

ARTICLE

Perspectives on gender and the division of labor: readings on the experience of migrant families in Santiago, Chile

Perspectivas sobre el género y la división del trabajo: lecturas sobre la experiencia de familias migrantes en Santiago de Chile

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Abstract:

This article investigates how migrant mothers who reside in Santiago de Chile and who have children under 5 years of age have lived their gender roles in the exercise of parenting and care from their migratory experience. To this end, interviews were conducted with 17 migrant mothers of Latin American origin who participate in the Chile Crece Contigo System from Family Health Centers in Santiago communes. Results show that they associate parenting and care tasks with a naturalized role, in which they identify at the family level as responsible for these tasks. In this way, their migratory experience is deeply related to the need to guarantee the care and well-being of their children as the main axis, which transforms or maintains gender roles throughout their migratory experience, and is related to studies on maternity and the mental health of migrant women where

Keywords:

Gender; Migration; Child raising; Division of work

the sexual division of labor and the overload of child-rearing and care work on women emerge. This raises challenges that can be addressed by the State, the ChCC and academia.

Resumen

Este artículo busca conocer cómo han vivido las madres migrantes que residen en Santiago de Chile y que tienen hijos menores de 5 años, sus roles de género en el ejercicio de la crianza y el cuidado desde su experiencia migratoria. Para ello se realizaron entrevistas a 17 madres migrantes latinoamericanas que participan en el Sistema Chile Crece Contigo (ChCC) desde Centros de Salud Familiar de comunas de Santiago. Se evidencia que asocian la crianza y las tareas de cuidado a un rol naturalizado en el que se identifican a sí mismas y a nivel familiar como las responsables principales de dichas tareas. De tal modo, su experiencia migratoria está profundamente relacionada para ellas con la necesidad de garantizar el cuidado y el bienestar de sus hijos/as como eje principal, lo que va transformando o manteniendo los roles de género a lo largo de su experiencia migratoria, y guarda relación con estudios sobre maternidad y salud mental de mujeres migrantes donde emerge la división del trabajo y la sobrecarga de labores de crianza y cuidado sobre las mujeres. Se plantean desafíos que pueden ser abordados desde el Estado, el ChCC y la academia

Palabras Clave:
Género; migración; crianza; división del trabajo

Introduction

In recent years in Latin America, migration flows have increased at the intraregional level, with Chile being one of the most attractive countries for migrants (León, 2014; Martínez and Orrego, 2016). The increase in the migrant population has become evident in recent years, as reflected in the figures (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, INE and Departamento de Extranjería y Migración, DEM, 2020; 2021). Since 2017, an unprecedented increase was seen and by December 2021, 1,482,390 migrants were registered in the country (INE and DEM, 2022), which corresponds to 7.6% of Chile's population, according to 2021 figures (World Bank, 2023). This migration is predominantly intraregional in nature, concentrated in the Santiago Metropolitan Region and is mainly of Venezuelan (30%), Peruvian (16.6%), Haitian (12.2%) and Colombian (11.7%) origin (INE and DEM, 2022).



Within the migratory movements that involve the arrival in Chile as a destination country, migrant families, migrant parents who have children at the destination and unaccompanied children take part. In this context, there is evidence of different realities, practices and meanings regarding parenting (Grau et al., 2022) and the role played by migrant parents in this regard, where roles can be determined and transformed in the migration process, considering origin, transit and destination and the different conditions and characteristics that are present there and that impact parenting, care and the role of parents in them. In addition, the experiences are not homogeneous; they are marked by inequalities that arise according to class, migratory condition and citizenship status, which condition access to resources to support daily care (Colen, 2006 in Linardelli, 2020). These inequalities became even more acute during the pandemic, where an increase in the poverty rate was evidenced, as well as in the informality of migrants, to a greater extent than Chileans (Servicio Jesuita Migrantes, SJM, 2021).

In this context, family vulnerability, manifested in the labor, housing, health, etc., conditions of migrants in Santiago de Chile, strains care and affects the way it is exercised (Grau et al., 2023). However, in the Chilean case, the State has implemented some policies that help to mitigate this vulnerability², for example, the public policy called Chile Crece Contigo, a subsystem of comprehensive child protection that offers accompaniment, protection and comprehensive support to children and their families, created for all children living in the country, to which the migrant population can access and, through it, access expeditiously services and benefits of care and support in development. The ChCC provides support to families for the welfare of children (Ministry of Social Development and Family, n.d.), and it is precisely in this subsystem that the migrant families who participated in this research are inserted.

In this way, and as part of the new dynamics brought about by intra-regional migration and the feminization that accompanies it, we seek to know how migrant mothers who reside in Santiago de Chile and who have children under 5 years of age have lived their gender roles in the exercise of parenting and care from their migratory experience, seeking to contribute to migration studies, specifically migrant parenting, from a gender perspective, where the challenges that arise for them and the role of the State and the ChCC in it are made clear.

²These policies are often designed for the Chilean population and can be accessed by the migrant population.



Upbringing and care

Parenting refers to the processes, activities and perceptions related to the care of children (Peralta, 1996), to the training and formation that an adult/responsible person, who is generally the parent, provides them based on their beliefs, attitudes and knowledge (Izzedin and Pachajoa, 2009 in Infante and Martínez, 2016). It is a cultural construct, considering practices and models that show patterns of socialization, based on beliefs and knowledge that societies consider appropriate for the welfare of children and the maintenance of culture (Naudon, 2016).

Care, on the other hand, is tangential in relation to parenting (Pérez and Olhaberry, 2014) and refers to the action of supporting the daily development and well-being of a dependent person, such as a child, including three aspects, material, economic and psychological care, thus involving work, a cost and an affective and emotional bond (Batthyány, 2004). Although families, in general, go through similar experiences in the upbringing and care of children, when speaking of migrant families, additional difficulties are revealed to those that local families would present, due to an increase in the conditions of vulnerability arising from the lack of networks and aspects related to migratory regularization; in this sense, when there is no guarantee of social conditions that facilitate upbringing, this can become a stressor for parents (Grau et al., 2022).

Gender, division of labor and construction of differentiated roles

It is necessary to approach gender from a sociohistorical viewpoint (Waisblat and Sáenz, 2014), which transcends the differences of a biological nature between men and women. Following Bourdieu (2000), this differentiation between the sexes has been the basis for the generation of a social meaning around it, associating each sex to certain characteristics in the way of being, of approaching language, the body, of relating, etc., from which a hierarchization is socially established in which women are placed in a role of subordination and are associated with attributes that obtain less social value; on the other hand, men are placed in a role of power and domination in relation to women (Logiovine, 2017). Bourdieu (2000) put forward the social construction of bodies, from which sexual differences that are immersed in a set of oppositions that organize social life are addressed. An interpretation is generated that understands some characteristics as natural differences, thus the socially constructed difference of the sexes is understood as natural and is filled with legitimacy (Bourdieu, 2000). Biological differences, then, appear as a “natural” justification of a difference that is established especially

in the sexual division of labor, where the role of men in productive work (recognized and remunerated) and that of women in reproductive work (little recognized and not remunerated) has been naturalized, accompanied by an unequal distribution of burdens (Logiovine, 2017) and in the differentiation of the sexes within the labor market in terms of labor and salary hierarchies (Hirata and Kergoat, 2007) and the recognition of women's capabilities (Cárdenas and Caro, 2021). The division of labor is framed within the structure of male domination (Bourdieu, 2000) in which women are assigned the responsibility of fertility, motherhood and the tasks that have to do with it by extension, excluding them from the public sphere (Heritier, 2007), as the social structure is based on the rupture of the public and private spheres and their differentiation based on sex (Monreal et al., 2019), helping to reproduce the capitalist patriarchy in which women are primarily responsible for the reproduction and care of the workforce (Logiovine, 2017).

However, the scenario has changed in recent years in Western societies with the massive incorporation of women into productive and, therefore, educational work, generating changes in social structures and beliefs (Monreal et al., 2019). However, gaps and inequalities between the sexes and, above all, gender biases in different work environments are still maintained (Díaz, 2014).

According to Judith Butler (1990), gender is performative, constituting the required identity; and it is not constituted consistently and coherently in all historical contexts, since this category intersects with others, such as class, sex, race, etc., so Butler proposes that gender cannot be separated from intersections of a political and cultural nature. Latin American authors, such as Ochy Curiel (2017), have argued that, although gender is an important analytical and political category for the social sciences, which highlights hierarchies between the sexes, it is based on the male-female dichotomy, and assumes each of these two groups as homogeneous within themselves, ignoring other characteristics. Likewise, María Lugones (2005) shows that the subordination of women to the power of white men is universalized as the subordination of all women, ignoring the fact that they are not all presented in the same way and hiding the intersection of different forms of domination. Thus, beyond an approach based on gender, it is necessary to relate it to other characteristics, such as nationality, generating an intersectional understanding.

Gender and migration

The feminization of migration, as well as migration studies that do not take women as companions in migration, but as protagonists of it, are recent (Stefoni, 2014). In Latin

America there is evidence of a growing intraregional and feminized migration (León, 2014), which means that women are beginning to attract attention in migration studies and various studies are produced that inquire about their work experience (Álvarez and Castro, 2020; Cardenas and Caro, 2021), especially in relation to domestic work (Courtis and Pacecca, 2010; Mallimaci and Magliano, 2018), on their role in the family and raising their children (Naudon, 2016; Pedone, 2006; Quecha, 2015), among others.

Although there are works that have addressed “gender” and “migration” (Palacios, 2016; Stefoni and Stang, 2017; Thayer, 2012), most works do not allude to the concept “gender” nor are they approached from a gender perspective, but refer to migrant women (Stefoni and Stang, 2017). This is due to the idea that women are empowered due to the economic independence generated by being precursors of the migratory movement, becoming a transforming factor of gender relations (Thayer, 2012).

Gender, care and migration

Following the review made by Monreal et al. (2019), it should be said that gender models are constructed that imply for migrant women the construction of identities different from those of men, which is manifested in the way they position themselves in the face of the risks and opportunities of the migratory process. Their role tends to be associated with care and with their role as mothers, therefore, their migratory process goes hand in hand with the importance of the family, which implies ensuring the welfare and opportunities for their children (Courtis and Pacecca, 2010). However, the established roles may imply stigmatization, in that migration is associated with the abandonment of children (Pedone, 2008) or the failure to fulfill the maternal feminine role of those who work outside the home (Monreal et al., 2019), placing greater emphasis on the stigmatization for the failure to fulfill the traditional role of mothers, over the situations of exploitation and domination to which they are subjected (Pedone, 2008). On the other hand, migration tends to reinforce men’s role as providers.

In addition, women’s migratory movements have particularities related to the economic and social role in the public and private sphere that differs from the role of men and that is present both at origin and destination (Monreal et al., 2019), which has entailed changes in family dynamics (Quecha, 2015). Although it has been highlighted that these transformations do not necessarily imply a change in the patriarchal organization of the family (Vargas, 2019 in Lara et al., 2021) or the emergence of new types of families, such as transnational families (defined as those where members live much of the time, or part of the time, separated, but despite the physical distance, create links that make

them feel as part of a unit, perceiving well-being from a collective dimension (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002 in González, 2016)). On the other hand, migration studies related to gender have tended to focus from women, and those that focus on men have done so from a look at labor (Torre and Rodríguez, 2018). However, in a study conducted with Venezuelan migrant men (fathers) in Ecuador, it is realized that fatherhood and work are common elements, but these, as well as the transformations, adaptations or reaffirmations of masculinity, are expressed and experienced in differentiated ways. Nevertheless, there is a reaffirmation of traditional masculinity based on being the family provider (Márquez, 2020).

The incorporation of migrant women into labor markets and the existence of transnational families have given rise to global care chains, which refer to linkages of people across borders who seek to sustain life in everyday life, paid or unpaid (Hochschild, 2001 in Hernández, 2016), in this case, women who migrate to engage in care work, leaving their children in the origin under the care of relatives (Lara et al., 2021; Leiva-Gómez, 2017), generating new forms of kinship and family life (Mummert, 2010 in Hernández, 2016).

Methodology

The methodology was built on the basis of the qualitative interpretative paradigm (Ruiz, 2003; Tarrés, 2008), seeking to collect the practices, meanings and evaluations that migrant mothers give to the exercise of daily parenting, as well as the parenting received by their parents or significant adult migrants. In order to achieve this purpose, qualitative tools were used, mainly semi-structured in-depth interviews with the subjects in question (Latin American migrant families) in the selected health centers belonging to the public health network of the Metropolitan Region. The ethnographic character is embodied in the characteristics acquired by the interview, which implies greater immersion in the context of the people and, therefore, flexibility in the conversation generated (Flick, 2012).

Participants

The participants of the study were, on the one hand, Latin American migrant parents attending Family Health Centers (CESFAM) in 2 communes of the Metropolitan Region of Santiago with a high percentage of migrants (INE and DEM, 2019). The inclusion criteria were to be migrant families with parents who were born in another country, who had children under 5 years of age, who were exercising the child-rearing process in Chile and who participated in the stimulation rooms of the Comprehensive Child



Protection System (Sistema de Protección Integral a la Infancia, ChCC). The number of people in the family and the type of family (two-parent, single-parent, other) were not considered. As exclusion criteria, families attending family health centers other than the selected communes or having only children over 5 years of age were not considered for this study.

Semi-structured interviews (Vela, 2004; Tarrés, 2008) were conducted with 17 migrant families (14 mothers, two families where father and mother were interviewed and one family where grandmother and father were interviewed). The fieldwork took place between August and October 2019 and the participating families were of Venezuelan, Peruvian, Colombian, Cuban, Dominican and Haitian nationality. Most of the children of the participating families were born in Chile, except for 3 children who were born in their country of origin, Venezuela. The children ranged in age from 6 months to 4 years, and all of them attended the stimulation room of the CHCC of each CESFAM, because health professionals had identified some lag in them. The professionals of the stimulation rooms identified the families that could participate taking into account the inclusion and exclusion criteria defined, contacted them and after giving their authorization, the research team contacted them to conduct the interviews. It is important to mention that despite the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, the choice of participating families could be biased by the professionals' criteria. Some of the characteristics of the participating families are listed below (Table 1).

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Gender, caregiving and migration

Following the review made by Monreal et al. (2019), it should be said that gender models are constructed that imply for migrant women the construction of identities different from those of men, which is manifested in the way they position themselves in the face of the risks and opportunities of the migration process. Their role tends to be associated with care and with their role as mothers; therefore, their migratory process goes hand in hand with the importance of the family, which implies ensuring the welfare and opportunities for their children (Courtis and Pacecca, 2010). However, the established roles may imply stigmatization, in that migration is associated with the abandonment of children (Pedone, 2008) or the failure to fulfill the maternal feminine role of those who work outside the home (Monreal et al., 2019), placing greater emphasis on the stigmatization for the failure to fulfill the traditional role of mothers, over the situations of exploitation and domination to which they are subjected (Pedone, 2008). On the other hand, migration tends to reinforce men's role as providers.



Table 1: characteristics of the participants

| Participant code | Family composition | Nationality | Time in Chile |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------|---------------|
| E1 (mother) | Parents and one child | Haitian | 4 years old |
| E2 (mother) | The mother and daughter. La madre tiene dos hijos The mother also has 2 more daughters in the Dominican Republic, and the father, who is not the mother's partner, has older children in Chile. | Dominican | 4 years old |
| E3 (mother) | Parents and three sons. | Peruvian | 13 years old |
| E4 (grandmother and father) | Parents, grandmother and one daughter | Venezuelan | 2 years old |
| E5 (mother) | Parents and one daughter | Venezuelan | 1 years old |
| E6 (mother) | Parents and two sons. The father has a child from a previous union. | | |
| E7 (mother) | Parents and two sons | Peruvian | 2 years old |
| E8 (mother and father) | Parents and one child. The father has a child in Colombia from a previous union. | Colombian | 2 years old |
| E9 (mother) | Parents and two sons | Venezuelan | 3 years old |
| E10 (mother) | Parents and a child | Peruvian | 11 years old |
| E11 (mother and father) | Parents and a son. The mother has an older son in Haiti. | Haitian | 3 years old |
| E12 (mother) | Parents and two sons | Colombian | 7 years old |
| E13 (mother) | Mother and two twin daughters | Colombian | 6 years old |
| E14 (mother) | Parents and three sons | Cuban | 10 years old |
| E15 (mother) | Parents and two sons | Colombian | 7 years old |
| E16 (mother) | Parents and a child | Peruvian | 4 years old |
| E17 (mother) | Parents and two sons | Venezuelan | 2 years old |

Source: Own construction with information provided by the families interviewed.

Interviews and data analysis

This article is part of a broader project that sought to understand and analyze how, from their cultural universe, tensions and contradictions about practices, meanings and valuations of and in the care relationships in the upbringing during gestation and early childhood of Latin American migrant families linked to ChCC in Health Centers of the public health network of the Metropolitan Region of Santiago are configured. In this regard, interviews were conducted to address different topics on the basis of this study and in response to the specific objective proposed in this article. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. A content analysis was carried out on the topics of the migratory trajectory, the experience in the exercise of daily parenting, as well as on the upbringing received by their parents or responsible adults. From there, a codification was made that allowed a later description of the traditional gender roles in the exercise of parenting and care of migrant mothers in Chile.

Ethical aspects

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to guarantee their scientific rigor and informed consents were signed in accordance with the ethical commitment of the research, which was approved by the Scientific Ethical Committee of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, as well as by the Ethics Committee of the Servicio de Salud Metropolitano Norte.

Results

The results are presented below, organized according to the following dimensions that intersect with the migratory trajectory of the families: experience in the exercise of daily parenting; parenting received by their parents or responsible adults. In turn, the results were structured based on the 3 profiles of migrant women mothers, according to the gender roles that stress the spheres of production and reproduction in the context of female migration (Gissi and Martinez, 2018). The profiles identified would be the following: (1) Centrality in reproductive roles: those women mothers who, due to the migratory situation, having small children and the lack of support networks, dedicate themselves exclusively to care and upbringing; (2) Conciliation of productive and reproductive roles, corresponds to those migrant women mothers who, despite having small children, carry out productive work; and (3) Those who make productive and reproductive roles compatible in the context of transnational upbringing. In the case of men, all of them play the role of father provider, although there is evidence of different discourses on their position in relation to parenting and paternity; however, in the imaginary of none of the families interviewed does the primary role of caregiver attributed to the father appear.

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The exercise of daily parenting

In the first place, we inquired about the upbringing that migrant families currently exercise with their children in Chile, seeking to know how gender roles are exercised there. The results show that not all families have the same dynamics or develop the same parenting roles (fathers and mothers).



(1) The centrality of reproductive roles: Families with women mothers dedicated to domestic and care work.

In this first case, women who do not work for pay are divided between those who decided to stop working as a family decision (which in several cases they say was their husband's idea), to devote themselves to caring for their children after the change of country, and those who stopped working because they had no one else to care for their children. These women report that they went from working and being economically productive to dedicating themselves exclusively to reproductive work. The lack of family networks plays a role in this; the families say that if they were in the country of origin, someone else in the family could take care of them so that the mother could work; however, always exemplifying that the caregiver would be a woman (grandmother, aunt, neighbor), but never a man.

“It's not that I don't want to work, my husband doesn't want to. Because who is going to take care of her, she is afraid to be in the garden, as they say, but little by little. Yes, I have the possibility of being able to take good care of him, then thank God he works and I take care of the baby.” (E10)

“[...] if we were in Colombia we would have more support, starting from the fact that a stranger would not take care of him, my mom, I don't know, a sister. But in that sense we would have more support, and the child would be more in the family, not with a stranger.” (E8)

The most complex transformations in the way they exercised their gender roles are reported in the cases of Venezuelan families. Women were dedicated to productive work and for migratory reasons had to transform their role to a more traditional one, leaving productive work aside to take on care and domestic work, which also implied a loss of economic autonomy. These situations include accounts in which contradictory emotions and a feeling of loneliness and sadness are expressed.

“Right now I am 100% dedicated to my children, to the home, to the house and well to be honest suddenly I am super overwhelmed, I want to run away because I love them, I love them, I adore them, but you know, I got lost.” (E6)

Most of the women who dedicate themselves exclusively to reproductive work report an overload of domestic and caregiving tasks simultaneously, taking advantage of the children's breaks to finish the household chores. It is noted that husbands work tirelessly outside the home in order to bring in financial support, which affects the amount of time they can spend with their children. However, it was noted that several fathers seek ways to balance the quantity of time with the quality of time, finding the possibility of sharing with their children in the little time they have available.

"I am with him all day long. I wake up, I make him breakfast, sometimes he takes his nap. Sometimes when he sleeps I try to make lunch or clean or wash when he is asleep (...) In the case of my husband, he works 12 hours, so when he shares with the child. That's how I feel. Right now he is getting up early because he wakes him up and shares 2 hours before he leaves." (E5)

"He works from 9 a.m. until 6 a.m., he arrives at 7 a.m. at home. The time he arrives he is with my children, he asks him how he has been at school, he asks him if he has any pending homework, because my son and I don't always do it, but we let the dad also participate." (E7)

(2) Families with mothers engaged in paid work: Reconciling productive and reproductive roles

In the case of mothers who work for pay outside the home, they say that they feel that work absorbs their whole day, not being able to dedicate enough time to their children, feeling guilty for this and for having to leave them in the care of third parties. When someone other than the mother takes care of the child, that person is a woman or (very few) they leave them in kindergartens. Despite working all day, just like their husbands, they are the ones who are in charge of taking the children to medical checkups, having to ask permission from their jobs or having to take them to work to then go to the doctor's office.

"I have almost no time with my daughter. She goes to kindergarten and I go to work and when I take her out there is a lady who takes care of her and I go to study. My husband takes her out and I arrive and sometimes she is sleeping or I have to prepare her for the other day, then I have almost no time, the only day we have are Sundays and when she accompanies me at work." (E1)

Some, in order to get a job after having had their children, point out that they have lied about their condition as mothers, because they assume that the bosses think that the role of worker is not compatible with the role of mother, which would put them at a disadvantage compared to their male colleagues or women without children.

“I got a job, just the same to enter that job I had to say that I have no child, because I went to many jobs, I said that I had a child with whom I lived, I said what it was, but from there they told me no, because if you say that you have a child of such age they will not accept you, because it is like <<ay, my son got sick and they have to give me permission>>. To enter that job I just said <<now, well, I am not going to say that I have a child>> and on the sheet they give you to fill out I said that I did not have a child and that same day they gave me the contract.” (E16)

There are other families where it is stated that even though the mother works because of an economic necessity, the ideal for them as a family would be for the father to exercise the role of provider and the mother to stay at home with her children. Thus, although they would ideally hope to comply with traditional gender mandates, the reality of migration and economic necessity do not allow it.

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“Unfortunately we have to work. What I would give to have a super good salary and tell [the wife] <<ya, you stay at home and you are with the child always>>. Unfortunately it plays like that.” (E8)

(3) Those families that make productive and reproductive roles compatible in the context of transnational parenting.

There are families where one of the partners (mother or father) has children in the country of origin. However, the situation is approached differently when it is the father or the mother who has separated from the children.



In the case of the mother, when she is separated from her children, she looks for a way to be with them again, devising a plan for reunification at the destination, a plan that is slow and complex due to economic conditions and/or the migratory situation. In addition to this, mothers, who were the main caregivers, seek to leave their children in the care of third parties, other than the father (if he is in origin), always women.

“I have two more girls who are in the Dominican Republic, I had a problem with him [the girls’ father] and that is why I decided to come here. A sister-in-law, his sister, is taking care of them. I pay her 10,000 pesos, 10,000 from there, which is about 140,000 from here. One is 10 years old and the other is 5 and in December he will be 6. (...) later I will bring one of them, but I can’t bring them all together, because I live in a small house and I can’t fit anything. And rents are very expensive here.” (E2)

In the case of the father, when he is separated from the children, it is stated that the children are fine because they are with the mother in the country of origin and that they maintain telephone communication, through which, on occasions, the children are corrected from a distance and the need to maintain a male figure who establishes limits and guarantees good behavior is evoked. The need to send money for their support is also highlighted.

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“He is a child who has everything, because I send him money from here and his mother is also a professional and earns well there. He has everything. Just tell him <<what is wrong with him? what is missing? what doesn’t he like?>>. And talk to him a little bit man to man and explain to him how things are, so that he really knows that it’s a tantrum just because, because he doesn’t have to behave like that.” (E8)

There is another case, in which the daughters were conceived in Chile, but the father decided to return to the country of origin. In this case, the father has little relationship with his daughters, asks about them, but does not contribute financially or visit them. Thus, the task of care and upbringing falls solely on the mother, who must also act as the sole provider for the household.



“No, he is in Colombia, he came to see the girls. Here they asked me if I was sure that he was the father of the girls, that they would give me the name, I didn’t know what to do. I talked to him, he came, he saw the girls and sometimes we talked, but no money was given. Sometimes he asks me how the girls are and I answer him normally. I don’t know if he is going to come back here.” (E13)

On the other hand, there are families that do not leave their children in the country of origin, but they do leave other relatives, such as the children’s grandparents. In these cases the families continue to maintain emotional and economic ties. When the person who stayed in the country of origin is required to be cared for permanently because of age or health, it is also a woman (family member or not) who does the care work.

“She is sick, but always, now she is bedridden in Lima. She is cared for by my sister who is single. But we have always gotten along well.” (E10)

Upbringing received and the weight of traditional gender roles

On the other hand, we inquired about the aspects of the upbringing of the interviewees’ families to find out how their parents exercised gender roles and how they have distanced themselves or not from that. The aspects identified as positive in the upbringing they had in their countries of origin are linked to experiences of affection and respect, where dedication and attention as part of care are highlighted as aspects that they would like to replicate with their children. In the upbringing received, a woman is generally recognized as the main caregiver, whether it is the mother or a relative, such as a sister, aunt or grandmother. In other cases, the women describe that they themselves were in charge of their siblings.

“I did not grow up with my mom, I grew up with an older sister because my mom married my dad, my dad had other daughters from another marriage and my dad passed away when I was 2 years old.” (E1)



In a few cases the parents of the interviewees were also caregivers. In this case the women were cared for by the father who exercised reproductive tasks from affection, but simultaneously incorporated them into productive work generating dynamics around child labor.

“Because when my mother went out, I stayed with my father. My dad would do my hair, he loved me very much because I looked so much like him. We used to work in agriculture with him, beans... and the relationship with him was quite good. Yes, because he taught us how to plant things, because that was what you did the most, planting, agriculture... we planted a lot there.” (E2)

On the other hand, there is an account of how they were taught to maintain traditional gender roles since childhood, instilling in them that women and men should perform differentiated tasks “proper” to each sex, where women were more restricted and were taught aspects such as staying at home with other women doing domestic work.

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“In those times, the little girl had to be in the house helping mom, doing things and the male children did not, they were taken care of by dad, <<do whatever you want>>. But the little girl, women, no.” (E3)

“In Colombia there is always a difference, for example, my mother and my father showed love, affection, everything to men, but to men, yes, my father spoke louder and tried to instill in them more.” (E13)

In some accounts, it can be observed how the discourse on traditional gender roles still persists, where the maternal figure acquires a central role in relation to the care and upbringing of children.

“In Peru, most women do not work when they have children, they usually stay at home, their husbands work, because we are used to raising our children. Because the mother can work, that’s fine, everything develops, but the absence that you are going to give to your child when you work is not the same when you come” . (E10)



Despite having been raised based on traditional gender roles, some families take a critical position in this regard, recognizing that although the traditional gender roles were emphasized in the upbringing they received in their country of origin, this has been changing in part, but has also persisted to a greater extent in their contexts of origin.

“Previously, there was like a lot of machismo. Like men are from the street and girls from the house.” (E9)

“Yes, boys were allowed to go out more than girls. You don’t go out because you are a girl, it was like that. There is still a lot of taboo there about telling the mother that she has a boyfriend because the mothers tend to react more, they lock them up, they don’t let them go out, suddenly they change schools. It is still strong. A girl in shorts, cleavage is not well seen, very badly seen”. (E7)

According to the results, we can point out that most of the interviewed women refer that in their childhood, women were much more restricted than men. Women had to stay at home, they were not allowed to go out until late at night, and it was even frowned upon to have boyfriends during adolescence.

Discussion and conclusions

The above shows that the migrant mothers who participated in this research, who reside in Santiago de Chile and who have children under 5 years of age, have lived their gender roles in the exercise of child rearing and care from their migratory experience in different ways. This shows that migrant mothers are not a homogeneous group of people who live their experiences in the same way and with the same characteristics. There are some mothers who used to work for pay and have remained in the private sphere after migration, dedicating themselves not only to care and child-rearing tasks, but also to domestic chores. Others are engaged in productive work and sometimes pay for informal and private care services provided by other women. In the face of this, there is an overload, as they continue to assume reproductive tasks during the hours they are with their children and still belong to the productive sphere. Sometimes, productive work is an undesirable option for women, who would prefer to maintain their traditional gender role in which they themselves naturalize that it is mothers who should be with their children.



In this case, although they would like to maintain traditional gender roles, the reality of migration and economic needs make it difficult, since the mother cannot stop working to stay at home. These findings are consistent with recent studies on motherhood and the mental health of migrant women (Carreño et al., 2022), where the sexual division of labor and the consequent relapse of child-rearing and care work on women emerge.

On the other hand, although men were not the main focus of this article and their own vision of masculinity in a migratory context was not addressed, it reaffirms what other research has said (Márquez, 2020) regarding the fact that fathers -men-, in the migratory context, reaffirm their traditional masculinity based on their role as the main provider at the family level. However, differences are reflected in the exercise of their masculinity, from the mothers' accounts, where some fathers are to some extent involved in the tasks of care and upbringing. It is shown that there are several fathers who seek to make space before or after their working day to spend time with their children, showing that, although their main role is not that of caregiver, but that of provider, they distance themselves somewhat from the traditional mandates when they seek to be present in the upbringing of their children and share with them daily moments in their time off, which they would like more of, but for economic reasons cannot do so. In this sense, it is observed that although men can be present in childrearing, playing a complementary role in this space, the responsibilities of care fall on and are focused on women (Carreño et al., 2022). This is due to the interweaving of gender, division of labor and naturalized and differentiated roles and attributes. There is only one case in which the father is not a provider and does not have any type of contact with his daughters; in this case, beyond the reproduction of the provider role from the family model, a question of individualism is evident, displacing the idea of providing for a family to providing for oneself.

In this sense, it should be noted that the results show that in the imaginary of the families it is implicit that the role of caregiver belongs to women predominantly; in no case was it considered when migrating that the father could devote himself to care while the mother devoted herself exclusively to productive work, which shows, as expressed by Vargas (2019, in Lara et al., 2021), that the transformations in family dynamics do not necessarily imply a change in the patriarchal organization of the family. This is also reflected in the case of women who leave children behind, since the father does not remain as the main caregiver; it is other women who are left in charge of their care. However, in an account of transnational paternity, it is pointed out that the father has a position of power that surpasses that of the mother with res-



pect to the obedience of his son and that, in addition, he seeks to transmit it from his own idea of masculinity, from what he calls “talking to him as a man to a man”.

In terms of daily childrearing, it can also be observed how childrearing models are transformed and often conflict with the experiences of migrant mothers (Carreño et al., 2022; Grau et al., 2022).

From an intersectional perspective, it is evident how gender and nationality mark the experience of gender roles in care and upbringing, as it was shown, for example, that Venezuelan mothers had to stop working due to the migratory situation and economic conditions. On the other hand, it is observed how Central American mothers leave their children at home and become mainly responsible for economic support, delegating care and generating, as stated by Mummert (2010, in Hernández, 2016), a transformation in the roles expected from the culture of origin and generating new forms of kinship and family life. In such a way, in the case of these Central American mothers who build transnational families, it is manifested, as proposed by Bourdieu (2000), that women are assigned the responsibility of fertility, motherhood and the tasks related to it by extension; but in addition, they assume the role that has been defined as traditionally male, as Trujillo and Almeda (2017) showed, of being the main economic providers. In this sense, mothers experience an overload of work, whatever their daily task. Those who dedicate themselves exclusively to reproductive work, have an overload with respect to domestic and care tasks, not only with respect to their children but also to their partners; mothers who work in a paid manner in the public sphere have an overload of productive and reproductive work, evidencing a double workday and what has been called a “global workload” (Sáinz, 1999). In the case of fathers, there is an overload of productive work.

It can also be seen that mothers have different characteristics that place them in a position of subordination and inequality. Not only because they are women do they have an overall work overload, but also the possibilities and conditions of integration will depend on the nationality of the people, since the rules and regulations vary according to the country of origin. This conditions the lack of support networks and opportunities in the country of destination, depending largely on the country of origin and the migratory situation, which is given, for most of them, by the length of stay in the country. But in addition to the above, it is shown how the fact of being migrant women and also mothers puts up a wall for them when they need access to work, to the point that they must lie about their condition as mothers.



We conclude, in line with other research (Logiovine, 2017), that parenting and care tasks are associated by women, and by the migrant families interviewed, with a naturalized role in which they are primarily responsible for such tasks. In this sense, their migratory experience is deeply related for them to the need to guarantee the care and well-being of their children as the main axis, which transforms or maintains gender roles throughout their migratory experience. This means that gender roles are accommodated, maintained or transformed depending on family conditions and the way in which they organize themselves as a group to meet their needs at the economic level and for the maintenance and reproduction of life.

This article reaffirms the challenge of including from the State, and particularly from ChCC, a gender and division of labor perspective, which also includes an intercultural respectful point of view, where customs and traditions are understood and respected, as well as conceptions regarding upbringing, care and gender mandates, understanding that not for all families and mothers the definition and construction of being a woman and the feminine corresponds to the same- and that not for all families and fathers the definition of their masculinity is the same. Let us remember that there are mothers who have been forced by migratory circumstances to do exclusively reproductive work, when in their lives they had always participated in productive work. This also goes hand in hand with the difficulty of finding places in kindergartens or day care centers that are economically accessible and trustworthy, a matter in which the State has an important role to play. Although an approach to co-responsibility could be proposed from instances such as the ChCC stimulation room, the reality that this study shows is that this does not depend exclusively on the will, but that there are other factors such as economic possibilities and cultural meanings, which make this a complex challenge.

Another relevant aspect is the need to provide care and support to mothers, understanding that they face an overload of work exacerbated by migration, sometimes accompanied by the difficulty of finding employment as mothers of young children and/or an excess of daily tasks. It is important to address from academia and from the State, in this sense, the welfare and mental health of Latin American migrant mothers with young children in Chile.



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