

Gender and labor: toward a national agenda on labor-family balance in Chile

Verónica Gómez-Urrutia  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2399-7566>

Universidad Autónoma de Chile, Chile, gomezver@gmail.com

Andrés Jiménez-Figueroa  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8324-0250>

Universidad de Talca, Chile, anjimenez@utalca.cl

Abstract: This paper seeks to explore discourses on the possibilities and limitations identified by relevant actors in the sphere of paid work to set up a national agenda on labor-family policies that are compatible with gender equality in Chile. The study is based on in-depth interviews with managers of organizations in different productive sectors, workers' representatives, legislators and officers of the Chilean government. The interviews sought to establish their perceptions on the importance of labor-family balance and policies aimed to promote it, the place of such policies in the political agenda and the conditions necessary to successfully implement them. Two main obstacles to set a national gender-friendly agenda on work-family policies were identified: first, the persistent identification of carework as a female responsibility, thereby, a situation that only affects female workers. Second, the discursive tension between the ideas of productivity and worker's welfare.

Keywords: paid work, carework, gender, public policy, discursive institutionalism.

Resumen: El presente trabajo busca reconstruir los discursos sobre las posibilidades y limitaciones que surgen desde el mundo del trabajo remunerado para hacer posible instalar una agenda de conciliación de responsabilidades laborales y familiares, con equidad de género, en Chile. El estudio se basa en entrevistas en profundidad a directivos de organizaciones de varios sectores productivos, representantes de trabajadores/as, del Ejecutivo y legisladores/as sobre medidas de conciliación trabajo-familia, su importancia en la agenda laboral y las condiciones necesarias para su implementación. Entre los resultados se encontró que la persistente identificación de las responsabilidades familiares como un ámbito femenino, y la tensión existente entre las ideas de productividad –asociada con largas jornadas de trabajo– y bienestar de los/as trabajadores constituyen dos obstáculos claros para relacionar los discursos, hoy divergentes, sobre trabajo, familia y equidad de género en Chile.

Palabras clave: trabajo remunerado, cuidado, género, políticas públicas, institucionalismo discursivo.

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Introduction

The distribution of remunerated v. non-remunerated labor and its gender implications have become increasingly important in the international social development agenda¹: changes in the family structure, demographic aging, the mass entrance of women to the labor market and the sustained drop in the fertility rate have raised numerous questions regarding the future capacity of societies to conciliate productive and reproductive aspects in such manner that gender equality is promoted.

As regards institutional arrangements, the distribution modes of the socially necessary work imply an assignation of value “both symbolical and material” for each type of task, frequently expressed as monetary rewards and social rights associated to it. Because of this, they also play an important part from the standpoint of distributive justice and the recognition of individuals’ contribution to society (Fraser, 1997), and also the distribution of opportunities for men, women and children.

Historically, the sexual division of labor “providing men – caretaking women” implied specialization according to gender lines that relegated reproductive work to the context of the family, house chores and caretaking to the private space, making it invisible as socially valuable work and configuring a sort of inequality rooted in the very mode of social organization. The demand for gender equality has stressed the importance of domestic and caretaking work as a key element for the wellbeing of individuals and societies, relieving the tensions implicit in the project to conciliate the demands of this kind of work with those imposed by remunerated work. Such tension is still in the center of gender inequalities in terms of opportunities to develop talent, generate an own income and decide on it (Adatti *et al.*, 2018). This distinction also crosses the possibilities to link work not only with economic productivity, but also with wellbeing and the harmonic development of human capabilities.

In this context, this research intends to rebuild discourses on the conditions, possibilities and limitations that appear in the remunerated-labor sphere to make it possible to set an agenda that conciliates labor and familial responsibilities with gender equality in Chile. It was intended to identify agreements and disagreements that various relevant actors in the world of

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remunerated labor —employees, unions and state representatives— propose as key to advance in an agenda of labor-family balance in Chile, and whether this is ultimately a political priority.

Methodologically, the study is based on gathering primary information on the perceptions of the directors of people management, representatives of workers, the executive and legislators on the labor-family conciliation measures, their importance in the labor agenda and the necessary conditions to set them up so that they provide conditions for gender equality. With this purpose, the article is organized into four sections: in the first, an analytical framework is proposed to locate the issue of government agendas and the discourse pacts in legislation and public policies; in the second, the methodology of the study is presented; in the third section, the main results of the data analysis are presented; and, the final section presents the conclusions of the research.

Labor, family and gender

In Chile, as in almost every society, the distribution of socially relevant labor forms is marked by gender. Men have labor participation rates proportionally higher than women in every educational level; whereas, feminine participation is clearly conditioned by the level of formal education, age and number of children as key factors. For the women who manage to enter the labor market, it frequently implies a dual task, for they are still the main responsible (if not the only) of house chores. According to the think tank *Comunidad Mujer* (2017), the global load of a Chilean couple's work "which accounts for the addition of remunerated and non-remunerated labor" reaches 11.6 hours a day for women and 9.7 for men.

The surveys of time use run by Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (INE, 2017) verify such information: in a typical working day, on average women devote 5.89 hours a day to non-remunerated labor, and men, 2.74. This gap increases at weekends, when women report devoting 6.12 hours and men, 3.5, on average, to non-remunerated work, which has direct impacts on the time that can be devoted to paid work and leisure and entertainment.

This distribution of responsibilities also affects the possibilities that men and women have to earn their incomes. Wage gaps (by sex), which in Chile may reach 30% (INE, 2017), have been attributed, at least partially, to "maternity tax": such difference that is only explainable by the fact of being a woman with a child / children (Budig et al., 2012; Oesch *et al.*, 2017). Likewise, according to Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica

Nacional, CASEN [National Socioeconomic Characterization Survey] for 2015, out of the population that is not part of the labor market owing to domestic work or caretaking responsibilities,² 20.9% is women and 0.4%, men (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2017a).

This disparity stresses by social stratum: among the women with the 20% of lowest incomes, 30% states not to look for a job outside the household owing to family reasons, by contrast, 10% does so in the 20% of the highest incomes (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2017a). Those with the lowest incomes find more disincentives to have a paid activity, either because they face the perspective of low-income posts and few promotion opportunities or because transferring caretaking to third parties is not viable in economic or cultural terms; something that those who can pay someone (generally another woman) to take care of such tasks are able to do. This explains that 76% of people over 15 years of age do not have an own income in Chile is a woman (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2017b).

The culturally rooted idea according to which family is mainly a feminine responsibility has been reinforced up to recently by public policies. The legislation in this regard has oriented to protect maternity in the context of labor rights such as the prohibition of conditioning hiring to the nonexistence of pregnancy, maternal leave or breastfeeding rights.

Only recently have measures been approved to promote the active incorporation of men into the sphere of family care such as Law no. 20.545 (2011) which prolongs the postnatal leave for female workers to six months, with the possibility to transfer part of the time to the father; Law no. 20.761 (2014), which extends the feeding right to fathers; and, the Insurance to Accompany Children, known as SANNA law (*Seguro para el Acompañamiento de Niños y Niñas*) in force as of 2018.³ All these measures intend to protect the spaces for women, and to a lesser extend men, to be able to care for their children without postponing or sacrificing their labor opportunities.

2 Corresponds to people who did not look for a job in the four weeks prior to the survey owing to any of the following reasons: a) they do not have who to leave their children with; b) they do not have who to leave their elderly with; c) they do not have who to leave other relatives with; or d) house chores.

3 This last is a compulsory insurance for employed parents of children affected by a grave health condition so that they can miss job to provide attention to them for a certain time, receiving over this time a subsidy that totally or partially replaces their wages.

The legislation states nothing about other responsibilities such as school age children (unless they experience disability or a grave illness) or the elderly. Other possible measures, for instance flexi-time (differed start and finish times), the existence of extraordinary leaves, which may be compensated or not, to deal with particular family situations, time banks and others are subject to possible negotiation between organizations and their collaborators.

There exist attempts to regulate labor-family conciliation at the level of nonbinding policies. In 2006, then Servicio Nacional de la Mujer, Sernam⁴ [National Service of Women] launched a Best Labor and Nondiscrimination Practices Guide that puts forward measures to improve conciliation between family and labor, facilitating the access of women to training and professional development. Adhering to the code provides public and private organizations with the option to obtain a certification (“Sello Iguala”) in the Chilean norm NCh 3262. On the basis of this code, Confederación de la Producción y del Comercio, CPC [Confederation of Production and Commerce] adopted that same year a “best labor practices guide on nondiscrimination in the company”, which includes a section on “Conciliation of labor responsibilities with family duties”, in which the organizations are encouraged to foster a organizational culture friendly with labor and parental responsibilities of men and women to the extent that it is compatible with the firms’ needs (Faúndez *et al.*, 2013). All these measures are voluntary, thereby, they depend on the firms’ decision.

In 2006, then-president Bachelet also decreed a Presidential Instruction Manual on Best Labor Practices for the State Administration, which states the need to incorporate measures to balance labor and family life in the management of people in each service. In September 2013, the Protocol for Monitoring Psychosocial Risks at Work, known as ISTAS 21, entered into force in Chile; it includes the dimension dual presence (labor-home) as a psychosocial risk, being this last the only dimension in which no intervention actions are demanded if there are negative or risky indicators for the workers (Ministerio de Salud de Chile, 2017). All these measures present the characteristic of being still mainly oriented toward women, with men in a subsidiary role; or else, they do not have a binding character that ensures their widespread application, restringing their application.

⁴ In 2017, Sernam became Servicio Nacional de la Mujer y Equidad de Género, Sernameg [National Service of Woman and Gender Equality], when the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality was created.

Discursive pacts and labor-family conciliation

Within this context, it is worth wondering about the possibilities to boost, from public policies, a set of measures that promote labor-family conciliation with gender equality. The present analysis considers the policies of labor-family conciliation as those that make it possible to balance family duties (house chores and caretaking, mainly) with those of labor and that can be set up both by the State or the organizations that offer paid work (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003).⁵ Hence they go beyond the labor legislation. Here, we make a first important distinction: even if these policies are distinguishable from labor legislation, they are clearly conditioned by it. For example, the long Chilean labor schedule (45 hours a week) decides on the available non-labor time. The ways in which such labor shift may be distributed or divided are established by the law, which may facilitate or hinder conciliation.

A second relevant distinction is that labor-family conciliation policies are not neutral in terms of gender: they may reinforce the traditional roles or help dismantle them. Because of this, in order for them to provide better gender equality, such policies must promote co-responsibility; this is, the equitable redistribution of family duties between men and women, but also between the families and the State (OIT and PNUD, 2009; OIT, 2013). Here labor legislation also provides a reference framework that conditions the policies; for example, ensure care services for children and the elderly for workers will make conciliation easy. However, if these services are only targeted at women, they will not favor co-responsibility. An instance of this, is the expansion of the public nursing rooms in Chile as of 2016; even if they favor conciliation, the service only targets mothers, in accordance with Article 203 of the Chilean Labor Code, in which the right to nursing rooms is exclusive of female workers.⁶ The idea that childcare was a women's responsibility was thus reinforced.

From this standpoint, the issue here approached shows at least two important ideological conditionings. On the one side, the limits between labor and family time; and on the other, the sexual division of labor, which implies the preeminence of men in the "productive" sphere (paid work) and of

⁵ In other contexts, such as the Anglo, the concept work-life balance is preferred (Casper *et al.*, 2018), understanding that non-labor aspects not only comprise family, but also community responsibilities and the right to leisure. In this article, the more restricted concept will be utilized.

⁶ The policy of nursing rooms also included female students or those looking for a job, not fathers though, maintaining the gender bias.

women in the “reproductive”, family. These conditionings are relevant as they provide a favorable or unfavorable ideological-discursive environment for certain topics such public policy issues, conditioning the way in which they are defined and negotiated (Anderson, 2003; Sabatier, 2007; Kingdon, 2003). Both the definition of the problem and the possibilities to include it in the public agenda depend on the organizational, discursive and power resources the actors have, as well as the existing political opportunities (Fischer and Gottweis, 2012; Schmidt, 2014). Owing to this, the ideational environment where public policies on labor and family move is key to understand the possibilities to set up an agenda on the topic that re-conceptualizes it as a public-interest problem, not private, which involves workers, employers and the State. The analysis framework of this work adheres to the suppositions of what Schmidt (2014) calls discursive institutionalism: a standpoint that considers that institutions produce discourses that may be ideological, pragmatic or opportunistic, but which beyond their substantive content are mobilized in a specific sociocultural context and with certain resources. This way, some ideas may be more akin to determinate contexts, which influence their setting as a part of the public debate. This conditions the possibility to establish a social pact, which is in the first place, always, a discursive pact: the stakeholders concur on specific points, which may suppose the resignification of some terms or categories in the process of interpretation of the problem. This does not mean to relegate to a second level the issue of power, for as Schmidt (2014: 7) states, the discourse and actions of the agents are also a response to material interests and realities.

From this standpoint, the elaboration and setting up of public policies on labor-family conciliation may be understood as located in a discursive field in which social legitimacies are constructed and reconstructed both in terms of the limits of the action of the State and what is defined in terms of gender. This issue implies negotiating in terms of meaning; the distinction between the public (labor) and the private (family) and within the latter, the possibilities that men and women have to negotiate roles as regards caretaking, house chores and income earning. The issues referring to gender and family have, in addition a value dimension (the social importance given to the role of mother, for instance), which implies that a political agreement, relatively strong is needed, and owing to this better discursive articulation in order to accomplish the institutionalization of public policies in this regard (Gómez, 2014). In like manner, Blofield and Martínez (2014) and Staab (2017) distinguish how the current modifications of gender roles will demand the revision of important parts of the architecture of labor laws

and social welfare, which historically have assumed non-paid female labor, either as domestic work and caretaking or non-paid community activities, as a base for policies, especially social, as apart of the citizen role of women's civic role. Because of this, the promotion of policies to conciliate labor and family with co-responsibility entails the redefinition of some basic terms in this discursive field and their acceptance as part of the legitimate action of the State comes from the stakeholders in the sphere of labor: the State itself, productive and service organizations and workers.

Methodology

In terms of the respondents, three groups of relevant actors to discuss the policies of labor-family conciliation were identified, using stratified purposeful sampling, which intends to identify participants from four strata out of the same social collective (Izcara, 2014); summarized in Table 1.⁷

For the two first groups, organizations with at least 100 employees from various production sectors were contacted: manufacturing and service firms, and the public sector. This criterion is due to the fact that the productive sector which the organization belongs to poses specific challenges to organize the working shifts or else, the characteristic of having a largely male or female labor force. Eventually, eleven organizations agreed to participate. Out of these, three belong to the public sector, four in the service sector (trade and banking) and four are manufacturing firms. For the case of the parliamentarians, the members of the Commissions of Labor and Social Security, both representatives and senators were contacted. Four of them agreed to be interviewed in person, two men and two women; in terms of partisan affiliation, two were part of center-left parties, one in a center-right, and one declared being independent. In the Ministries, informants with direct relation with topics related to labor-family conciliation were sought. In total, 52 semi-structured interviews were held between 2015 and 2017 with the same number of people; each one lasted about 60 minutes.

In every case, a letter of commitment in which both the participant organizations and researchers committed to respect the voluntariness, confidentiality and anonymity of those who accepted to be respondents. Moreover, each respondent received and signed an individual informed consent format. The information gathering technique was semi-structured interviews with homologous patterns, this is to say, the same topics were considered for every respondent. This sort of interview was chosen because

⁷ Tables are in the Annex, at the end of the present article (Editor's note).

it is an instrument that allows the researcher to access the perspective of the subject under study: understand their mental categories, interpretations and feelings, the reasons for their actions on the basis of a questionnaire with a logical sequence, but it is not standardized and flexible (Izcara, 2014; Wengraf, 2004).

The analysis of the corpus presented by the interviews privileged the identification and comparison of three discursive lines, *grosso modo* defined as: a) the perceived need to set up labor reforms that facilitate the labor-family conciliation and the reasons that justify them; b) the need that these policies foster co-responsibility in the terms previously defined in this text; and, c) the opportunities/barriers perceived to set up policies that facilitate labor-family conciliation. To do so, in the first place an open categorization process, and secondly structural (MacQueen *et al.*, 2008; Saldaña, 2009) resorting to software Atlas.ti ver. 7. This is, firstly a codification was made to identify the most recurrent topics or categories in the discourses and their possible association with other ideas. Then, structural codification was used; it is applied to key ideas or concepts to research each segment of the text (Saldaña, 2009), defining three large key conceptual units or macro-categories summarized in table 2, which for their part, produced associated social dimensions. The analysis considered categories and emergent dimensions, which appeared in the very discourse of the respondents.

Later on, these categories were ordered in terms of the logical relations established between them; this is to say, the base structure is the discourse and the valuations that respondents made for such categories were included. Finally, the structures for each of the three groups were systematically compared, with the intention to establish the discourses' similarities and dissimilarities, understanding that these are not monolithic and present internal contradictions. Such process was reviewed by a professional alien to the research, who acted as consultant in order to avoid biases derived from our own research interests.

Results

For clarity in the exposition, the findings will be ordered in function of the discursive lines used in the analysis. In terms of the perceived need to implement measures that facilitate labor-family conciliation, a first verification is that few firms that participated in this study, but also at national level (Bosch *et al.* 2014), have policies to conciliate labor-family, focusing on abiding by the current labor law. The reasons put forward to

do so are basically that although family and the suitable performance of family roles are greatly important for the workers' wellbeing, these spheres are out of the firms' responsibilities, they are private decisions and forms of organization that require, therefore, private solutions. Hence, despite that the relevance of considering workers from the standpoint of their personal realities is recognized, the family dimension is not considered an important factor at the moment of organizing labor. The following extracts show the contrast between these two spheres:

The employer does not have the worker's family in mind, they are utterly different things. Then if you're single, don't have children or aged people to look for, is like the ideal situation. But these people with no family responsibilities are few. Here, those with a family are punished, because it is as if it was not part of what is needed (union leader, woman, service sector).⁸

Yeah right! The family of the workers is very important, the idea that they are people not numbers. This is considered in people management. But there is not a formal policy to conciliate labor and family I'd say it is an issue, don't know, of common sense, to recognize there are important personal aspects... but I have the feeling that it is not something the firm does "as part of the job" (people management director, woman, manufacturing sector).⁹

This interpretation logic is evinced in the status of the labor-family conciliation measures in the firms, which typically are associated to the idea of benefits in wellbeing, in the same category as Christmas festivities or agreements with trading houses, for example, and not as part of people management. Out of the 11 firms in the present study. Three stated having an explicit policy in this regard; out of them, in two cases such policy was highly formalized, with established rules and a clear system to organize time for the family. However, workers in these firms reported that using such measures was heavily conditioned by the supervisors' and direct bosses' decisions, which in practice reintroduced an important degree of discretion. Varying discretion degrees mean *ad hoc* rules that would compromise those with actual caretaking activities or are at a position with little negotiation power, as it is case of people with positions deemed "replaceable" in the firm (Gornick and Meyers, 2009). This particularly affects women, mainly those with the lowest qualification degrees, for owing to gendered cultural mandates, they usually ask for permissions to deal with family situations, which are perceived as interruptions of the worker's "regular" performance. The above also jeopardizes their possibilities of career development.

8 Personal interview, January 18th, 2016 (in Santiago).

9 Personal interview, December 23rd, 2015 (in Talca).

Promotion opportunities are a paradigmatic example of this tension, since in general, they are conditioned to meet certain productivity goals or training that are associated to regular working hours. Or else, training opportunities are related to the commitment (expressed as presence in the workplace) that bosses and supervisors notice in the worker and that are conditioned to the workers' willingness (availability) to prioritize labor before family.

The logic of labor-family conciliation as an individual and private problem and not as one with structural roots also permeates the discussion on labor flexibility. According to data available for Chile, in the firms where there are conciliation measures, on average about 70% of the workers positively values labor flexibility measures (Fundación Chile Unido, 2017)¹⁰ such as paid or unpaid leaves, differed start and finish times or compressed weeks to have a day off or shorter shifts. When these are part of a policy of people management and applied with clear criteria, in an individualized context and/or where there is little negotiation power, there is also the risk that the organization colonizes family spaces that were previously provided for in the law or previous negotiations if the schedule is organized on productivity demands and not family life. Owing to this, organizations of workers express mistrust in the face of possible flexibility measures, for in many cases these are in tension with already acquired labor rights as part of a logic defined as labor pauperization and against the workers' rights.¹¹

This debate was known at national level during the discussion on the labor reform fostered by the second administration of socialist Michelle Bachelet (2014-2018), which included the so called "adaptability pacts": the possibility that workers and enterprises may reach some agreements on the distribution of shifts and other adaptability agreements for workers with family duties, women and youths. Initially, this measure implied greater negotiation capacity for the unions, which was banned by Sebastián Piñera's (2018-) center-right administration, leaving gaps for negotiation, though in a context of uneven relations of power, as pointed out by a senator:

We ended up in the worst case scenario after the presidential ban, because now we can negotiate spaces that were protected, but without increasing the power of workers. Then, it is a nominal negotiation, because the result depends on what the employer defines as the best interests for the firm. And here in Chile, there is this entrepreneurial culture of

10 Data in a study in which 90 national and multinational public and private organizations of various sizes and economy sectors. The study considers firms that voluntarily participated, due to which it has a self-selection bias.

11 Group interview with 14 union leaders, October 22nd, 2016 (in Talca).

organizing the workers lives around labor needs (Senator, Labor Commission, Center party).¹²

A second verification, related to the second analytic line, refers to the poor adherence to the idea of considering co-responsibility between men and women to balance labor and family. The concept of co-responsibility implies that family duties must distribute among the adult family members regardless of their sex (OIT, 2013). Even if this distribution is the result of an agreement in the family, public policies and organizations may broaden or reduce the negotiation margins available for men and women in terms of facilitating or making it easy to distribute family duties more equitably.

By and large, in the firms that participate in this study, the demand for family time is recognized not only as private, but essentially feminine. This is understandable from the standpoint of the legal reference; as indicated, in Chile most of the rights related to family duties such as postnatal care and nursing rooms are associated to the female worker, reinforcing cultural stereotypes. However, even in activities with majority of women such as trade and banking, labor-family conciliation it is a problem of the female workers, not of the workforce, as evinced in the following extracts:

And you will laugh, but the ones with the most permission are men. In their case, it is more for personal issues, doctor, those sort of things... but the idea that women ask for more permissions because they have children and a house remains. Indeed, in the firm it is always said "women are always asking for permissions" and that is a lie, it is false (Human Resources leader, woman, manufacturing sector).¹³

Here we don't have problems of labor-work conciliation, as most of the employees are men and married. Then issues of the house are solved in a different manner; without the participation of the firm (Human Resources leader, man, manufacturing sector).¹⁴

This feminization of family duties has effects for the female workers on two sides: on the one side, it produces tension between the satisfaction of practical and immediate needs, which at present affect women more because of the identification of the female role with family and the strategic need to question the ideal worker model as someone always available for the firm. This implies undermining the standard of the "ideal" worker as that without family duties; a standard before which most of the female workers seem inefficient, and troublemakers, but which is still legitimate for the firms' directors and also for the workers with no family duties. As pointed out by on female respondent:

12 Personal interview, March 2nd, 2016 (in Valparaíso).

13 Personal interview, August 14th, 2015 (in Santiago).

14 Personal interview, July 28th, 2016 (in Talca).

When we raise the issue of times, adjusting the performance goals and objectives to the family reality, the employer tells me: “see, that is the cost of working with women”. For the workforce mostly comprises women. “Such as that person?” Yeah, but she does not have children and her parents are still young, but that is not going to last all of her career, she will have to choose (union leader, woman, banking sector).¹⁵

This point has concrete practical implications on a second front: to define the issues that will be negotiated between employers and employees as legitimate demands. Since labor-family conciliation policies are characterized as woman-oriented, the demand takes place in a discursive field of ambiguous legitimacy, mainly owing to two reasons: one, as it is seemed as a particular interest, it is thereby less relevant than other demands deemed to affect the whole workforce. One of the respondents summarizes this:

We in retail stores, as most are women, prefer to work from Monday to Friday and rest at the weekend. This helps the family. The [male] colleague, who is more like a breadwinner, not. It has always been the same, in the negotiations, for instance, we have colleagues who don’t want to stop working at the weekends, this is a disadvantage for them, as at weekends we sell the most (union leader, woman, service sector).¹⁶

The other reason is as literature suggests, when a demand is associated to a challenge to the roles fixed “for women” in the imaginary, namely: maternity or caretaking, it weakens (Gómez, 2014; Staab, 2017). In this logic, remunerations and pecuniary benefits have preponderance over other needs and working at times normally devoted to family, night shifts, weekends, national or local holidays are considered an option to improve by those who do not have family duties (or delegate them to other people) or prioritize the role of provider as these are paid at a higher rate than an ordinary day. Because of this, it is usually a contentious negotiation point, even in the very organizations of workers, which frequently cannot express a common claim to the employer, or if they do, this seems secondary.

At once, another verification of the present work is that frequently it is assumed that better economic remunerations will necessarily solve conciliation issues, mixing two problems, which in spite of being related, cannot have a common solution, as the next extract shows:

It is not that people don’t care [claims for labor-family conciliation]. But, one works for the money in a country with super low wages. There are people who work a lot because money is not enough (union leader, man, manufacturing sector).¹⁷

15 Personal interview, December 17th, 2015 (in Santiago).

16 Personal interview, July 13th, 2015 (in Talca).

17 Personal interview, December 29th, 2015 (in Talca).

This paradox occurs even in sectors with majority of women (trade and banking), however the unions headed by women pay more attention to conciliation than their male counterparts. Raise wages and leveling men and women's remunerations would decrease the need to work overtime or outside regular hours, but it does not offer an answer to everyday family demands, which are the greatest obstacle for women to incorporate into the labor sphere and for their professional development in equal terms with men.

From the standpoint of the opportunities/barriers perceived to implement policies that facilitate labor-family conciliation, one of the most recurrent categories was labor productivity. It is an emerging category that has two sides. On one hand, high productivity levels are seen as an opportunity to provide workers with greater autonomy in the organization of working hours; by contrast, low production levels are discursively associated to the need of prolonging the shifts and the reduction in the level of autonomy that operational levels have in the firms to define how they will be ordered. Available data suggest that production per worker in Chile is relatively low, in comparison with other countries of OECD, of which Chile is a member as of 2010, it may be considered high in the context of other Latin American countries (OCDE, 2018).

However, in the discourses of managers, unions and other workers' association, "low productivity" of the Chilean labor force is a recurrent mention, though with different origins. For the employers, it is an organizational culture of extensive labor, more than intensive; for the workers, it is lack of investment in relevant training to perform their jobs more efficiently. This helps understand that even though the idea that workers with more balanced life will produce more is frequently mentioned, this coexists with the notion that altering the existing modes of labor in order to facilitate conciliation will become fewer working hours and so, an even lower productivity. A member of the parliament summarizes this as follows:

I think that if the entrepreneur sees that "labor-family conciliation" helps his firm increase productivity, I have no doubt that it'll be set up. Thing is, who takes the first step? Who takes the risk and affords the costs associated to these decisions? (Representative, commission of Labor and Social Security, right-wing party).¹⁸

The characterization of the change required to set up conciliation measures as a risk helps understand as well that the workers' wellbeing is seen as opposed to the firm's ultimate goal: economic survival. However, the present study and other works (Bosch *et al.*, 2014; Fundación Chile Unido, 2017) evince there is poor registration of the functioning of this sort of

18 Personal interview, July 3rd, 2015 (in Santiago).

measures and how they may be assessed beyond the workers' perception. Even in the organizations with explicit conciliation policies, the effective impacts on the workforce, for example on staff turnover or productivity, are neither measured nor systematically recorded in any of the firms considered in this study and there are few references in the literature for the Chilean case. The logic of risk, hence, is not tried and it overlooks that current arrangements place the cost of conciliation on women, as it is assumed that they must fulfill productive roles without leaving aside the reproductive one and accept the inequality of opportunities this generates as a result of a "private" decision. This is an ambivalence that is also recognized in the State discourse on female employment, as summarized by one of our respondents in the Executive:

When the country realizes that it needs women because the economy is growing and because you need to take the labor posts, it doesn't necessarily means you have overcome everything it implies. Because the adaption of human-resources policies to actually be co-responsible needs greater commitment than nursing rooms. And because there are lots of social policies such as pre-school education that are still based on women's non-paid work. And there, women's issues matter little and are points of conflict, because it is easy to criticize and say: "ah that's female anti-employment, employment will cost more, productivity will drop" (Advisor to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security of the Ministry of the Treasury).¹⁹

Within this context, the discussion on productivity takes place in a discursive framework that does not consider the substantive modification of the sexual division of labor, nor the current modes of organizing productive work, in order to contemplate the inclusion of family duties, which are seen as a result of a (personal) decision to prioritize an aspect over another, and in virtue of this, as a risk for productivity, especially in a context described as changing and competitive. The State discourse in this regard is ambiguous: even if the need to advance toward greater gender equality and incorporating female talents into employment, at once the idea that the greatest social contribution of women is reproductive work is maintained (Gómez, 2014). There is an omission as regards the democratization of the caretaking roles and tasks in the family, even though it is deemed a desirable objective (Ansoleaga and Godoy, 2013).

Discussion and conclusions

The analysis in the previous pages suggests that despite the growing incorporation of women into the labor force, there are still important barriers

19 Personal interview, May 13th, 2016 (in Santiago).

for a broad discussion about the way to organize productive and reproductive labor outside the traditional roles, which imply the specialization in gendered tasks and also an uneven distribution of rewards for each sort of work. This has become a systematic disadvantage for women in the economic sphere and in opportunities for the development of talent by sex, as well as a significant overload from the dual labor shift that face those who have to combine their caretaking responsibilities with paid work everyday.

A relevant part of these barriers are ideological and mainly refer to the discursive prevalence of family as a sphere detached from productive work and, owing to this, from the distribution of reproductive work that takes place in the family and following purely personal decisions. This way, the cultural and structural conditionings of these decisions gendered expectations, but also the organization of productive work periods, the logic of the incentives to develop a career and the opportunities for men and women are systematically overlooked. From this standpoint, in the discourses at workplaces appear as neutral in terms of gender, unless there are opposed explicit dispositions; for example, those aimed at pregnant or breastfeeding women, which are justified by biological reasons. Wage gaps and breaches in the access to chair positions between men and women are seen as the result of the individuals' (personal) availability to invest time, effort and talent on paid work. This does not consider the socially-punished expectation according to which reproductive work, key to preserve the wellbeing of children, men and women at home, is almost exclusively carried out by women. Moreover, it implies that women with family duties will be less productive, since their main efforts will be at the household. Despite this supposition has not been verified by means of empirical data, it would be in the origin of the "maternity tax" (Oesch *et al.*, 2017).

Owing to this, discourses on labor-family conciliation still focus on the need to facilitate women's ability to balance what is conceived as their main role "housekeeping and raising children" with the possible role of breadwinner and not in the redefinition of traditional roles, in spite of the progressive increase of Chilean households' dependency on incomes from women, estimated to be around 33% and many of which are single-parent with a female head (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2017a).

The ambiguity in Chilean State's discourse in this regard is key. Historically, social policies have been strongly supported on unpaid female work, either as caretaking or community activities; which Staab (2012) identifies as "maternalism" in social policies. As stated at first in this paper, a large part of the Chilean labor legislation links caretaking rights to women

(specifically mothers) placing men in a subsidiary role and framed into an ideological bias in favor of productive organizations.

So, on the one side, the productive sphere is encouraged to incorporate women in equal conditions; on the other, though, the important issue of cultural and legal frames that imply women's reproductive role, which limits the exercise of an integrated labor and gender agenda from the State. The noticeable effect is key, even in those firms which set up measure beyond labor legislation, as it may foster co-responsibility decreasing the probability that claims become women's and so, they become secondary in the agendas of the very organized workers.

From the standpoint of power relations, those who can push this debate, the workers' organizations, are internally divided in this regard and have limited negotiation power, as evinced by the debate on labor flexibility. In a context of low negotiation power, it is reasonable to suppose that new forms of labor organization will be frowned upon by the workers, as historically in Chile flextime has been understood as deregulation (Sisto, 2009). The organizations propose that a way to survive in changing and globalized labor environments is to increase the added value (productivity) or else, soften the legal frames that rule labor in order to allow more agile responses in the face of market changes. However, it is not yet possible to fully dimension the associated costs from an economic, social, familial and personal standpoint, and particularly, how these costs will distribute among firms, workers and the State, in addition to their impact on gender inequality.

Having research works that contribute to this line is very important in a context in which new flextime and partial labor forms open as employment opportunities for those with the heaviest family duties (women), on the understanding that they are in charge of unfolding private conciliation strategies. Softening without paying attention to relations between productive and reproductive work represents the actual risk that, once again, the possible costs and benefits are unevenly distributed over gender and social-class cleavages, perpetuating the existing inequalities. Owing to this, the construction of an effective agenda to conciliate labor and family needs to evince the links between productive and reproductive labor, as well as the crucial role the latter has on keeping social welfare, which is responsibility of every society, not only of women.

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Annex

Table 1
Respondents

Stakeholder	Sort of respondent
Productive and service organizations (firms)	Managers and people in charge of people managing and human resources. Spokespeople of Union Associations (e.g., chambers).
Workers	Unions or negotiation groups. Workers' organizations by sector or national level (Central Unitaria de Trabajadores).
State	Members of the legislative power: parliamentarians of the commissions for labor in the representative's and senator's chambers. Public servants of Ministries and relevant governmental offices such as Ministries of Labor, and Women and Gender Equality.

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2

Analysis macro-categories

Macro-category	Associated conceptual dimensions
Representation of the limits perceived between family and labor.	Labor-family relation: definition and sorts of recognized measures. Labor-family relation: importance. Negative v. positive labor-family interactions.
Roles (productive and reproductive) and their link to gender.	Definition of labor commitment. Worker as identity role. Definition of family commitment. Paternity / maternity as identity role and differences by gender. Incentives / disincentives to hire women or people with family duties.
Barriers and opportunities	Labor legislation as incentive / disincentive to hire certain social groups: debate on the funding of family-associated rights. Chaining and competitive environments that demand swift responses: labor flexibly v. deregulation. Organization structure and requirements for labor force. Productivity and autonomy of the labor force as a risk and advancement possibility.

Source: own elaboration.

Verónica Gómez-Urrutia. Ph.D. (Gender Studies) from the University of Sussex (United Kingdom). Master in Political Science from Universidad Federal de Minas Gerais (Brazil) and journalist from the University of Chile. Scholar in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities and researcher associated to Center of Studies and Social Management of Maule, both belong to the Autonomous University of Chile, seat Talca, Chile. Research lines: gender and citizenship in Latin America, and public policies on gender and family. Recent publications: Gómez-Urrutia, Verónica, Royo, P. and Cruz, M. (2017), "Imagining Families: Gender, Youth, and Diversity in Chile", in *Affilia. Journal of Women and Social Work*, vol. 32, no. 4, United States, DOI: 10.1177/0886109917718232; Gómez-Urrutia, Verónica, Arellano, O. and Valenzuela, C. (2017), "Negociaciones en familia: género, trabajo y cuidado en Chile", in *Revista Estudos Feministas*, vol. 25, no. 2, Brazil, DOI: 10.1590/1806-9584.2017v25n2p661; Jiménez, A., Gómez, Verónica and Palomo, G. (2017), "Work-family balance, participation in family work and parental self-efficacy in Chilean workers", in *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth*, vol. 9, no. 1, Canada.

Andrés Jiménez-Figueroa. Doctor in Business Administration from the Free University of Brussels, organizational psychologist from the University of Santiago de Chile and master in Administration and Human Resources Direction (Chile). At present he is an academican in the School of Psychology and a researcher in the Research Group on Quality of Life and Healthy environments (GICVAS). Research lines labor-family conciliation in organizations and quality of life in labor environments. Recent publications: Jiménez, A., Gómez, V. and Palomo, G. (2017), "Work-family balance, participation in family work and parental self-efficacy in Chilean workers", in *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth*, vol. 9, no. 1, Canada; Abarca, S., Letelier, A., Aravena, V. and Jiménez, A. (2016), "Equilibrio trabajo-familia, satisfacción laboral y apoyo familiar en docentes de Escuelas básicas", in *Psicología desde el Caribe*, vol. 33, no. 3, Colombia; Jiménez, A. and Aravena Vega, V. (2015), "Desafíos de fomentar estrategias personales e incorporar políticas de conciliación trabajo-familia en las organizaciones", in *Pensamiento Psicológico*, vol. 13, no. 2, Colombia, DOI: 10.11144/Javerianacali.PPSI13-2.dfep