspective of the historical and cultural elements of the participants (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2020). All interviewees resided in Chile, situating their experiences and the meanings they would attribute to the experience of being men in that context. It is recognized that the construction of gender, patriarchy, and heteronormativity could not be understood as universal and ahistorical concepts (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). On the contrary, these aspects were intrinsically linked to specific contexts, and the understanding of male identities is enriched by considering the historical and cultural influences that shape their perceptions and practices in the Latin American context (Fuller, 2020).

Thus, participants described how the stereotype of hegemonic masculinity, expressed through various occupations, is mandated from their own socio-historical and cultural contexts. They identify the logics of dominance and power that men are forced to comply with through mechanisms of coercion and violence in a game of constant acceptance and rejection.

At the same time, the interviewees accounted for the mechanisms through which the system serves for the reproduction of this mandate. In childhood, family occupations and play were the means of socialization that transmitted to them the differences and restrictions by sex/gender, as well as the hierarchies defined by patriarchy, according to the adaptation to the dominant stereotype. Similar to other works that account for the relationships between gender and play in childhood (Aravena et al., 2017). During their childhood and youth, some of the interviewees learned the norms to be accepted, along

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[4]In occupational science, there are some studies on "dating" or romantic courtship processes, which are understood as occupations. Some references include: Ip et al. (2022); Krishnagiri (2014); and McCarthy & Jackson (2022).

with the means of coercion to assert themselves over other men; while the other interviewees who were dissidents from the heterosexual norm did not experience friendship with other men and lived multiple expressions of homophobia.

Regarding the division of labor by gender, the interviewees described nuclear families with a marked hegemonic organization. Thus, mothers or women in the family - in most cases - were homemakers and in charge of care and upbringing, while fathers, as economic providers, worked outside the home, separated from household chores and childcare, establishing a physical and emotional distance, common in the relationships of the interviewees with their fathers.

In relation to other agents transmitting hegemonic masculinity, school and peer groups were described as fundamental during puberty and adolescence, as in both relational spaces, young people continued to develop their identity. In this sense, various authors propose that gender is a process that develops throughout individuals' lives (Facio & Fries, 2005; Fernández, 2012; Grollmus, 2012), and as such, it never becomes a fixed state but rather is modified based on experiences. During puberty and adolescence, faced with the challenges of hegemony, the participants had to either express the expected virility dictated by the mandate or be excluded for not complying with this logic, in a mistaken correlation between orientation, sex, and identity. This is similar to proposals that have studied the processes of socialization in adolescents from an occupational perspective in heteronormative contexts (Almeida, 2022; Avillo et al., 2015; Beagan & Hattie, 2015; Hadden et al., 2020; Lukas et al., 2021; Murasaki & Galheigo, 2016; Schneider et al., 2018).

All the interviewees experienced homophobia as a means to ensure the mandate. Some of them participated in its expressions through mockery, attacks, and harassment. Meanwhile, those who did not adhere to heteronormativity, experienced homophobia by being excluded, repressed, and subordinated by the "included" individuals who engage in these actions to assert their virility.

In this way, the research recognizes the difference between participants who expressed a heterosexual orientation in childhood, in line with the stereotype; compared to those whose orientation was openly homosexual from childhood. The former identify codes of hegemonic masculinity contained in their experiences, such as the role that women play in interactions with men, since, to the extent that both become sexually involved, they are validated as "males"; even when, in this masculinity, men place women in a place of invisibility, since they do not have the status to be recognized by them as peers (Garda & Huerta, 2007; Rojas, 2005). The expression of gender identity in the LGBT population has also been an aspect studied with occupational science (Morrison et al., 2023), pointing out similar consequences to those of this study.

Furthermore, these interviewees identified in their experiences the risks involved in refusing to comply with any of the demands of any of the indicated means of socialization. From an occupational perspective, not participating in certain occupations operates as a way to avoid risks related to gender expression (Beagan et al., 2012; Goodman et al., 2007).

In contrast to these experiences, the need to appear strong arises, and for this, it is necessary that men, from childhood, learn to repress their emotions, since some of these are considered signs of weakness (Martínez, 2013). This requirement will also be expressed in the refusal to perform self-care actions, such as the use of creams, body oils

or others; or in carrying them out covertly for fear of reprisals for being considered feminine. And on a larger scale, in the refusal to consult the doctor and take care of one's health when required, since, according to what is narrated, it would correspond to a sign of weakness, a characteristic rejected from this masculinity.

On the other hand, the experiences of the participants who, since childhood, developed their gender identity with an openly homosexual orientation have a different presentation. The interviewees recognize experiences of fear of reprisals for being identified as "different" in childhood, exclusion by other children or young people their age, and overt violence through harassment, physical abuse, mockery, and beatings, both by their peers and by adults seeking to "normalize" them. Those who had these experiences were excluded and, like women, were not considered peers (Rojas, 2005); therefore, the codes of hegemonic masculinity are unfamiliar to them, as well as irrelevant, since demands such as heterosexuality, competition, or the need to appear strong to avoid being treated as weak, are characteristics that either do not identify with them or represent the historical aggression they have suffered.

Thus, the narratives of the interviewees express a dynamic of social control inherent to the internal function of hegemonic masculinity: there are those who learned to be violent and those who learned to ignore violence, or to defend themselves. This dynamic is understood as relational and is expressed in power relations that vary according to different contexts. It is observed that the coercion of patriarchy is imposed on both parties (although one of them undoubtedly receives much greater violence), producing restrictions that, in occupational terms, are relevant to analyze because, at different levels, both groups are repressed through stereotypes. These stereotypes promote certain occupations, preventing individuals from freely exploring others that may be more related to their potentials, desires, or values, thus restricting the expression of an occupational identity from what makes sense to the individuals themselves.

Therefore, by engaging in occupations, an occupational identity is created that gives meaning and significance to what is "done" from gender (Aravena et al., 2017; Cerón & Morrison, 2019). As we carry out these actions, we are defining a unique occupational identity that in turn reflects the collective identity, but, in these terms, it is important to question whether this identity really encompasses its full potential or whether it reproduces a way of occupying oneself linked to gender and that, rather than really enhancing the subjects' own characteristics, interests and passions, restricts and limits their own possibilities of occupying themselves to a limited space of action.

In this research, it is suggested that the constant coercion experienced over time generated emotional and psychological distress in the interviewees, leading to a search for occupations aligned with the need to find other meanings and groups of belonging where they could participate openly and feel safe. Therefore, this study concludes that occupation is the pathway through which gender is constructed, and in turn, gender is reproduced through occupation.

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**Author's Contributions**
Natalia Polanco Cerón proposed the research idea; carried out the design, fieldwork, analysis and conclusions. Rodolfo Morrison directed the research, made theoretical contributions, contributed to the analysis, conclusions, and made an initial proposal of the article draft. All authors approved the final version of the text.

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