Social Media in Northern Chile

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One day while scrolling through postings I noticed a controversy brewing on 31-year-old Omar’s Facebook wall. He had posted some text—meant to evoke a mixture of sincerity and humour—about his vision for the future.

Searching: for a woman who wants me to cook her lunch and clean the house. She is required to work, buy the food and treat me to drinks occasionally. Also maybe buy me an Xbox. Send me a message!

Several men posted supportive comments or ‘liked’ the post, but a few of Omar’s female friends and acquaintances wrote comments which accused him of being *flaite*, or scummy, for such a post. One complained about men in general: ‘Why do men think they can just be lazy and someone will take care of them? You’re perfectly capable of working. Time to go look for a job!’ To this other men responded that women were perfectly capable of working as well, yet no one complained when a woman moved in with a man and let him support her.

While this argument was not resolved in the comments on Omar’s Facebook wall, it does reveal some of the deep cultural assumptions that circulate in Alto Hospicio. These assumptions maintain that there is something of a symbiotic relationship between men and women. Men almost always work outside the home and women often maintain the daily functioning of the house. They clean, cook for the family, take kids to school, care for younger children, go to the utility offices to pay water, electricity, cable and telephone bills, and otherwise organise the daily life of the family. Men work long hours to ensure that there is sufficient
income to keep the home running. Women at times work outside the home as well, but when they are with a male partner these jobs are usually considered supplementary income.\textsuperscript{1} The daily lives of individuals, and thus their self-understandings, are deeply affected by this gendered division of labour.

Omar had recently quit his job at the mine due to chronic health problems aggravated by the high altitude of the mining operation and was considering other work options. I ate lunch with him and his mother Ximena one day, and over a bowl of rice and lentils she asked him, ‘Gordo, what’s your plan for getting a job?’ He responded with frustration, listing some possibilities. Then he changed his tune. ‘Wait a minute! Constanza [his sister] has never had a job. And she has two kids. You never ask her when she’s going to work. Why me?’ Ximena laughed and reminded him that Constanza had a fiancé who also worked at the mine and provided for her and her children. ‘And I need you to take care of me. I’m getting old!’ she added.

As previous chapters have shown, social scripts in Alto Hospicio are deeply laden with expectations of homogeneity – in terms of class, race, education, access to resources and even what is acceptable to show off. Yet gendered forms of normativity are just as deeply embedded in the social and economic lives of Hospiceños. Omar’s post demonstrates the ways that differences in expectations for women and men adhere to normative social scripts surrounding gender, sexuality, families and work. When Omar expressed his desire (whether sincere or ironic) to live outside of this norm, his expression was met with criticism. Most notably this criticism came primarily from women, suggesting that they did not see gendered normativity as an oppressive structure, but as something that was mutually beneficial.

These gendered expectations, which in part form notions of sexual citizenship, are closely tied to practices of work and labour, both within and outside of the home. Social media becomes a key ground on which these expectations are expressed, challenged and most importantly reinforced, regulating the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable ways for men and women to behave. Social media provides both access to a world of examples of different gendered assumptions and an arena in which to test out other possibilities. But in Alto Hospicio social media is most often used as a stage for many individuals – both men and women, both young and old – to reinforce forms of gendered normativity and ‘good citizenship’ that have structured social life in Alto Hospicio and Northern Chile in recent decades.\textsuperscript{2}
Work and industry in Northern Chile

Since the Great North was incorporated into Chile after the War of the Pacific (1879–83), its economic activity has always been defined by its natural resources: first nitrate, now copper and the Pacific Ocean ports that allow for a proliferation of international trade. Mining in particular is essential to not only the North, but to the nation as a whole, making up 60 per cent of the nation’s exports and a large part of its GDP.³ Scholarship on mining in Chile is plentiful, but almost always focuses on economic and environmental issues, particularly in relation to indigenous groups and corporate social responsibility.⁴ While these are important concerns, the impact of mining and what may be called the mining lifestyle on individuals’ daily lives and self-understandings should be equally important to anthropological analyses. Analysis of labourers’ personhood, the conditions in which they labour and even the structure of life outside of the workplace are of equally vital importance to understanding the reorganisation of the labour process within neoliberalism.⁵ The ways in which such work regimes intersect with gender and citizenship are of further importance in understanding normativity. The lens of social media allows us to appreciate how mining not only effects the environment and economic systems, but also people’s daily lives, interpersonal relationships, sense of identification and notions of what makes a ‘good’ Northern Chilean citizen.

Hospicenós suggest that about 25 per cent of male residents work in mining, many of whom also have several family members who work in the industry. Most mining employees spend 5, 7 or 12 consecutive days working 12-hour shifts. During these work periods they live in dormitories at the mine. Social media is incredibly important for miners during these work weeks, providing key links between distant family members. Older miners use text messaging and increasingly WhatsApp to communicate with their families, while younger men keep up with their friends’ latest news on Facebook and use WhatsApp to communicate with girlfriends and their parents. Many miners lament that the worst part of the job is feeling so far away from their friends and family. One miner even described life at the mine as being in an ‘asylum’. Yet many also say that the highlight of the job is the fact that their schedules allow them to spend a good deal of time with their families. When working 5, 7 or 12 days at a time, miners are usually entitled to an equal number of free days, so rather than weekdays and weekends, life for mining families is often divided into weeks-on and weeks-off.
Jorge and Vicky moved from Arica to Alto Hospicio with their two young children, Alex and Gabriela, in the mid-1990s, so that Jorge would have a shorter weekly commute to his job as a mining machine mechanic. When Alex graduated from high school Jorge encouraged him to take a job at the same mine, and eventually Gabriela began dating their colleague José, also from Alto Hospicio. When I met them in 2013 Jorge, Vicky, Alex, Gabriela, José and Samuel, Gabriela’s son from a previous relationship, all lived together in a large house in the centre of Alto Hospicio. The men’s shifts overlapped by a few days, so the house often filled and emptied like an hourglass. Jorge would leave on Monday night, then José on Tuesday and Alex on Wednesday. At times this coincided with Samuel’s father’s schedule of visits, and only Vicky and Gabriela would be left in the house. Then, as the new week began, one by one the men would return to the house, and the time that Vicky and Gabriela described as lonely and boring would become busy and lively.

Both miners and their families live in a sort of waiting game for weeks off. In Vicky and Jorge’s family this means that, while the men work, the women try to accomplish as much in the home as possible. Mining companies pay sufficient salaries to enable the earnings of Jorge, Alex and José to support the extended family of six people. Vicky and Gabriela spend their week cleaning, doing laundry, shopping for food and household items, going to doctor appointments and working on home renovations. In their ‘down time’ the women watch telenovelas or children’s cartoons with Samuel. In the evenings they chat on Facebook with friends and family who live in other cities, as well as with their partners at the mine.

When the men arrive home from the mine the whole family enjoys time together, eating big meals and taking day trips to the beach in Iquique. With half of the family away half of the time, multi-generational families like this usually prefer to live all together. Vicky, in particular, likes having everyone in the same house because her parents and siblings live in Arica, about five hours away. ‘If we lived in separate houses I would be lonely during the men’s shifts. I’d rather have my daughter and her family here in the house, to keep it lively. If no one’s around there’s not even a good reason to cook for myself,’ Vicky told me.

This arrangement contributes to a sense of matriarchy in the house. Because Vicky is always there and her husband often is not, there is an overwhelming sense that she is in charge. She manages the finances and is not afraid to ask Alex and José for contributions. She is often the one who makes sure that Samuel goes to school and has his homework done.
She does the cooking, but also directs conversation at the table during lunch, the biggest meal of the day. She is a kind and joking woman, often calling Alex, José and Gabriela by pet names, but there is an unmistakable sense that she is a woman who should not be crossed.

Of course not all families are so structured by a mining work-schedule, but the division of labour within the other families is remarkably similar. Men most often work in manual labour industries and women care for the home. At times women also work in service industry jobs, but they generally still take the majority of the responsibility for the home, even when working in the paid labour force as well. Many people take jobs in Iquique, particularly at regional offices, at the port or in the Zofri mall. However, it is important for women in particular to work closer to home, so that they can be present for big family lunches, continue to manage day-to-day life in the house, and ensure everyone in the family is organised for their own activities.

The landscape of commerce in Iquique thus greatly impacts the types of work that both men and women take. While Alto Hospicio is a sizeable city, the physical spaces of commerce are quite limited. Those that do exist are almost all small, family-owned businesses (the supermarkets and home improvement store being the only exceptions). Indeed, the majority of commerce that takes place in Alto Hospicio happens in small family-owned almacenes [corner stores] or the market stalls of the Agroferia [outdoor market]. While the markets have official administration, vendors pay rent for their assigned stalls and there is even a small fee for customer parking, the overall feeling of the place is one of informality. Prices may be haggled, for anything from a head of lettuce to a used smartphone or sweater. One can find kitchen wares, cleaning products, children’s toys, small furniture, new and used clothing, power tools, key copiers, cameras, phones, used stereos, pet merchandise and all manner of food products mixed among the stalls.

Shopping in the Agro market remains a normal task for Hospiceños, but Facebook is becoming an alternative to this type of commerce. Used products including furniture, baby-related goods, clothing and even cars are constantly being bought and sold on numerous Facebook pages with names such as ‘Everything for Sale – Alto Hospicio’. With no local exchange websites such as Craigslist or Gumtree, or even the availability of eBay or Alibaba for purchasing international goods, Facebook takes their place, as well as partially encroaching on in-person commerce in the ferias. While most Hospiceños use these sites to sell the occasional older television or outgrown baby accessories, some entrepreneurs create Facebook profiles...
for their small retail businesses which function entirely through the site. These entrepreneurs are largely women who capitalise on internet commerce in order to maintain a business without neglecting their usual tasks in the home.

Even as new forms of labour emerge in Alto Hospicio, work in the city remains quite distinct for men and women. Normative social scripts often incorporate these differing forms of work; in addition, notions of normative femininity and masculinity are often deeply tied to the kinds of work in which women and men engage. As individuals post about their work, it is clear not only that men and women overwhelmingly labour in different manners, but also that they incorporate these different forms of labour into their self-understandings. The ways that representations of both work and gendered expression become visible on social media allows for further reinforcing their prevalence.

**Work and masculinity**

Men’s work in Alto Hospicio tends to be in industries traditionally labelled ‘masculine’, often revolving around manual labour and skilled crafts. Other than mining, many men work at the docks in the Zofri port, in construction, as drivers of taxis or shipping vehicles, or as electricians or mechanics. These types of work are often central to men’s sense of self and are shared with great pride. On Facebook men post memes declaring the value of their profession and the importance it carries in their daily lives.

These men, who dedicate long hours to manual labour, often view work not as something that takes away from other preferable activities, but as something integral to the way that they understand their lives. One cargo truck driver posted a photo that expressed his pride in being a driver – an idealised picture of a truck against a sunset overlaid with the text, ‘This is not my job, this is my life.’

One miner expressed a similar sentiment through a piece of text shared as a photograph on his wall, titled ‘What is a miner?’ where he tagged all of his workmates. The photo seemed to be taken of text that was printed out on a white sheet of paper and posted on the wall in a work place. Of course it is hard to tell if this photograph was taken at this miner’s own workplace or had been extensively passed as a meme on social media before he posted it. It could have easily been used to describe work in a number of professions. Nonetheless the miner felt it had particular salience for him and his line of work.
What is a worker? A worker is that man that gives his life for his family. It is he that leaves his family and goes far in order to give them a much better future. That man that is honest and honourable, it is he that doesn't have Christmas, New Years, nor holidays, that doesn't celebrate his own birthdays nor those of his loved ones. That doesn't know summer from winter, because all the days are the same. It is he that like a national flag is washed with rain and dried in the sun. He is that man that doesn't see the birthdays of his children, but always shows their pictures proudly saying “This is my son or my daughter!” His work is anonymous, but his feat is immortal. The doctors cure sicknesses, the architects build, the teachers teach, and I as a WORKER offer the most humble that I have. A LIFE FAR FROM HOME.

It is no surprise that miners develop a strong occupational identity. Isolation and group solidarity, combined with the history of the labour movement in the area, provide a context in which identification with this particular form of work is almost essential for mental health. Miners’ experience of collective socialisation, high interdependence, physical proximity, physical boundaries, isolation and danger often contribute

Fig. 5.1 Meme depicting identification at work. Translation: ‘This is not my job. This is my life’
to strong work subcultures. While Hospiceno men’s work may not be glamorous, it remains a source of pride and is central to identification and self-understanding.

While work is often integral to men’s identification, part of this involves complaining about it. One of miners’ biggest complaints is separation from their families and the physical distance between work and home. Many miners post a daily tally of days completed of their shift and days remaining, such as ‘Today 5/7’. Others post memes that explicitly communicate a desire to go home. Almost all post Facebook messages on their partners’ or family members’ walls telling them that they miss and are thinking of them. One man even posted photographs of snow in the Altiplano on his girlfriend’s Facebook wall, with the message ‘I’m cold!’ in an effort to share daily challenges. These types of posts allow the workers to share their daily lives with absent individuals.

Fig. 5.2 Meme depicting frustration with work. Translation: ‘Fucking shift, I want to go down [to home]’
In their time away from their families, however, men also create lives at the mine that are not just centred on their labour. They make friends and entertain themselves in ways that allow them to feel something beyond simply being a worker, making their shifts not just ‘time away’, but an important part of their social lives as well.

Mining is perhaps the most obvious example, but many other lines of work are spaces almost exclusively made up of men. This contributes to worksites being characterised as overall masculine spaces, in which workers often incorporate a joking ‘locker room’ type attitude. One young man described the attitude as ‘mariconeo’ or ‘faggy’. He told me, ‘Everyone goes around doing things really gay. Joking, touching each other’s asses. Bothering each other, like playing pranks on one another. Because it’s seven days without your family. You get bored. You invent ways to amuse yourself. Everyone hugs. Just jokes.’
Fig. 5.4   Photograph from the mine. 'At work with my compañeros, a good group!'

Fig. 5.5   Photograph from the mine. Miners working in masks for Halloween
Another young man described a common joke, which he called ‘the Titanic’. ‘If you ever find your friend at the edge of something. Like if there’s a gate, or a railing that they are looking over, you just go up behind him and say “do the Titanic”, and then spread your arms out. Like Leonardo on the boat.’ He told me that most of his friends think it is funny and play along, but a few are annoyed and get angry.

This form of joking, often referred to as weando in Chilean Spanish, carries a connotation of immaturity and is often contrasted with a more serious life outlook. Alex told me this is even part of a common saying at the mine.
'It means in the mine, we mess around with each other. But in the city, we all say hello to each other, “hello how are you?” more formal. They are two different lifestyles, and we act accordingly.’ Yet, as the memes above demonstrate, social media allows for some mixing of the two lifestyles. Despite the physical distance between home and work, social media provides a conduit for workers to have a piece of home while at the

Fig. 5.8  Translation: ‘Titanic, and an unforeseen problem’

De la garita pa adentro  From inside the gate
Anadamos weando  We go around joking
De la garita pa abajo  From outside the gate
Somos personas educadas.  We are educated people’
mine, as well as enabling them to continue joking with friends, acting as another form of masculine space while in the city. While the spaces of home and work – particularly for miners – are mutually exclusive and circumscribed, social media allows them to mix the two, thereby mixing their different manners of formal interaction and *weando*.

While this sort of joking masculinity is primarily reserved for work, or at least work friends, men also perform specific sorts of masculinity as part of their families. Men often post explicit philosophies about being a man. These position them as being in charge, the provider of resources or the saviour of the family. One popular meme declares: ‘Man is not one that abandons the ship leaving his family to drift. Man is he who takes the problems on his own and his family on his shoulders and rows so the boat doesn’t go down.’

Although this meme uses a metaphor of rowing a boat, this form of manual work stands in for others forms such as mining, construction or even office employment that keeps a family ‘afloat’. Most men see it as their duty to support the family financially and, as comments on Omar’s post confirm, many women are complicit in, or even actively support, this conception of men’s duty to work. Both men and women see work as integral to men’s self-identification or the ways in which they express who they are to a larger audience. While men often complain about their long shifts at the mine, they also speak of their jobs with great pride and see their work as an important contribution to the family. Many Hospicéños confirm these men’s contributions are ways of caring for a family, just as important as women’s caring through emotional labour.

**Women’s work**

While many men work in trades in which their interactions are primarily with other workers, women’s work is often more geared toward interaction with clients. In performing jobs working with children, the elderly, in Iquique’s casino, supermarkets, small shops or in customer service for a local business, women also incorporate their work into notions of self-understanding. In fact, they are often just as adamant about expressing the importance of their work as men are. Michelle, a pre-school educator, always becomes very offended when she is considered anything less than a trained professional. On a number of occasions when referred to as a *parvularia* [along the lines of a ‘preschool worker’], she would take time to explain that she was actually an *educadora de parvulario* [‘a pre-school educator’] and all that the job entails. She would even vent this...
frustration on Facebook at times, explaining to the potentially massive audience of social media all of the education and background training necessary for her career.

Many other women work as part of a family business. Because Alto Hospicio hosts so few chain businesses, family-owned corner shops, butcher’s shops, pet shops, restaurants and various other service businesses proliferate. Women’s labour in these areas is considered essential to the operation and longevity of the business. While such work is not necessarily closely connected to women’s self-understanding, it is part of their family involvement which is central to their identification.

Yet the majority of women over 40, and plenty of younger women, do not identify closely with their work outside of the home. Most women who take paid employment work in jobs paid by the hour, for instance in supermarkets, small corner shops, the mall at Zofri or as cleaning professionals.8 These jobs are usually considered as supplementary income for the family, and are often thought of as temporary. Women may work a few months at a supermarket, but if the family decides to remodel part of the house, or if a relative becomes ill, they are likely to leave their job outside the home in order to dedicate time to these other matters. When the project concludes or the relative recovers, they might begin to look for work again, perhaps taking a job as a cleaner at an Iquique hotel.

As social media gains popularity in Alto Hospicio, many women see Facebook as an opportunity for a side business. Women often sell prepared lunches from their homes, taking orders through Facebook and WhatsApp, or have online retail businesses selling everything from imported handbags to sex toys. Usually they open a separate Facebook page for these businesses, though the proprietor usually makes sure to post announcements on their personal account. While these businesswomen hope for longevity for these online stores, they are equally seen as ‘supplementary’ rather than essential income for the family.

In July 2014 Maritza launched a new business, Sexo Escondido [Hidden Sex]. She ordered a set of sex toys, including aphrodisiac pills, vibrators, lubricants, handcuffs and massage oil from a company in Santiago. She then created a Facebook page, posting photographs and describing the products, offering complete anonymity to customers, though the ‘likes’ on the Sexo Escondido Facebook page remained public. She sent invitations from the page to her friends (including her siblings, parents, aunts and uncles). She also made sure to request friendship from the bar in Alto Hospicio, as well as other local businesses, such as a pastry shop and a handbag sales outlet, that operated primarily through Facebook.
She told me that she thought there would be a lot of interest in an online sex shop. Her rationale was that the sex shop in a prominent neighbourhood in Iquique had been in business for years, but Alto Hospicio had nothing like it. She liked the fact that Facebook provides a bit of secrecy for people who may not be comfortable publicly buying sex products.

Several months later, when I asked Maritza about the business again, she told me that she had not sold many products. She remained hopeful, though, because there are not many businesses in Alto Hospicio. She knew that she had a strong base of friends, acquaintances and other community members in Alto Hospicio who would be eager to support a neighbour rather than someone unknown to them. She still had her day job, working as a cashier in a local supermarket, but the family relied primarily on her husband’s income.

I don’t worry about selling things quickly, because I have another job. And David [her husband] has a good job. It’s more just for fun. If it takes a while to sell, that’s fine. More than anything, I just thought it would be nice for the city to have something like this. For people to be able to buy without going to Iquique, and from a community member.

Commerce such as Maritza’s sex shop and other Facebook-based businesses takes place without the kinds of bureaucratic oversight to which formal shops or even stalls in the Agro market are subject. They are usually presented as hobbies or fun pursuits rather than business or ‘work’. Yet they are also spoken of as vital to the community. Maritza frames her business as fulfilling a need in the community, thus it further functions as a form of service rather than simply a means of making extra money.

Her thoughts are reflected in general perceptions of local businesses. Most people do not see them as advertising to make more money, but rather as making their ability to fulfil needs visible – again conceived as something of a symbiotic relationship with their clients. As institutions (in this case corporations rather than the government) have left the city without more structured means of exchange, individuals and small groups take responsibility for creating services. Regulations are left aside, and the economic relationship is seen as mutually beneficial in Alto Hospicio.

This attitude is particularly relevant for food delivery businesses. Much like the paucity of commercial retail outlets in Alto Hospicio, the restaurant sector is small. There are dozens of small lunch restaurants, about ten Chinese or sushi restaurants, two fried chicken fast-food chain locations and one pizza delivery service. For a city of almost 100,000
people, however, this leaves quite a bit scope to sell more prepared food. Plenty of families operate fast-food type pick up services out of the front room of their home, serving *completo* hot dogs and *salchipapas* – a mixture of fried potatoes and bite-sized pieces of hot dogs. Other family businesses, usually run by women, find success creating a pre-order and delivery service through their Facebook pages. Home-made sushi delivery businesses at times seem to dominate my Facebook newsfeed. In these businesses the owner will publish the daily or weekly specials on the page, allowing customers, with several days’ anticipation, to place their orders, and to specify the time that they would like the sushi delivered. On the day of operation the owner will create large batches of home-made sushi, such as rolls with tuna or salmon, avocado, cream cheese and rice, and then send a family member for delivery along with the small cups of soy sauce and sweet teriyaki.

These businesses are so closely associated with women’s labour that when Gonz and his brother Victor started their sushi delivery business they listed it on Facebook as ‘Ana’s sushi’, using Gonz’s wife’s name. Gonz explained:

I thought people would trust it more with a woman’s name, you know? And Ana helps with taking the orders or putting together the boxes, so it’s not really wrong. But I always think it’s funny when we see a customer and they talk to her like she runs everything. I just stay quiet and smile.

Gonz had the idea to start the delivery business after a major earthquake, when the highway to Iquique was cut off. He often mentions that he does not even like sushi himself, but saw that it was becoming popular in Alto Hospicio so learned how to make it by watching YouTube videos. Then he put in a Chilean spin.

Chileans like rich food. They like hot dogs with lots of mayonnaise, so much mayonnaise it’s overflowing . . . so I tried to make sushi more Chilean, with lots of cream cheese, with avocado and lots of sugar in the rice. And the panko fried rolls are the most popular, without a doubt. So now people in Alto Hospicio can get exactly the kind of sushi they like, without having to go to Iquique. I make it easier for everyone.

Customers enjoy the convenience of delivery, but also see it as a way to support local businesses. For local entrepreneurs such as Gonz or Maritza, these Facebook businesses allow them to supplement other income by
opening food businesses informally; thus avoiding the bureaucracy associated with having an official restaurant licence. The ability to set their own hours or only open sporadically also allows families to maintain primary jobs, travel or devote time to other pursuits, attending to the business only when they want or need to, depending on demand. In such a way these entrepreneurs, usually women, positioned themselves not only as caretakers of the family, but also as caretakers of the community.

While women often say that they enjoy administering these types of businesses, it is clear that they are not central to their self-understanding – despite the labour they put into these operations, they continue to report their occupations as homemaker or nonworking. Yesenia, who works part-time for the municipality and often volunteers even more time to organise community events, told me several

Fig. 5.9 A sushi advertisement. Translation: ‘Don’t know what to make for lunch??? Don’t worry, at Sushiland Alto Hospicio we have the solution. Order your delicious sushi and surprise your family!! We have 20 pieces hot fried in panko, 10 pieces wrapped in scallion, 10 pieces with sesame!! With different fillings like shrimp, chicken, onion, basil and cream cheese. Make your reservation by inbox or call!!’
times that she was ‘unemployed’. Her Facebook page, like those of many middle-aged women, focuses on her family and community involvement. These women position themselves as mothers, grandmothers, cooks, organisers and managers. Most women’s postings revolve around family and friends, or creative activities that contribute to the home.

Family is very important to most Hospicenios. It often acts as a source of validation (see Chapter 4), as well as acting as a group with whom resources are shared and which is the centre of social life. Many young women, shortly after completing high school, begin their adult lives as mothers, and their Facebook posts proudly show off the latest pictures of their children. However, identifying as a mother involves more. It is often the creative work involved in being a good mother, and thus a ‘good citizen’ that becomes a focus of attention on social media. Pictures of activities with children and craft projects often dominate young mothers’ Facebook walls. At times they upload dozens of photos

![Fig. 5.10 Photographs of party decorations. ‘Decorating a party for my little princess’](image)
showing off not only their child’s birthday party, but also the lengths to which they have gone to decorate, organise and hold the party. Of course birthday parties are not everyday occurrences, and the mundane details of life, such as taking care of the home, are also displayed on social media.

As children grow up, some women feel their primary purpose in life has changed and begin directing their energies towards business pursuits, as discussed above, or more involvement in the community. Such women often post status updates announcing community events, expressing their pleasure at events’ success or share pictures of their own involvement. Yesenia often posted photos of events she helped to organise for elderly people in the community, such as the beauty pageant for older women shown below.

While these posts in some ways serve to demonstrate normative notions of interacting in a strong community, they also serve as a form of identification for the women who post them. Though their children
Fig. 5.12 Photographs of community activities. ‘They are our queens! Congratulations to all of the older adults of our city . . . And thanks! They don’t know how they give me energy!’

may be grown, these activities keep the women active and, as Yesenia suggests, give them energy.

Of course not all women are able to rely on income from men’s wages, whether that of their father, brother, husband or son. Although formal marriage is uncommon, separating from a partner with whom an individual shares a child often completely rearranges the daily lives of both women and men. If young people leave the family home to establish their own house with their partner, they often return after a break up. Local priest Padre Mateo confirmed this trend, suggesting that in part young people do not like to get married because they do not see their relationships as permanent, even when they have children with
their partner. Instead, women in particular think of their natal family as the keystone of their family life.

For single mothers, support from the natal family is not always sufficient to maintain their own families. While some women get by working at a supermarket or cleaning homes, with financial assistance from their parents or siblings, others need to seek employment considered more serious and permanent. Many of these women work in office settings in Iquique, leaving their children alone or with family after schooltime; others even work in food service or cleaning in the mining industry. Though working at a mine provides the best source of income by far, it requires week-long shifts away from the family – something many Hospiceños considered much harder for a woman than a man. ‘Because it’s one thing for a man to be out of the house all the time, but for a woman it’s harder,’ one male heavy machine operator told me. Many women also complain about sexual harassment in the mining operations, because they only make up about 10 per cent of the workers.

Many male miners seem to feel a certain sense of pity about women who work at the mine. Their sympathy reflects both the women’s own alienation from life at the mine as well as the perception others have of the life circumstances that compel women to work in the mining industry. One male mine electrician told me, ‘Generally, if [women] are working up here, they need a good salary. Most of the women I know, if they go to work cleaning, it’s not that they like it; it’s that they live alone, or they have kids and need to support them. So they take advantage of the opportunity for a good salary.’ For these women, as for many men, salary is more important than lifestyle and enjoyment of work. It is viewed as a noble sacrifice to make for the family.

While, on one hand, the ways that men and women treat work differently suggests gendered imbalances in the community, most people value work within the home as a legitimate form of labour. Such a belief contributes to the sense of how men and women work symbiotically to balance different types of necessary labour, rather than one relying on the other completely. The normativities associated with types of gendered labour are strong, but many women still often feel empowered and exercise this social power within both the family and the community. While social scripts about gender thus prescribe particular ways for men and women to labour, relate to their families and friends and even express themselves in public, social media reveals how these scripts are usually met without contention.
Gender, work, pleasure

Because work is usually naturalised as either feminine or masculine, labour and gender tend to reinforce one another in individuals’ self-understandings. A miner who sees himself as masculine will highlight the masculine aspects of his work, thus reinforcing both pride in his job and using work-related behaviours to reinforce his sense of masculinity. A woman who enjoys working with young children will emphasise the emotional aspects of interactions as the highlight of her job, thus calling upon a typically ‘feminine’ characteristic of the work – emotional labour\textsuperscript{11} – as the reason she identifies deeply with the job. This is, of course, mutually reinforcing. What is always already assumed to be masculine or feminine makes the person who performs the act feel more masculine or feminine, and becomes reinscribed in discourse as precisely that which constitutes femininity or masculinity. This is because, as most contemporary theory on gender emphasises, gender is not something inherent in a person, but a socially determined concept. Gender is actively created through various forms of self-expression, behaviours and even unconscious actions that are slowly learned throughout a lifetime along the lines of dominant social scripts.\textsuperscript{12} These aspects and actions of individuals, taken together and in the context of other individuals’ self-expression, create the impression that gender differences in personality, interests, character, appearance, manner and competence are ‘natural’. The gendering of work that is apparent in Alto Hospicio reinforces this appearance of naturalness.\textsuperscript{13} As most jobs are primarily held by either men or women, and these divisions by and large fall along the lines of historical gendered division of labour, it is easy to see the boundaries as natural – even though in other situations or contexts, work may be divided differently.\textsuperscript{14} Gender is not simply an aspect of work, but is constructed through the work itself.\textsuperscript{15}

Work then contributes to a broader sense of gendered normativity, in which the aspects of labour – usually wage earning manual labour for men, and supplementary emotional labour for women – correspond to overall typifications of men and women. Workers of both genders are more likely to accept, or even to be proud of, their labour identity when it allows them to enact gender in a way that is satisfying.\textsuperscript{16} Thus it is not surprising that social media expressions about work often reinforce the aspects of work that men and women find most satisfying or worthy of pride. Men portray their work as requiring a tough exterior (‘it’s cold’).
and elements of sacrifice (‘A worker is that man that gives his life for his family’), but also is made tolerable through the sort of camaraderie typified by the immature laddish humour among friends of weando. Women portray their work as forms of emotional care, often using creativity for the benefit and enjoyment of others (particularly young children or the elderly), and through their work strengthen the bonds of family and community.

The economy of Alto Hospicio and workplace relations have created something of a ‘separate but equal’ mentality about gendered labour. Yet the implications for these gendered expectations have effects that reach far beyond the workplace (whether that is away from or within the home). These divisions in many ways structure a kind of gendered citizenship in which being a trusted member of the community relies on following gendered social scripts related to labour. Though these self-understandings may not be entirely conscious or explicitly articulated, they inform actions. Because these expressions are usually implicit rather than explicit, simply asking often does not elicit clear explanations of these gendered identifications. However, social media is one visible way in which they became manifested.

The types of gendered expression apparent in the division of work also become manifested in men’s and women’s general styles of expression on social media. As evident in the previous chapter, the ways in which men and women relate to their friends of the same gender is often different: men assume joking, sarcastic tones, while women post emotionally charged memes aimed at their female friends or children. Similarly, when men and women post about the types of activities that give them pleasure, they continue to follow the dichotomy of manual and emotional labour.

Many men spend a great deal of time posting memes, pictures and status updates related to vehicles. Motorcycles, cars, trucks and jeeps are relatively cheap, either purchased new from Zofri or used from other traders in the area, so they are well within most families’ means. Yet rather than presenting vehicles as consumer goods, they are usually portrayed as a site of (pleasureful) work. Gelber writes that at the turn of the twentieth century in the United States, the typical middle-class man began taking over home chores previously done by professionals. This shift happened without cultural resistance because ‘household construction, repair and maintenance were free from any hint of gender role compromise’. Particularly in Northern Chile these realms correspond to the types of manual labour the majority of men do for wages,
Figs. 5.13 and 5.14  Photographs of work or modifications on vehicles
thus their theoretical market value gives them masculine legitimacy. Framing these activities as being performed for the family’s benefit reasserts this already strong conception of masculinity. Photographs of vehicles on Facebook rarely simply show off the car; they usually portray a modification, such as special lighting, or the process of work, such as engine maintenance.

While some women are part of this ‘car culture’, and are usually welcomed by men, it remains clear that they are women participating in something masculine, rather than their presence serving to make the cultural form more feminine. The meme below, which suggests, ‘Just because she loves cars doesn’t mean she is less feminine’, seemingly complicates the gendered association between cars and masculinity. Yet it only posits jeopardy for femininity, suggesting that the overwhelming masculinity of cars could be powerful enough to de-feminise a woman. Though it rejects this postulation, the meme (and thus we might assume those who share it) never question the association between masculinity and vehicles, as might a phrase such as ‘Just because men like cars doesn’t mean they are any less masculine’. Instead, because the activities associated with cars corresponded to the types of manual labour that are part of jobs heavily populated by men, the association with masculinity remains unchallenged.

Similarly, men’s enactment of family-related tasks is often framed as a welcome helpful hand. One meme, depicting a man decorating a cake, suggests, ‘Just because you help your woman in her work does not make you less of a man. On the contrary, it makes you a unique and great man’ (see Fig. 5.16). This meme, similarly, does not question ‘woman’s work’ as being based in the home and taking care of a family. Instead it reassures men that ‘helping’ is not enough to erase their masculinity; rather their masculinity is so deeply instilled that doing something deemed feminine simply reaffirms one’s status as a ‘great man’.

These memes, which reference forms of labour associated with another gender, further suggest that, while types of work for men and women are naturally different, there is no shame in doing work that pertains to the other. Yet in reaffirming individuals’ ability to cross gendered work lines, these memes reinforce the idea that this line indeed exists. That which is naturally ‘feminine’ about women and ‘masculine’ about men cannot be erased through their individual behaviours or hobbies.
Fig. 5.15  Meme depicting gender assumptions. Translation: ‘Just because she loves cars doesn’t make her less feminine’

Fig. 5.16  Meme depicting gender assumptions. Translation: ‘Because you help your woman in her work doesn’t make you less of a man. On the contrary, it makes you a unique and great man’
Memes that depict a man doing ‘women’s work’ or a woman pursuing ‘men’s interests’ actually serve to strengthen gendered assumptions. In many ways expressions of sexuality on social media also strengthened the connections between manual labour for men and emotional labour for women. This appears most explicitly in reference to men’s work, as again they identify more closely with their paid labour than women. This was especially true for men working in the mines, because expression of their sexuality is constrained while at work. Given the 90/10 per cent gender division, and rules that prohibit women from entering men’s dormitories and vice versa, the miners I spoke with described heterosexual activity at the mine as a complicated feat. They suggested homosexual relations could be slightly easier, but public bathrooms and shared dormitories did not make it particularly easy. Instead pornography was widely thought of as a substitute for sexual intercourse. As one male mining mechanic jokingly put it, ‘There’s a micro-traffic in porn at the mine, and it’s shameful on a world scale.’ Social media is key to these exchanges, with individuals trading short videos via their mobile phones. Another young man who drives large vehicles carrying mining extract explained that ‘for every worker, they have 20 friends in the city who send them stuff too’, whether music, amusing videos or pornography. ‘And no one is ashamed’, he concluded. Though the mechanic described the prevalence of pornography as shameful, he did so in a sarcastic way, actually reinforcing the driver’s point that no one is ashamed of it. While in other situations the prevalence of pornography might be considered inappropriate, within the mining context it was accepted as a natural alternative to actual sexual relations.

Indeed there is little shame for men who express sexual desires and frustration about their inability to fulfil them while at the mine, whether they are in a relationship or not. Such enforced abstinence is often portrayed as one more form of sacrifice that miners make in order to support their families, and thus is part of their pride in their work. This manifests in a genre of somewhat self-deprecating memes that miners post about the perils of infrequent sexual activity.

These memes are passed around as part of the humorous and immature weando social relationships between men, strengthening homo-social bonds but also reaffirming masculinity through connections between sexuality and their labour. Not only does their work make them more masculine because it supports their families and relies on
skills associated with masculinity: it is also a sign of their sexual virility. To express frustration with weekly abstinence confirms the sexual desire assumed to be part of manliness. The following meme, though seemingly from a woman’s point of view, is often posted by men on the last days of their shifts. ‘Today he comes home from his shift. He has seven days in the mine. He comes home like a Bolivian truck.’ This meme is particularly locally suited, relying on knowledge that a Bolivian truck – frequently seen travelling from the port up through the Altiplano to the Bolivian border – is usually overloaded with goods to be delivered in Bolivia. The metaphor suggests men coming home from the mine are ‘overloaded’ with sexual frustration, while playing on local stereotypes that subtly denigrate Bolivians.

Fig. 5.17  Meme posted by a miner about pent-up sexual energy after a week at the mine. Translation: ‘Today he comes home from his shift. He has seven days at the mine and comes home like a Bolivian truck’
Women are far less likely to post explicit references to sexuality, though their desires are referenced in more subtle ways. At times they post sexual memes depicting nude or scantily clad bodies, obscured by a foggy camera lens and overlaid with text expressing sentiments such as ‘being with you one night is worth the wait’ or ‘what I want with you I don’t want with anyone else’. When women do post memes with explicitly sexual messages they often portray sexuality as simply a substitute when more romantic forms of connection are unavailable.

While not all social media users post content related to sexuality, it is certainly not uncommon and is rarely commented upon in negative ways. In fact sexual content only seems to cause a stir when it involves overly graphic visuals. The fact that references to sexuality are quite common and tolerated suggests that sexuality is considered to be a natural part of individuals’ self-expression. The connections drawn between men’s work and their sexuality serve further to cement the naturalisation between masculine forms of labour, men’s gender expression and heterosexual sexuality.

The fact that women are less likely to post explicitly sexual content reflects two interrelated factors of gender and sexuality. First, in the context of Alto Hospicio, femininity is more likely to be understood as something that women ‘naturally’ possess, whereas men’s masculinity is an achievement, attained in part through heterosexual sex, or at least representations of sex online. As something of an achievement,

Fig. 5.18 Meme depicting sexuality. Translation: ‘If you’re going to play, play with my clitoris, not with my heart. It feels better and it doesn’t break’
masculinity is also expected to be more performative than femininity, requiring men to affirm their manliness through self-expression (particularly on social media); women's femininity is called into question far less often. Often, both in daily life and on social media, men who fail to perform in ways that their peers regard as sufficiently masculine are chastised. ‘Insufficient masculinity’ is evidenced by anything from a man not finishing his beer to not supporting his family. While some popular memes refer to ‘a real man’ as someone who goes to great lengths to maintain his family economically, others chastise men whose girlfriends are more masculine than themselves. This may be evidenced by pressuring her male partner to finish his alcoholic drink by shouting ‘al seco maricón culiao’ [drink it all, fucking fag].

While ‘maricón’ is often used as a homophobic slur, it also at times indicates other forms of failed masculinity, much as ‘fag’ does in American English. However, the liberal usage of maricón I noted both in daily speech as well as in social media posts does not necessarily indicate homophobia, but rather suspicion over non-normative gender performance. It is not uncommon for people to identify themselves as lesbian or gay on social media, either posting romantic messages on their partner’s Facebook page or explicitly using hashtags such as #gaychile or #iquiquelesbiana on Instagram. In the public eye, however, these individuals usually follow normative gendered expectations. Many gay men upload selfies of themselves at manual labour jobs next to pictures of their partner, and women describe how pretty and sweet their girlfriends are. Though gay men are granted a bit more leeway in terms of expressing music tastes (such as Britney Spears) or types of conspicuous consumption (posting Instagram photos of Dolce and Gabbana cologne advertisements) than straight men are, overly camp expressions are absent. Alex gave me a clue to this absence when he compared his gay uncle to a gay neighbour he had in his old neighbourhood.

My uncle, he’s calm. He has a male partner, but he’s not like showing it all the time. He’s just like any other guy. He works at a hotel, and is really close to his family. The contrary example is my old neighbour who is always going around, talking like a woman, wearing flashy clothes. He calls attention to himself. That’s why he has problems. The neighbourhood kids mess with him. I don’t think it’s safe for him. But my uncle, he is always fine. Because he is a normal guy. Most people will say ‘I have no problem with gay people, I just don’t want them showing it off.’ So when they’re calm, like my uncle, no one really cares. It’s totally fine.
This reflects drag performer Pablito’s fear of his family finding out about his night job, while they are perfectly content knowing that he is gay (see Chapter 1). Maintaining separate Facebook pages allows him to perform publicly as a gender normative individual, while keeping his activities that go beyond these norms more private. As Alex's narrative makes clear, these normativities are closely connected to work. Alex did not emphasise his uncle’s employment, but he did highlight that he provides a source of income, thus connecting his normativity to the fact that he holds a ‘normal’ job. He also mentioned his uncle’s connection to his family, as well as the fact that his outward appearance corresponds to normative expectations of Alto Hospicio.

As in most other facets of daily life, normativity is a deciding factor in whether social media posts or other forms of expression are acceptable. Gay men and lesbians in part disrupt what many Hospiceños assume to be a natural universal order of complementary polarity (male/female; heterosexual/homosexual; masculine/feminine) in which gendered behaviour, desire and expression relate in a congruent and coherent manner. However, most individuals’ adherence to other forms of normativity, and particularly those associated with work and family involvement, are sufficient to grant them ‘good citizen’ status. Thus for both men and women of any sexual preference, adherence to social scripts related to gendered work functions as a form of authentication. The expression of labour, gender and sexuality on social media is often intertwined, representing the conjunction of the three that serves to reinforce and maintain the others.

The point here is not that all Hospiceños fall into polarised, binary gender categories. In fact, as many of the examples in this chapter demonstrate, people deviate from these ideals all the time. While labour in part creates the structure on which these gendered ideals rest, it is also labour that acts as the conduit through which they are at times challenged. Despite the fact that Maritza's Facebook sex shop was not terribly successful, her expectations that female customers wish to purchase sex toys clearly evidences that adherence to social scripts which equate masculinity with sexuality and femininity with romance are not universal among Hospiceños. And the ways in which miners joke with each other, doing ‘the Titanic’ or other ‘faggy’ pranks, demonstrates the ways in which their notions of masculinity are actually quite flexible. Of course, self-understandings include aspects of sexual desire and behaviour. However, as the treatment of gay men’s and lesbians’ gender expression makes clear, in the context of Alto Hospicio gender normativity supersedes non-heteronormative
Adhering to gendered normativity allows leeway in terms of sexuality because individuals are still perceived as following the appropriate social scripts, particularly when they are legitimised by their economic activity.

However, the ways in which gender is performed and policed on social media reveal the normative ideals of gender in Alto Hospicio. Certainly representations of non-normative gender and sexual expression appear on social media. Yet they are usually framed in ways that support social scripts of complementary masculinity and femininity, rather than challenging this binary. Most Hospiceños do not see these forms of normativity as oppressive, but instead understand them as natural preferences. Yet what is perhaps most revealing is the fact that rather than providing a space for discussion and debate about such assumptions, social media is a visible public space for reaffirming and reinforcing these normativities. Those who disagree or have non-normative preferences do not seem to feel empowered to speak out through these media. Indeed, questions of who is empowered to speak, and about what topics, reveal the extent to which certain forms of normativity are embedded and actively maintained within the community.

Productive gendered citizenship

While scholarship on gender normativity (and non-normativity) is abundant, understanding how these norms are constituted and why they prevail is always context dependent. In the case of Alto Hospicio, adherence to normative social scripts in many diverse areas of social life, as well a strong division of labour, provides the context in which gender normativity is highly pervasive. While in some contexts work, gender and sexuality are not closely linked, in Alto Hospicio there is a tight relationship between the three. The prevalence of either men or women in a form of work becomes evidence that the job demands specifically masculine or feminine qualities, and consequently that individuals of a particular gender might be best suited for the work. These assumed predispositions toward manual or emotional labour are also thought to reflect gendered preferences for types of labour as well as leisure activities. As these ideas become embedded within individuals’ self-understandings, they further entrench binary conceptions of gender. While there is considerable flexibility in notions of proper gender performance, this does not undermine the appearance of inevitability.
and naturalness that continues to support the division of labour by gender.

The close connection between acceptability, gender normativity and work emerges from the importance of labour to marginalised identification in Alto Hospicio. Marginality is associated with the extraction of resources, including labour. T. H. Marshall defines citizenship as ‘a claim to be accepted as full members of the society’, yet questions whether the inherent inequalities of market economies can be reconciled with notions of full membership. While in many instances neoliberal citizenship is defined through consumption, Hospiceños’ marginalised citizenship is defined through productive labour. Participation in the labour market – and thus the ability to pay taxes, participate in local schools, raise families and engage in other activities that make people an integral part of their local communities and institutions – can be understood as a form of participatory citizenship that allows those often excluded from citizenship to make citizenship-like claims. The centrality of work to this claim to citizenship therefore means labour is also central to notions of normativity.

Given the importance of wage labour in contemporary economies, it comes as no surprise that work is central to the ways in which individuals understand their lives in Alto Hospicio. In structuring family relationships as well as those within the community, work is a mediating factor in almost all of the relationships that Hospiceños think of as important. While work may be important on some levels for individuals in any context, it is particularly important in Alto Hospicio because it provides another level of authentication, demonstrating the individual’s position in the community and marking them as a ‘good citizen’. Salient social roles allow individuals to understand themselves as well as present themselves positively to the community through reference to their occupations, forms of unpaid labour and other ways of gaining income that resemble a hobby rather than a career.

When Omar expressed a desire to not work outside of the home, therefore, he not only expressed something contrary to the normative gender divisions in Alto Hospicio – he also expressed something understood as contrary to identifying with marginality. To not want to work, in many ways, framed him as a ‘bad citizen’ who, rather than contributing to his family and community, hoped for an ‘alternative lifestyle’.

By providing space for gendered expression, as well as identification with particularly gendered activities or aspirations, social media is also central to expressions that meld gender, work and citizenship.
To be a ‘man’ is to provide for the family; to be a mother involves emotional and creative work. These gendered prescriptions for identification do not necessarily correspond to the lived experience of all Hospicenos, but they do highly structure the ways in which they express their self-understanding online. In so doing they reveal the ideals of good, gendered citizenship that are central to Hospicenos’ focus on normativity.