

Gender, care and kinships networks: Family forms in Santiago, Chile

Género, cuidados y redes de parentesco: formas familiares en Santiago de Chile

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RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo es comprender cómo los chilenos en Santiago definen a sus familias. Este estudio utilizó un enfoque de métodos mixtos, ya que combina técnicas cualitativas y cuantitativas en diferentes etapas de la investigación. Primero, se realizaron 16 entrevistas en profundidad, utilizando generadores de nombres en ego-redes y una técnica para procesar los datos de las redes familiares de cada entrevistado. Posteriormente, se realizó un análisis de redes métricas para describir las estructuras cognitivas y las relaciones en las familias utilizando un enfoque de métodos mixtos. Los resultados mostraron que las familias santiagueras se pueden describir en cuatro tipologías: redes de camarillas, familias cohesionadas, familias con redes extendidas y/o ramificadas y redes familiares centro-periferia. Se concluyó que las familias en red de las mujeres tienen una cohesión interna mayor en comparación con las redes familiares descritas por los hombres. Además, el uso del enfoque de análisis de redes sociales ayudó a demostrar la diversidad en la conformación de las formas familiares, definidas por los entrevistados develando su noción de las estructuras de parentesco.

Palabras Clave: Redes de parentesco; Formas familiares; Redes familiares; Métodos mixtos.

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to understand how Chileans in Santiago define their families. This study used a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques in different stages of the research. First, it was done 16 in-deep-interviews, using name generators in ego-networks as a technique to process the data of the kinship networks of each person interviewed. Later, a metrical network analysis was done to describe the cognitive structures and the relations in the families using a mixed methods approach. The results show that families in Santiago can be described in four typologies: clique networks, cohesive families, families with extended and/or branched networks, and family centre-periphery networks.

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Furthermore, it concluded that the network families of women have a significant internal cohesion compared to the family networks described by men. In addition, the social network analysis approach was used to demonstrate diversity in the conformation of family forms, defined by the interviewees with their understanding of kinship structures.

Keywords: Kinship networks; Family forms; Family networks; Mixed methods.

INTRODUCTION

EVEN NOWADAYS, many authors had defined families as a conjugal nuclear unity, with their members living in the same house and sharing kinship (Rabell and D'Aubeterre, 2009). However, numerous studies have established that in current post-industrial societies, families are more diverse (Laslett and Wall, 1972; Yanagisako, 1979; Anderson, 1988). For example, Sylvia Yanagisako (1979) studied the differentiation between family and home and established that kinship networks were essential even though the people in her sample did not share the same house. Therefore, the extended family was part of the diversity of existing families.

In this way, these authors managed to 'challenge these rigid distinctions that petrify family dynamics' (Rabell and D'Aubeterre, 2009, p. 42). One of the pioneers in working with family networks is Elizabeth Bott (1957), who has highlighted that not all people are obligated to relate to other people in the same environment; instead, only some are. She defines families not by the household people are part of but by the social networks (rather than organised groups) that those involved constantly work to maintain.

Looking into the networks within the family in the 1970s, Catherine Gokalp (1978, cited by Rabell and D'Aubeterre, 2009) reviewed all the relationships occurring outside the physical home. Accordingly, based on the sociology and anthropology of the family at the time, it was predicted that a person's relationships (beyond biological bonds) would be as meaningful as those of blood ties (Bott, 1957; Yanagisako, 1979). In the 1980s and 1990s, inquiries on the subject focused on the relevance of a person's social class and country of origin in forming family networks (Rabell and D'Aubeterre, 2009).

The pioneering works of Elizabeth Bott (1957) have shown the diversity in the formation of family networks and how these in-

fluences ways of understanding kinship. Bott herself not only mentions the relevance of considering factors external to the family network (e.g. changes in the economy and geography) but also points out that modifications in the personalities of the people who make up the network are fundamental. All this affects the performativity and the position of each family member and therefore impacts the notion of the family network. This leads us to the first hypothesis of this study, which suggests there is a diverse conformation of family forms and, therefore, of the kinship relationships that a person recognises. The physical structure of the family does not limit the conception of the family network that a person has, much less the relationship they maintain with them. We do not see family networks as fixed data but rather as inexhaustible sources of resources that change over time (Rabell and D'Aubeterre, 2009). All this is in line with the notion of family that guides this study, which considers families as complex social units of wide diversity (González, 2014).

Several studies have investigated what occurs inside the home and in individuals' family networks. This has generated various current discussions, such as on the problematisation of the social organisation of care (Faur, 2011; Ortiz and González, 2016). In Latin America, the rise of this issue has been felt above all from a gender perspective (England, 2005; Sojo, 2011; Flores-Castillo, 2012; Esquivel, Faur and Jelin, 2012; Faur, 2014). In all of these studies, the centrality of the role of women in the family network is highlighted as women are the ones who take care of the other members who comprise these networks. In the words of María Teresa Martín (2008), we currently find ourselves in a 'situation of a fragile balance in which care needs are met thanks to intergenerational solidarity (of women mainly), interwoven with recourse to the market and the limited support provided by public services' (p. 41). The family structure is based mainly on the distribution

and performance of care tasks among all the people who make up the network. Feminist studies have proposed that women acquire a significant role in the network because of the naturalisation of care given by the women of the family (Pérez Orozco, 2006; Precarias a la Deriva, 2004; Del Valle, 2010; Montaña, 2010; Nakano Glenn, 2010; Hanlon, 2012; Rodríguez, 2015).

There has also been a proliferation of literature studying the social organisation of care from a gender inequality perspective (Martín, 2008). Additionally, due to the increase in the number of studies on the existing family diversities in Chile (Bascuñan, 2012; Olavarría, 2004; González, 2013; González and Ortiz, 2016), progress has been made towards raising this concern not only at the local level but also more generally. This development gives rise to the second hypothesis of the present study, which suggests that family networks described by women denote greater internal cohesion than family networks as defined by men because, in general, men are not the ones who dedicate themselves to maintaining kinship relationships within the family (Yanagisako, 1979; Di Leonardo, 1987; González, 2016a).

OBJETIVES

The main objective of this study was to understand how the Chilean people in Santiago define their families. Accordingly, it explores the idea of what a family means today.

METHODOLOGY

This research analysed data collected and produced in the project 'The families in Chile: kinship work and family constellations' (González, 2013, 2016a; González and Ortiz, 2016). Its main objective was to study people's experiences and practices regarding being in a particular family. In other words, it attempted to comprehend the kinship work inside the families of Chile. Among other possible examples, Di Leonardo has defined this as 'the conception, the maintenance and the rituals through the kinship inside a domestic group, including visits, letters, phone calls, gifts and memory cards; the organization of holidays [...]' (1987, p. 442).

PARTICIPANTS

The data collection consisted of three stages. First, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 33 people in 2013. These interviews lasted approximately one hour, and the subjects were between 23 and 65 years of age. Second, all the interviews were transcribed and transformed into the 'kinship cards' format (Bourdieu, 2008; Comas, 2010; González, 2016b). These cards were highly similar to those used in the name generators technique, because they were asked almost the same questions. Third, contact was made again with the people interviewed in 2014 for a second interview. At this stage, 28 interviews were performed. Those who did not provide us access for a second interview said it was because they lived outside the country or had personal issues. Finally, the interviewees were again asked about their family composition and for clarification regarding the first interview.

In total, 61 interviews of people living in Santiago, Chile, were undertaken. However, this article analyses only 16 cases, comprising 28 interviews. Only certain cases were used because some lacked all the necessary information for a mixed-methods analysis. Finally, regional and generational factors were not considered because more material would have been needed for a proper comparison.

The selection of participants was performed using the snowball sampling technique. During contact, the participants were selected considering their country of birth, gender and socioeconomic level, among other variables. Additionally, three criteria were used for the selection: First, the same proportion of people with high, medium and low socioeconomic levels were included. Second, an equal balance of singles, couples without children, couples with children and couples with older children outside the house were chosen. Third, an attempt was made to consider a diversity of families, for example, those of migrant people.

INSTRUMENTS

Qualitative interviews have been used extensively in network analysis (Bernardi *et al.*, 2007; Edwards, 2009; Hollstein and Dominguez, 2014; Crossley, 2010). Therefore, this

research also used this technique to analyse ego-centred networks and extract individuals' narrative constructions. Furthermore, through a mixed-methods analysis, these narratives were combined with formal methods of social network analysis (Bellotti, 2014; Edwards and Crossley, 2010; Hollstein, 2011; Molina *et al.*, 2014; Crossley *et al.*, 2015).

For the network data collection, a distinction was made between the characteristics of the respondent (ego), those of the people who were linked to the interviewee (ego-alter) and the relationships that those contacts had with each other (alter-alter). The first two strategies have been widely used in standardised questionnaires (Laumann, 1973; Fischer *et al.*, 1977; Burt, 1984), particularly applying statistical techniques, such as hierarchical (or multilevel) modelling (for example, Snijders *et al.*, 1999; van Duijn *et al.*, 1999; Luken and Tranmer, 2010). However, alter-alter application strategies have had significant difficulties as they assume that the size of the population is known or, at least, auto-content in borders that allow individuals to be grouped and that can be defined through realistic or nominalist approaches (Laumann and Marsden, 1979).

The first two strategies (ego and ego-alter) are usually linked harmoniously to ego-centric models and facilitate information processing. The alter-alter ties can be collected for research using an ego-centred approach (personal network), and for those considering complete networks (sociometric or complete networks). However, the latter strategy presents more significant challenges when collecting information. This also applies when a person has specific problems, such as memory loss when naming their acquaintances or a lack of time to complete the survey. Moreover, responding to this type of instrument produces an additional cost when the aim is to delve into the meanings or senses that the actors attribute to certain phenomena of interest and, to a lesser extent, to the structures they eventually make up.

For this reason, faced with the problems of applying alter-alter strategies, a strategy with a nominalist approach was here used, with the research criteria predefining the borders of the actors. In particular, the advantage of carrying out this type of strategy is that it allows for the proposal of typologies of theoretical structures

that enhance the relevance of the structural dimension (Wellman, 1997) while taking advantage of information that arises in ego-alter models that can be generalised to alter-alter models through qualitative sources. Furthermore, this strategy allows for increases in complexity and alignment with mixed-method techniques in social network analysis.

In particular, kinship letters were used, with each interviewee indicating the individuals who belonged to their primary families. Subsequently, each subject was asked about their extended family. Making this first distinction allowed us to differentiate between subjects with solid bonds and those with weaker (second-order) bonds. Furthermore, this type of difference helped distinguish between those relationships that were frequent, redundant and of intimate support and those that were less frequent, sporadic and less intense. While the first type of relationship is usually defined as a solid bond (bonding), the second is often referred to as a bridge relationship. As Putnam (2001) points out, this allows for the identification of bonds with individuals who are not within the immediate borders of family structures.

As a methodological strategy, this technique made it possible to distinguish between primary links (bonding) and secondary links (bridging) using the ego-alter procedure. However, the approximation of the structure of the ego's personal network makes it possible to identify links of length one (first-order zone) and two (second-order zone). At the same time, by identifying the type of link by family role (e.g. 'son', 'sister' or 'cousin') according to the family of the interviewee, it was possible to identify the link that the alters had with each other, constituting a strategy to identify alter-alter networks. In particular, a tie had been made when there was either a direct consanguineous bond (without considering ego and using family tree structures) or a marriage or love bond (e.g. partner or boyfriend/girlfriend). This information was compiled from the interviewees' stories and kinship letters.

For the above-mentioned reasons, this research use of this type of analysis. It investigates, under structural criteria, typologies of family structures that allow for the identification of the variability in their configuration,

qualities, and the heterogeneity they present among the nodes. From this perspective, it identifies the different social representations according to which families are structured.

RESULTS

The kinship letters were made, followed by the conformation of qualitative networks. Then, the typologies of the social networks were constituted through a mixed-method research technique in line with the study carried out by Bellotti (2008) concerning friendship structures. However, it must be specified that the results cannot be generalised to the overall population (given the scope and qualitative nature of the information). The typologies make it possible to guide and suggest reference frameworks for future research that confirm, revoke or expand on this theoretical-empirical proposal. In addition, unlike the type of friendship link that is usually voluntary or changes over time, family networks tend to include a high degree of obligation, recurrent links and, therefore, strong ties. On the other hand, it was observed in the data that the configuration of the family network, far from being a type of structuring and determining structure, is articulated and shaped by other links that expand how families

are conceived. For this reason, a general characterisation of the family networks in the cases observed in this research is carried out below so that they can be later detailed in the typologies proposed by this study.

To obtain a general perspective of the participants, some of the characteristics of the analysed networks are relevant to consider. The interviewed families had an average of 7.8 individuals, although high variability was observed between the different cases (DEV. 4.42). At the same time, the average density was 0.60, revealing a more significant variance between the networks (DEV. 0.35) compared to the percentage variability of their size (DEV. 0.16). Furthermore, among those interviewed, a total of 125 alters were mentioned, with 53 being men and 67 being women. Men (6 cases) identified 47 relatives, including 25 men and 22 women, while women (10 cases) named 73 relatives, including 28 men and 45 women (as shown in Table 1).

	Men	Women	TOTAL
Men	25 (53%)	22 (42%)	47 (100%)
Women	28 (38%)	45 (62%)	73 (100%)
TOTAL	53 (44%)	67 (56%)	120 (100%)

Table 1. Participants by gender.

Name	Type	Typology	Size (with ego)	Size (no-ego)	Density	N° of components
Isidora	1	Cliques	3	2	0.67	1
Maite	1	Cliques	4	3	0.67	1
Romina	1	Cliques	4	3	0.67	1
Camila	2	Cohesive	7	6	0.43	2
Luis	2	Cohesive	10	9	0.44	1
Pablo	2	Cohesive	8	7	0.36	1
Carla	2	Cohesive	9	8	0.39	1
Jorge	3	Ramified	10	9	0.33	1
Amanda	3	Ramified	9	8	0.31	1
Pedro	3	Extended	14	13	0.24	1
Andrea	3	Extended	10	9	0.29	1
Bejamín	3	Extended	8	7	0.32	1
Liliana	4	Centre-periphery	5	4	0.30	2
Martina	4	Centre-periphery	7	6	0.14	4
Marcela	4	Centre-periphery	22	21	0.12	6
Héctor	4	Centre-periphery	11	10	0.20	5

Note: The size of the network was calculated including ego (in the fourth column), and without it (at the following one).

Table 2. Summarization of participants and their types of families.

As evidenced, the women mentioned a greater proportion of people as family members than the men. These results allowed us to hypothesise that women are usually the ones who sustain family relationships through the care they provide and the kinship work they are generally in charge of (Yanagisako, 1979; Di Leonardo, 1987; Martín, 2008; Sojo, 2011; González, 2016a). In the same way, on average, the interviewed women had higher levels of density in their networks (0.40) compared to the men (0.32), even though their dispersion was more significant (DEV. 0.21 vs DEV. 0.09).

To identify the structures of the social representations of family networks, it was found that there are different types of family structures, allowing us to shed light on how families are structured in Santiago, Chile. Therefore, to illustrate how the typologies were configured, the (fictitious) names of the interviewees are used along with the size of the networks of each case considered in the study, the density of the network structure, the components, the type of emerging structure and some additional network data (data summarised in Table 2).

Cliques's networks

Three of the interviewees (all women) named just a few people as family members, making up a clique-type family network structure. This type of network has the particularity of being denser than the others (the average density of 0.67), with few members (average 2.67), and with a single component.

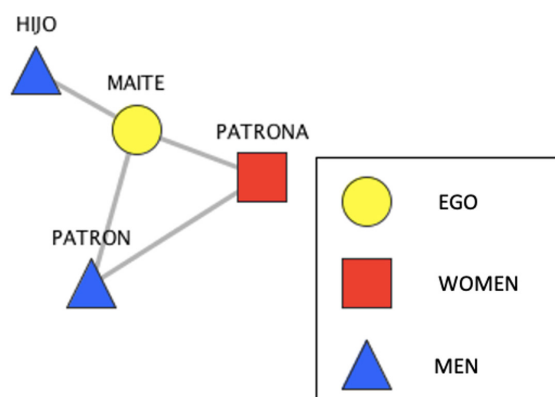


Figure 1. Maite's family.

One example of a network of this typology is that of a woman we named Maite (see Fig. 1).

She is 58 years old and has always worked as an employee. Currently, she has dedicated herself to being as a domestic worker for more than a year because she travelled to Santiago in search of job opportunities. When we first asked her who her family was, she immediately replied that it contained only her son. However, after asking her whether she would like to add someone else, she replied, 'My bosses – them. Sometimes you get much more affection from strangers than your family'. Constantly living with these people formed a frequent, intimate and prolonged bond made up of emotional and affective elements. Thus, Maite had a family structure with her son on one side and her employers on the other. One of the particularities of this network is that it is minimal, and the caring relationship between Maite and her son stands out as a very close relationship that she constantly seeks to maintain, as does her son: 'He always calls me in the morning to know how I woke up, how I am, and, well, I do the same. To ask him how he is, how he did at "U" [university], especially when he had a test, things like that'.

Cohesive family networks

The second typology is a "cohesive" family network (four interviewees belong to this typology, where two are men and two are women). That is the second densest network within the typology and, therefore, has the particularity of having a more significant number of direct links (nodal degrees) with an average of 3.1 links in the network (DSV: 1.7). It conforms to the traditional family type (single-parent type).

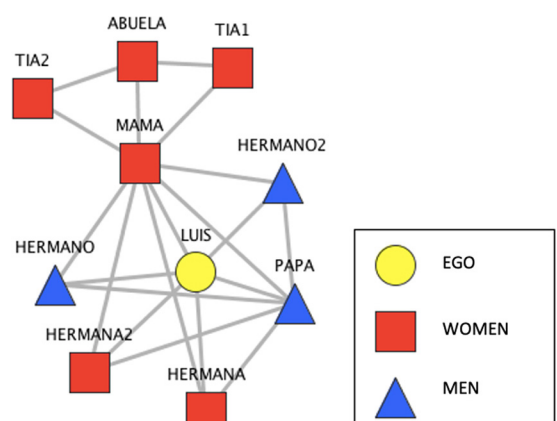


Figure 2. Luis's family.

Regarding the case we see in Figure 2, Luis is 28 years old and was born in the Fifth region; he is defined within his family as a son, brother, cousin, nephew, and grandson, thus encompassing a large number of relationships. He says that his nuclear family is made up of his four brothers, his father, and his mother, while through the latter, he also acknowledges having an extended family made up of his two aunts and his grandmother. They have maintained a rather traditional family structure, where the mother and grandmother are in charge of organizing everything during the most important celebrations, such as Christmas and New Year, being the critical actors in the work that implies maintaining kinship and care.

While the father, who works in another nearby city, has a role more linked to providing economic resources and being responsible for the “family roasts”. This configuration is also revealed in that on the maternal side, it is where more significant family events are usually held, organized by Luis’s grandmother and mother, where prior preparation and organization are necessary. Generally, because of the paternal family, that does not happen; therefore, he feels “that connection has been lost a little.” Luis works during the week in Santiago. However, he goes to his family every weekend, commenting that it is there where he can find them, and “because there is also a commitment factor, that yes, that if I go to visit one visited them or all or none”. When he tells us how he keeps family ties alive, he says: “I start from the basis that my family ties are quite good in everything, we see each other with some frequency, there is affection when we see each other, there are dynamics specifics of my family, em... I, for my part, what I try to contribute is, is always to try not to miss any family commitment when it is planned”. Thus, it is those dynamics and the fact of visiting each other’s, the factors to define his family members.

Extended and/or ramified family networks

The third typology includes the extended and branched networks. Five of the interviewees belonged to this typology, including two women and three men. The two networks were brought together into the same typology due to their similarities. Unlike the other network

types, this type has a lower density, with an average of 0.30 and low dispersion (DSV: 0.04). In addition, it has an average of 9.2 individuals in the network size (higher than the 2.67 of the clique typology and 7.5 of the cohesive typology). It has the particularity of having, on average, more intermediaries than other networks. The specificity of its structure is its number of indirect paths (diameters), where not all individuals are highly connected to each other. One of the peculiarities of this network is that a set of actors who have second, third and even fourth-order ties are incorporated into it, producing a broad network configuring the group.

We present two examples of this type of family network. Figure 3 shows the conformation of Pedro’s network as an example of an extended network, while Figure 4 shows Jorge’s network as an example of a branched network.

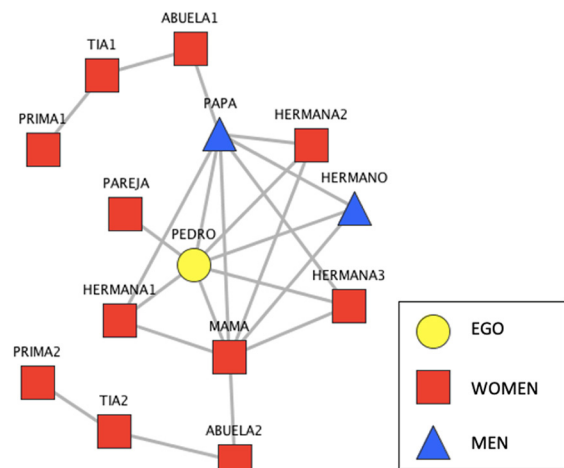


Figure 3. Pedro's family.

Pedro is 30 years old, identifies as a brother and was born in the VI region. He currently works in academia at a Chilean university, performing teaching and research. The people who make up one's extended family are intermediated by a contact that maintains that relationship. For example, a woman's mother is the mediator of the bond with her maternal grandmother, aunt and cousin, while the same occurs on the paternal side. In Pedro's case, the way to build these ties is through a consolidated nuclear group and other people (such as his grandmothers) who are part of the

extended family and depend on a person closer than Pedro. Pedro mentioned that Christmas is among the customs of his home, during which all his family members have to be together. On the other hand, Pedro differentiated between his partner and his family, explaining how 'his family (...) is my closest family'.

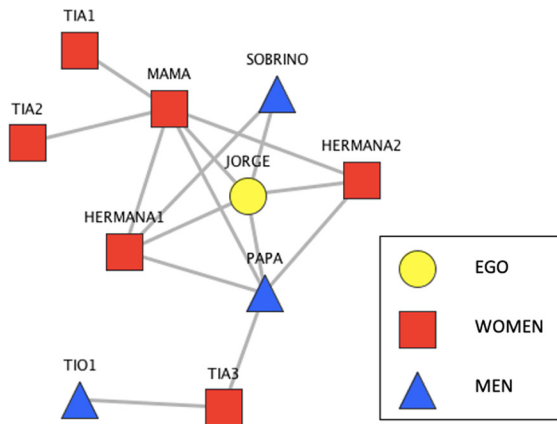


Figure 4. Jorge's family.

Jorge's family consists of a branched network and is above all characterised by the fact that it does not have a nucleus as focused as that of Pedro. However, it maintains certain links with people who are more distant but are mediated by other actors who claim the bonds. It is also a smaller network with fewer extensions between the links. Jorge is 26 years old and primarily considers himself a son. In his words, 'Concerning the fact that she is like the one who has great leadership within my family, she is my mother... I believe that we build our positions based on her position'. Their non-direct links are close since they are intermediated by only one or two actors, meaning that this network is branched rather than extended. Jorge conceives of his family as 'the people with whom I live the most, my father; I think that the fundamental thing is when my father goes home'. Even though his parents have recently separated, he visits his home, which positions him in a place very close to his father, as seen in his family network.

Centre-periphery family network

Finally, the fourth typology is the centre-periphery network. Five interviewees belonged to this type, including three men and two women.

Among all the networks, this type has the lowest density, with an average of 0.19, as well as the highest dispersion (DSV: 0.08). In addition, it has an average size of 10.25 individuals as well as the particularity of a set of components in its structure (an average of 4.25). As can be seen, one of the peculiarities of its configuration is the number of features and isolated cases it contains. For this reason, in this network, a heterogeneous set of actors who are not traditionally considered members of the family are present, broadening how kinship ties are subjectively conceived.

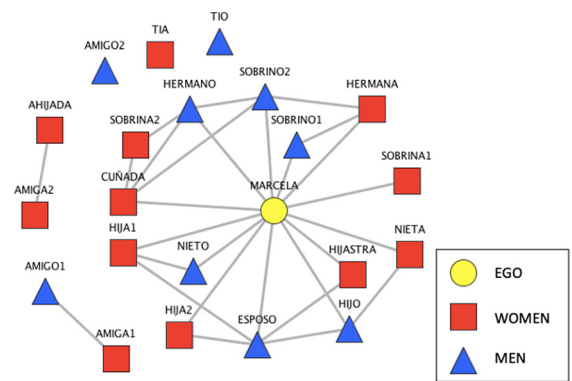


Figure 5. Marcela's family.

Marcela is 55 years old and works part-time in an institution, allowing her some flexibility (see Fig. 5). She takes part in other small jobs that occupy the other half of her time, and she is already considering options for her retirement. She has a significant role in her family, and her centrality was immediately made evident. At 55 years of age, she represents herself in several positions of kinship at the same time: mother, wife, sister, aunt and, until recently, daughter. She has been building many relevant relationships that have become part of her family network. Some of her friends, uncles and aunts have a relationship only with her (they have become like a part of her family), meaning they are actors isolated from the other people in her nuclear family. Throughout the interview, she repeatedly mentioned all the people making up this network because, for her, it was essential to consider everyone and not leave anyone out. Marcela told us that she even had a way of distinguishing the most interconnected group from the others since 'we play in the small family, eh, it is

fun, because we have names. For example, we say that the five of us have given names like the core, and the rest is like the big family. We have nicknames, core or things like that'. On the other hand, having so many roles within the same network means that she is continually in conflict with herself. She wants (and is not always able) to respond to everyone's caring demands. As she said, 'I think that the issue of role conflict or the number of roles that I assumed are some things that make it more difficult (...) It does not give me time, for example, for some practices that would be super rich'.

Marcela considers blood relations as part of her family but also several friends who play essential roles in her life and with whom she has created a link more robust than just friendship. In other cases, we did not see the incorporation of, for example, uncles or aunts as part of the family, but Marcela mentioned that she has always considered being part of her family.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, an analysis strategy was proposed based on a transition from ego-alter to alter-alter data collection. However, this procedure required the inference of information on the relation between the named alter, which is a common limitation of any such research. Nevertheless, this approach permitted the use of social network metrics to explore the structural elements of their conformations and create a deeper understanding of the qualitative aspects. Using this method, the research was able to examine the characteristics of the relations/links and the meaning constructed by the participants. Therefore, it is proposed that this approach can be applied to make additional structural dimensions, such as gender, class and age, more visible.

Following this, a mixed-method technique was used to create typologies of family networks. Additionally, a number of social network analysis metrics complemented by in-depth interviews informed the analysis's structural dimension and the interviewers' narratives. In this way, the research allowed for a deeper understanding of the structural construction of the family networks and the modes in which they are configured.

Accordingly, based on the hypotheses from the theoretical framework, the following conclusions were made: First, it was confirmed that the family networks described by the women had more internal cohesion compared to those described by the men. This idea was already established by Yanagisako (1979) and Di Leonardo (1987). Second, the social network analysis approach demonstrated the diversity in the conformation of family forms, defined by the interviewees and their understandings of kinship structures. These structures were observed to fall under the four typologies proposed: (1) clique family networks, (2) cohesive family networks, (3) extended and ramified family networks and (4) centre-periphery family networks.

This study has helped to illuminate definition of family in Santiago, Chile; while other analysis of the same participants interviewees can be found in other articles (González, 2013, 2016a, 2016b; González and Ortiz, 2016; Ortiz and González, 2016). Nevertheless, the relevance of the narrative in social network analysis is essential to reach a deeper understanding of this case study. In the future, similar studies will be necessary not only from a cross-sectional point of view but also using a longitudinal and comparative perspective.

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Contribution statement

FO translate this version of the article. HG was in charge of the conceptualization, funding acquisition, project administration, and investigation. FO and AE work in data curation, formal analysis, and methodology. AE did all the visualizations. All the authors helped in the writing process, including original draft, review, and editing.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Statement of data consent

The qualitative and quantitative data generated during the development of this study cannot be freely available due to restrictions imposed by Fondecyt Initiation projects No. 11121245 ethical agreements with the participants. ●

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