

Paola Marcela Roldán Vásquez, Ph.D.

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Professional profile

Economist and social researcher (Ph.D.) with more than 15 years of experience in university teaching and in quantitative and qualitative research across Latin America and the United States. She has taught econometrics and impact evaluation at undergraduate and graduate level, and has applied qualitative methods in her doctoral dissertation and in evaluation consultancies for the Inter-American Development Bank, including the qualitative evaluation of Cash for Work infrastructure projects in Haiti. She holds certified training in mixed methods integration and a specific track record of research with populations in situations of vulnerability, including LGBTQ+ people and women, combining in-depth interviews, focus groups and thematic analysis with rigorous statistical and econometric analysis.

Research areas

- Quantitative and econometric analysis.
- Monitoring, results evaluation and impact evaluation of social policy.
- Qualitative research methods: reflexive thematic analysis, in-depth interviews, focus groups, Photovoice, case study design.
- Gender and LGBTQ+ labour market inequality.
- Minority stress, stigma and social exclusion in Latin American and United States contexts.

Education

Ph.D. in Social Work (2025) — Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work, Richmond, VA, United States.

Dissertation: “A Qualitative Exploration of the Employment Experiences and Coping Strategies Among Transgender Women in Medellín, Colombia”. Chair: Maurice Gattis, Ph.D. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke) of 18 in-depth interviews with transgender women recruited through Caribe Afirmativo, an organisation working with the trans population in Medellín. Data were collected, coded and initially analysed in Spanish, with translations validated by a Community Advisory Board of three transgender women. The research drew on Puwar’s “Bodies Out of Place” framework, extended through the concept of the “cisgender somatic norm”, together with Minority Stress Theory and Turner’s (2024) extension of spatial, temporal and affective displacement. Findings were organised into seven superordinate themes concerning systemic exclusion, resistance to trans bodies, forced conformity, and transformative resilience and inclusion.

M.S. in Environmental and Natural Resource Economics (2006) — Universidad de los Andes and University of Maryland, Colombia.

B.S. in Economics (2002) — Universidad del Valle, Colombia. Distinguished thesis.

Certifications. Certificate in Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies (post-baccalaureate graduate certificate), Virginia Commonwealth University, 2023. MicroMasters in Social Work: Practice, Policy and Research, University of Michigan, 2020.

Teaching experience

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics (2011 – 2014 and 2015 – 2017) — Universidad del Norte, Barranquilla, Colombia.

Taught Econometrics I and II at undergraduate and graduate level. Taught Impact Evaluation at undergraduate and graduate level.

Adjunct lecturer (2011 – 2014) — Universidad de La Salle, Bogotá, Colombia.

Taught Impact Evaluation, Econometrics I and Econometrics II.

Teaching assistant, SLWK 380: Research Methods (Fall 2023) — Virginia Commonwealth University. Instructor: Humberto Fabelo, Ph.D.

Research experience

External evaluation consultant (Feb 2026 – Jul 2026) — Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Haiti.

Led the qualitative evaluation of three Cash for Work infrastructure projects in Haiti, covering road paving, water infrastructure and community public spaces.

- Applied Yin's (2018) multiple-case study design and Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis to data from nine focus groups with direct and indirect beneficiaries and community and NGO leaders.
- Designed the qualitative data collection instruments, including focus group guides and observation protocols.
- Produced within-case and cross-case analysis and a series of analytical reports, including recommendations for future projects and methodological proposals to scale the evaluation to the full portfolio of 608 subprojects.
- Delivered analytical outputs in Spanish and English for an institutional evaluation audience.

Graduate research assistant (2021 – 2025) — Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work.

Conducted qualitative and quantitative research across three concurrent studies with vulnerable populations:

- *Examining the Impact of a Photovoice Art Exhibit to Dispel LGBTQIA+ Stereotypes and Biases* (funded by the American Psychological Foundation Springfield Research Fund; principal investigators: Jacob Goffnett, Ph.D., and Kelly Clary, Ph.D.). Guided LGBTQ+ Latine adults in central Texas through Photovoice methods, conducted and translated interviews (Spanish–English), and coded qualitative and quantitative data.
- *Implementing and Evaluating a Shared Housing Model for LGBTQ+ Youth, Pregnant/Parenting Youth, and Youth at the Intersection* (principal investigators: Alex Wagaman, Ph.D., and Maurice Gattis, Ph.D.). Conducted surveys and qualitative interviews, prepared modifications and renewals for the institutional review board (IRB), and coded and analysed qualitative and quantitative data.
- *Community Health Workers' Perspectives on Family Dynamics among Sri Lankan Tamils* (principal investigator: Miriam Kuttikat, Ph.D.). Coded qualitative focus group data with community health workers and contributed to manuscript preparation and survey design.

Consultant (Apr 2021 – Aug 2021) — Inter-American Development Bank.

- Analysed Bolivian household survey data to estimate the effects of COVID-19 on unemployment and household income.
- Led a team of consultants producing analytical papers on the impact of COVID-19 in Bolivia, with responsibility for quality control and the overall coherence of the project.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning consultant (2018 – 2020) — Vital Voices Global Partnership, Washington, D.C.

- Provided tailored technical assistance to six grantee organisations of the “Voices Against Violence” project in Honduras to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation plans.
- Designed and analysed pre- and post-surveys to evaluate gender-based violence prevention programmes.
- Delivered Stata training to the monitoring, evaluation and learning team.
- Validated and analysed the indicators of the 2018 and 2019 Annual Reports.
- Produced, using NVivo, a literature review on the application of the Most Significant Change methodology to women's empowerment and leadership programmes.

Professional and public policy experience

Head, Atlántico Socioeconomic Observatory (2015 – 2017) — Universidad del Norte, Barranquilla, Colombia.

- Designed and conducted two large-scale socioeconomic surveys of populations living in poverty in metropolitan Barranquilla.
- Built socioeconomic indicators from the survey data and produced evidence-based policy analysis for regional stakeholders.
- Organised four academic events to disseminate survey results and foster dialogue between government, civil society and academia.

Deputy Director, National Family Subsidy Office (2012 – 2014) — Ministry of Labour, Bogotá, Colombia.

- Led the design of national policies and programmes for the Colombian Family Subsidy System.
- Directed the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation indicators for the Family Compensation Funds.
- Developed an evaluation plan for the services provided by the Family Compensation Funds.
- Held regulatory responsibility for the unemployment insurance provisions of Law 1636 of 2013 and for the impact evaluation of the labour formalisation provisions of Law 1429 of 2010.

Adviser, Planning Office (2011 – 2012) — Ministry of Science and Technology, Bogotá, Colombia.

- Identified the information requirements for impact evaluations of national science and technology programmes.
- Produced a literature review on impact evaluation of science and technology programmes and proposed a corresponding set of indicators.

Peer-reviewed publications

- Murphy, J., Lund, M. B., Kuttikat, M., Roldán, P. and Saleh, M. (2026). “Community health workers’ perspective on family functioning among Sri Lankan refugees”. *Migration and Development*. DOI
- Roldán, P., Matijczak, A. and Goffnett, J. (2024). “Negative associations between minority stressors and self-reported health status among sexual minority adults living in Colombia”. *Healthcare*, 12(4), 429. DOI
- Vargas, A. and Roldán Vásquez, P. M. (2018). “Ni muy cerca ni muy lejos: parques urbanos y bienestar subjetivo en la ciudad de Barranquilla, Colombia”. *Lecturas de Economía*, (88), 183–205. DOI
- Ospino, C. G., Roldán Vásquez, P. and Barraza Narváez, N. (2010). “Oaxaca-Blinder wage decomposition: methods, critiques and applications. A literature review”. *Revista de Economía del Caribe*, (5), 237–274.
- Roldán Vásquez, P. M. (2010). “Incentivos económicos para la implementación de un sistema silvopastoril: una aplicación a la cuenca La Miel (Caldas)”. *Revista de Economía del Caribe*, (2).
- Rodríguez, S. and Roldán, P. (2010). “Estimación de los determinantes del acceso a los servicios de salud en la región Caribe”. *Revista de Economía del Caribe*, (2).
- Roldán Vásquez, P. and Ospino Hernández, C. (2009). “¿Quiénes terminan en la informalidad? Impacto de las características y el tiempo de búsqueda”. *Revista de Economía del Caribe*, (4), 149–180.

Book chapters

- Roldán, P. M. and Ospino Hernández, C. (2010). *Sector informal y políticas públicas en América Latina: Colombia* (pp. 59–67). Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Rio de Janeiro. ISBN 978-85-7504-147-5.
- Roldán Vásquez, P. M. and Vargas Orjuela, A. (2010). “Deserción estudiantil en la Universidad del Norte: un análisis de supervivencia aplicado al programa de psicología”. In *Investigaciones de Economía de la Educación* (pp. 337–346). Fundación Universidad-Empresa.

Manuscripts under review

- Roldán, P. M. and Gattis, M. N. “Homophobic incidents and active bystander behavior: heterosexuals’ intentions to intervene in Colombia”. [Revise and resubmit]. School of Social Work, Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Roldán, P., Goffnett, J., Clary, K. and Matijczak, A. “‘I retired and I transitioned’: employment experiences of transgender and gender diverse Texans”. [Revise and resubmit].

Conference presentations

- Roldán, P., Goffnett, J., Clary, K. and Matijczak, A. (2024). “‘I retired, and I transitioned’: employment experiences of transgender and gender diverse Texans”. 20th International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI).
- Wagaman, A., Gattis, M., Kemmerer, A., Roldán, P. and Straka-Mai, K. (2024). “Developing and evaluating Marsha & Marians’ Neighbors: a shared housing program model for youth, pregnant/parenting youth, and youth at the intersection” [symposium]. SSWR 28th Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.
- Roldán, P. (2023). “Homophobic incidents and active bystander behavior: heterosexuals’ intentions to intervene in Colombia”. Society for Social Work and Research, 27th Annual Conference, Phoenix, AZ.
- Roldán, P. M. and Matijczak, A. (2022). “Sexual minority youth and emerging adults’ self-reported health status: differences in associations with minority stressors” [oral presentation]. 2022 National LGBTQ Health Conference: Bridging Research & Practice, Chicago, IL.
- Roldán, P., Kuttikat, M., Saleh, M. and Murphy, J. (2022). “Community health workers’ perspectives on parental behavior, parental practices, and family relationships among Sri Lankan Tamils” [oral presentation]. 18th International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry.
- Kuttikat, M., Saleh, M., Murphy, J., Roldán, P., Sahoo, I. and Chan, D. (2022). “Post-migration stressors, parent health, and family functioning among camp refugees” [poster presentation]. Council on Social Work Education, 68th Annual Program Meeting.
- Roldán Vásquez, P. M. and Vargas Orjuela, A. (2009). “Deserción estudiantil en la Universidad del Norte: un análisis de supervivencia aplicado al programa de psicología”. XVIII Meeting of the Economics of Education Association (AEDE), Valencia, Spain.
- Rodríguez, S. and Roldán, P. (2008). “Estimación de los determinantes del acceso a los servicios de salud en la región Caribe”. 7th European Conference on Health Economics, “Health Economics and Global Renaissance”, Rome, Italy.

Awards and fellowships

- Hans S. Falck Scholarship, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work, 2024.
- Diversity Scholarship, ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods, Ann Arbor, MI, 2023.
- IDB-CAF-Universidad de los Andes graduate study scholarship, 2003.
- Distinguished thesis, Universidad del Valle, 2002.

Professional development and specialised training

- Summer Mentoring Workshop for Advanced Doctoral Students (Latinx research focus), University of Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research, 2024.
- Mastering a Mediating or Moderating Effects Research Study (6-week online seminar), StatsWhisperer, Inc., 2024.
- The Ideal Qualitative Study with a Quantitative Component (6-week online seminar), StatsWhisperer, Inc., 2024.
- ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods, Ann Arbor, MI, 2023.

Methodological and technical skills

Qualitative methods. In-depth interviews, focus groups, Photovoice, reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke), narrative analysis, multiple-case study design (Yin), coding and management of qualitative data (NVivo, Dedoose).

Quantitative and evaluation methods. Survey design, statistical analysis, econometrics, design of monitoring and evaluation frameworks (logical frameworks, indicators), impact evaluation. Software: Stata, RStudio, Microsoft Excel.

Mixed methods. Graduate training in mixed methods integration (University of Michigan MicroMasters in Social Work: Practice, Policy and Research), applied in combination with — and not as a substitute for — core expertise in qualitative and quantitative methods.

Languages. Spanish (native); English (fluent, with professional command in research, teaching and writing).