

## **THE FAMILY AS RESOURCE FOR SOCIETY IN CHILE**

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There is vast literature that recognizes the importance of family, or at least of some aspects of it, in the production of economic and social well-being. The social performance of families that have achieved consistency and stability through time (conjugal families or intact families) has been a matter of increasing study considering an ample spectrum of social goods (which go from the fertility rate to civic participation). Those performances become more patent in a context in which the conjugal family with children living at home tends to blur as a predominant familiar arrangement in recent societies. The absence or instability of marriage and the growth of homes without a stable couple, especially homes led by women alone, produce a new situation whose evaluation, in terms of social performances, is a matter that arises a great preoccupation. In our countries, the data which has caused a great alarm is the accelerated growth of homes composed by single mothers with children, and the evident position of disadvantage in which these homes stay with respect to those who have a stable couple. But also the tremendous increase of cohabiting couples (even more than divorce and couple reconsideration) offers an additional angle of anxiety with respect to the social performance of families.

In this preliminary investigation, data will be shown allowing to demonstrate social advantages associated to the conjugal families, especially in the domain of economic well-being and social participation. Evidence will also be included regarding the transmission of intergeneration advantages associated to this kind of family. The data arises from diverse secondary sources, especially from the National Survey of Socioeconomic Characterization (CASEN, Ministry of Social Development, Chilean Government) that evaluates the economic well-being of Chilean homes. Unreleased data is also included which come from the Family Survey as Society Resource (Sociology Institute and Centro UC de la Familia, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, 2014) which was specially carried out to get to know the dynamics and familiar attitudes and their link with diverse social performances.

In the first part, the relationship between family and economic well-being is examined and well-known evidence is shown, which supports that two-parent families, where both spouses work, are clearly more successful than families having a holder father and a mother who stays at home. However, it is not always clearly mentioned that the greatest vulnerability is settled in homes where the woman works but has no couple. This shows that conjugality plays a strategic role in the elaboration of well-being. Female work within a stable relationship (and which is even institutionally punished through marriage if differences of income between married couples and cohabiting couples are considered) appears as the most appropriate arrangement to contribute to familiar well-being. Our results show evidence which is convergent enough with respect to the benefits of marriage when considering economic well-being, and especially in the probability of

eliminating poverty. Marriage has a specific importance which surely comes from its capacity to afford stability, security and a projection of people's economic activity.

Conjugality also has important projections for the future well-being of new generations. The presence of parents at home not only predicts current well-being – comparing them with homes of single mothers or divorced couples – but also has consequences on the educational performance and the prevention of risky behaviors in new generations, which are significant predictors of future well-being. The family structure, even after controlling for the parent's education, has a net effect over the children's school performance, as it is appreciated in standardized tests both in Language and Math (SIMCE, Ministry of Education, Chilean Government).

In the second part, evidence regarding the importance of conjugality, in critical areas of social performance such as confidence, associativity and civic participation, is given. In this case, data show that families which have an intact marriage (intact first marriage) generate greater rates of close confidence (and in general, they develop stronger familiar attitudes towards marriage and filiation) even though the benefits of generalized confidence tend to vanish, which is something that contrasts with the obtained results in similar research in other countries. The performances in conjugal families are much more convincing; however, in associativity and civic participation – even after controlling for age and socioeconomic level- better results are obtained. Within a context of accelerated growth of premarital cohabitation among young people, an important difference has been found between those who cohabit but have an intention of getting married and those who have not. These two forms of cohabitation differ significantly in terms of couple disorders (greater conflict levels and social deviation are found in couples who have no intention of getting married), which suggests that the development of prosocial attitudes and behaviors is encouraged by better secure and stable conditions given by an established conjugal bond.