

Kilometer 0: the beginning of migratory journeys of domestic workers in Chile

Kilómetro 0: inicio de las trayectorias migratorias de trabajadoras domésticas en Chile

Natalie Rodríguez-Covarrubias

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile

Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

natalie.rodriguez@pucv.cl

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3209-8482>

Received on: 31/01/2024 **Revised on:** 13/03/2024 **Accepted on:** 28/07/2024 **Published on:** 01/09/2024

Suggested citation: Rodríguez-Covarrubias, N. (2024). Kilometer 0: the beginning of migratory journeys of domestic workers in Chile. *Universitas XXI*, 41, pp. 219-243. <https://doi.org/10.17163/uni.n41.2024.09>

Abstract

This study aims to describe how the migratory trajectories of migrant domestic workers begin in Chile and the role of migratory networks and emotional factors in their decisions. A qualitative analysis of six biographical narratives is employed to examine the complexities of their labor and migratory trajectories, influenced by intersecting factors such as gender, class, and ethnicity in the context of global care chains. The results reveal five main moments when making the decision to migrate. The first moment is characterized by the fact that none of the cases had worked as domestic workers in their home countries. In the second moment, the need to change their circumstances in their home countries arises, often due to political crises, economic challenges, or gender-based violence. The third moment involves the existence of a migratory network of friends and family who assist in their journey. In the fourth moment, a significant emotional factor plays a central role in the decision to migrate, influencing the timing of the decision. Finally, in the fifth moment, the decision to migrate to Chile is made.

Keywords

Domestic work, trajectories, migration, migratory networks, intersectionalities, gender, South-South migration, global care chains.

Resumen

Este estudio busca describir cómo se inician las trayectorias migratorias de las Trabajadoras de Casa Particular Migrantes (TCP) en Chile, y el papel de las redes migratorias y elementos afectivos en sus decisiones. A través de un análisis cualitativo de seis narrativas biográficas, se exploran las complejidades de sus trayectorias laborales y migratorias, las cuales están atravesadas por factores interseccionales como género, clase y etnicidad, en el contexto de cadenas globales de cuidado. Los resultados revelan cinco momentos centrales en la toma de decisiones de migrar. En primer lugar, en ninguno de los casos las trabajadoras se habían desempeñado como trabajadoras domésticas en sus países de origen. En segundo lugar, surge la necesidad de cambiar una realidad vivida en sus territorios, como crisis políticas, económicas o violencia de género. En tercer lugar, existe una red migratoria de amigos y familiares que les ayuda a transitar esta trayectoria. En cuarto lugar, destaca la existencia de un factor afectivo central al momento de tomar la decisión de migrar, el cual marca la temporalidad de esta decisión. Finalmente, en quinto lugar, se toma la decisión de migrar a Chile. El principal resultado de esta investigación es que la decisión temporal de migrar corresponde a una decisión afectiva, más allá de los elementos laborales y económicos descritos previamente por la literatura.

Palabras clave

Trabajo doméstico, trayectorias, migración, redes migratorias, interseccionalidades, género, migración Sur-Sur, cadenas globales de cuidado.

Introduction

Migration has been a constant in human history. In 2000, there were 150 million migrants, a number that increased to 272 million in 2020 (OIM, 2020), although the COVID-19 pandemic slightly reduced these numbers (OIM, 2022). Almost half of the migrants are women and refugees, many of whom are fleeing violence and poverty (Fleischer and Marin, 2019; ONU, 2021). Since the 1960s, more women have migrated alone, seeking better living conditions and escaping violence (Pérez, 2017), leading to more visibility of women in migration studies (Hochschild, 2001; Arriagada and Todaro, 2012; Stefoni, 2011). These studies not only recognize the growing presence of women in migration flows, but also underline the need for a gender perspective in migration analysis.

Migrant women in Chile, mainly young people between the ages of 20 and 35, represent a significant proportion of the migrant labor force (Sandoval, 2017; INE, 2020). Many are engaged in domestic work (Stefoni, 2018). Chilean migration policies have evolved, but still face challenges in terms of migrants' rights and recognition (Galaz *et al.*, 2017). Migrants in Chile often face job insecurity, inadequate housing, and discrimination (Avaria *et al.*, 2021). These challenges indicate a significant gap between migration policies and their effective implementation (Esnouf *et al.*, 2023), highlighting the need for reforms that guarantee rights and improve the living conditions of migrants.

This study specifically aims to explore the initial moment of the migratory trajectories of the MDW in Chile, through a qualitative analysis of six biographical narratives, and seeks to understand the complexities and characteristics of these trajectories, and how they are crossed by intersectional factors such as gender, class and migratory status.

The research is framed in a decolonial and intersectional feminist approach, which allows not only to visualize the multiple oppressions faced by women, but also to highlight their agency strategies. In this way, we can understand the power dynamics and historical structures that mark the experiences of MDWs.

The following sections show the current situation of MDWs in Chile, as well as the biographical-narrative method, and the results by explaining the central moments in the decision-making of migration and the strategies of these women to begin to transit their new reality in Chile.

The employment situation of migrant domestic workers in Chile

More than 10% of migrants work in Chile in domestic service, according to the CASEN survey (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, 2022; Bravo, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated job insecurity in the sector (OIT, 2020). The lack of formal recognition of this work as an integral part of the economy has perpetuated its invisibility and marginalization (Valenzuela and Mora, 2009; Dos Santos, 2012; Garazi, 2016). The conditions of domestic work in Chile present unique challenges, with long hours and vulnerability to exploitation (Leiva *et al.*, 2017). Reproductive work, paid or

not, often involves caring for others and developing personal relationships with employers (Comelin and Leiva, 2017; Valenzuela and Mora, 2009). Despite that, domestic workers have resisted and promoted their rights through unionization and community building (Arteaga *et al.*, 2019; Federici, 2015; Munshi *et al.*, 2010). This organization and resistance have been reflected in the case of Chile in SINTRACAP, who have their doors open to migrant workers, however, most of them do not participate due to their migratory status. Therefore, migration networks are vital for these workers, providing support and facilitating migration (Arango, 2003). Migration networks play a central role in the lives of migrant domestic workers, helping them to establish themselves in the country of destination and access to job opportunities (González, 2001). In this sense, the resistance of the MDW in Chile has manifested itself through unionization and the fight for labor rights. The union organization has been a key for the empowerment and defense of the rights of these workers (Ruiz and del Campo, 2013). From this place, it is important to think about the different forms of agency and resistance that workers may have, however, it is important to clarify that, in the case of MDWs in Chile, it is complex to organize because of the immigration status mentioned above, and also because it is a type of work in which there is no regular contact between them, since their places of work are separated: private homes.

Decolonial feminist thinking

Decolonial and intersectional feminist thinking is fundamental to understanding the work of migrant domestic workers (MDW). This approach, which integrates the contributions of theorists such as Mohanty (2008), Lugones (2008), Espinosa (2009), Bidaseca (2011), Segato (2011), Fraser (2015), and Salem (2016), provides a critical lens to examine the multiple oppressions these women face, considering how colonial history and power structures impact their lives in contemporary society. This approach not only makes oppressions visible, but also challenges the hegemonic narratives that perpetuate these inequalities. Intersectionality, a theoretical approach developed by Crenshaw (1991) and expanded by Hill Collins (1990), is used to analyze how multiple axes of oppression, such as gender, race, social class, and nationality, intersect and reinforce in the experience of MDWs. Intersectionality provides a framework for understanding the complexity of South-South oppression and

migration, enabling a better understanding of how racism, classism, xenophobia, and others differentiate trajectories and distribute vulnerabilities and privileges globally. Feminist theories provide a framework for analyzing how global structures and power relations affect women, emphasizing the influence of colonial history on the oppression of women and their bodies. This analysis is important to understand the multiple layers of oppression faced by MDWs.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) highlights the relevance of the gender category in feminist studies, while Crenshaw's intersectional perspective shows that the categories of identity such as gender and race cannot be understood in isolation. This approach is particularly useful for understanding the trajectories of South-South migrant women, who experience interconnected oppressions related to multiple identities. Latin American decolonial feminism, as approached by theorists such as Mohanty (2008), highlights the importance of considering other forms of oppression, beyond the patriarchal system, that affect women, in this case in Latin American territories. This approach criticizes Western feminism for its colonial matrix and for ignoring the realities of Latin America, promoting the need to consider feminist interests and strategies that reflect the autonomy, geography, history and culture of these regions. This recognition is essential to building a truly emancipatory feminism.

Decolonial and intersectional feminist thinking provides an essential tool to understand and reflect on the work and struggles of MDWs, allowing a more complete and enriching view of their experiences and challenges. Through this lens, it is possible not only to understand oppressions, but also to identify forms of resistance and different agencies.

Global Care Chains

“Global Care Chains” represent a phenomenon where women are mostly responsible for care, either as migrant domestic workers in the destination country or as caregivers for migrant women's children in the country of origin. This situation is analyzed by authors such as Comelin and Leiva (2017), and Walton-Roberts (2019), Leiva, Mansilla and Comelín (2021). These chains reflect how women from the global South become wage workers of reproduction in the global North, affecting their own reproductive capacity, while women from the North are oriented towards production, according to Morini (2010). These dynamics highlight global inequalities and developed

countries' reliance on the labor force of women from countries in the global south, and especially for female migrant workers.

The study of these chains began in the 1990s, highlighting researchers such as Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) and Ávila and Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997), who incorporated the gender approach in migration studies. The research focuses on inequalities between immigrant and national women, and are manifested in the context of the relief of domestic reproductive work in post-industrial countries. Key contributors in this field include Chang (2000), Parrenas (2001) and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001, 2007) in the United States; Constable (1997) and Lan (2006) in Asia; and Escrivá (2000) and Anderson (2000) in Europe. This research has been fundamental to understand gender dynamics, and to be able to understand migration processes and how global power structures influence the lives of migrant women.

In the South-South context, research such as Diaz (2016) has analyzed these chains and their relevance in Latin American migratory circuits. These studies highlight the interaction of care chains with state policies and the dynamics of gender, ethnicity, and class. Research in Latin America, such as Dutra (2015) and Mallimaci (2018), has focused on how women take responsibility for care and the lack of recognition of this work, both externally and by the workers themselves. These studies explain how structural inequalities and a lack of protection policies affect care workers, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability and exploitation.

In Chile, the increase in female labor participation has led to the hiring of migrant domestic workers, especially from Peru and Bolivia, to take care of children and dependents (Leiva and Comelin, 2017; Arrigada and Todaro, 2012). Boric Bargetto (2021) and Mallimaci (2018) have studied how these workers form work paths linked to their migration projects. As Leiva and Ross (2016) describe, these chains demonstrate how migration and domestic work are interconnected in a globalized and unequal context.

Labor and migration trajectories

This research focuses on the labor and migration trajectories of migrant domestic workers, addressing both individual and structural perspectives. It adopts a biographical trajectory vision that considers individual events and the influence of social structures, reflecting the interaction between personal experiences and the broader social context. This approach, supported by

theorists such as Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Bourdieu, Giddens and Lahire, is particularly relevant to understanding the experiences of South-South migrant workers (Roberti, 2017).

The study emphasizes the need to integrate both events into the analysis, considering both the “individual events” that make up the biographical trajectories and the “historical events” that influence social structures (Balán, 1977). The biographical-narrative approach makes sense to understand the individual experiences and complexities faced by these workers. This methodology allows to explore the labor and social inequalities they face, as well as their personal experiences, through their own voices and narratives, thus placing their work trajectories in a specific sociohistorical context (Roberti, 2017).

In addition, structuralist and post-structuralist authors, such as Bourdieu and Giddens, examine how social structures and migration policies impact these women’s job opportunities. Studies such as those of Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea (2014), demonstrate the relevance of these structural influences on the working conditions and trajectories of women workers. Rita Segato, from a post-structuralist perspective, provides analysis on gender and power dynamics in domestic work in Latin America (Segato, 2003).

The concept of migration trajectory is approached from various strategies, including route mapping and analysis of migration sequences. The role of factors such as family, living conditions and mobility in migration decision-making is considered (Massey, 2005). Research by authors such as Sassone in Latin America and others in France highlights the importance of social networks, family, life cycles and territorial conditions in understanding migration trajectories (Bonvalet and Levy, 2010).

Different approaches are considered for understanding work trajectories, such as historical-economic, and narrative logics, senses and identities. This last approach, focused on the assessments of the workers themselves on their trajectories and the generation of categories from their speeches, is the one selected for this research (Cirami and Ferrari, 2018). In this way, the question to answer is: How do the trajectories of migrant domestic workers start in Chile?

Methodology

This study corresponds to the first of three of a doctoral theses on the Trajectories of Migrant Private Domestic Workers in Chile, being the main objective of the research to analyze the trajectories of South-South Migrant Private Household Workers (MDW) in Chile through their life stories from a narrative perspective. The specific objective of this study is to understand how these trajectories begin. The type of research is applied, and the design of this study was based on a qualitative methodology (Willing, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2017), corresponding to case studies of multiple parallel stories from a narrative perspective (Kohler, 2007; 2008), specifically biographical-narrative (Bertaux, 2005), based on the use of life stories (Pujadas, 2002; McAdams, 2012) to describe six cases of migrant Domestic Workers in Chile.

The sample was selected not for its size, but for the richness of the data and the skills of the researcher (Martínez-Salgado, 2012). A theoretical sampling was used (Iñiguez-Rueda, 2018), and the selection criteria included: type of work (inside or outside doors), existence of a caregiver in the country of origin, and participation in migrant worker organizations. These criteria ensure a group with diverse experiences and contexts of migrant workers. Three biographical interviews were conducted with each participant.

Table 1
Participants interviewed

Participant	Nationality	Age	Children/ grandchildren	Current City	Type of work
1	Venezuelan	55	2 children: 1 son and 1 granddaughter in Chile. 1 daughter and 1 granddaughter in Venezuela.	Lampa	Partial
2	Colombian	38	1 daughter (16 years old) in Chile. He lives with her.	Coquimbo	Partial
3	Peruvian	56	1 daughter and 1 granddaughter in Peru	Arica	Doors in

Participant	Nationality	Age	Children/ grandchildren	Current City	Type of work
4	Venezuelan	46	3 children 2 in Chile 1 in Venezuela	Santiago	Doors in
5	Peruvian	39	2 children 1 in Peru 1 in Chile.	Santiago	Doors Inside/ Doors outside
6	Colombian	40	No children	San Antonio	Doors outside

Note. Own elaboration based on the data of the participants.

The biographical technique of parallel multiple narrative was used to compile narratives of the workers. The retrospective biographical interviews were structured in three cycles, addressing chronological aspects of migration, working life and global experiences in care work. Successive analyzes of transcripts and coding of interviews were performed.

The analysis included a vertical and horizontal approach to life stories. Each case was analyzed individually (vertical analysis) and then the stories were compared to identify patterns and differences (horizontal analysis). Vertical analysis allows a deep and detailed understanding of each case, while horizontal analysis identifies common and divergent topics between cases. Narrative and content analysis approaches were used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of women workers (Bolívar *et al.*, 2001).

The study provided a temporal analysis of the experiences of female migrant workers in Chile, using a qualitative biographical-narrative methodology focused on the value of their personal stories and the listening of their voices.

To ensure transparency and the criteria of the interview process, a theoretical selection of participants with diverse experiences was used to ensure adequate representation, the interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility and depth in the exploration of relevant topics. They were carried out in convenient and safe places for the participants, ensuring their comfort and privacy, such as their own homes, and others were carried out online according to the geographical location of the researcher and the participants. As for biases, open questions and reflection and clarification techniques were used to ensure accurate understanding of the answers.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed with the participants' consent. Data triangulation and peer review were used to ensure the validity and objectivity of the findings. These steps ensure that the data production process is rigorous, transparent, and effective in capturing the experiences and perspectives of female migrant workers.

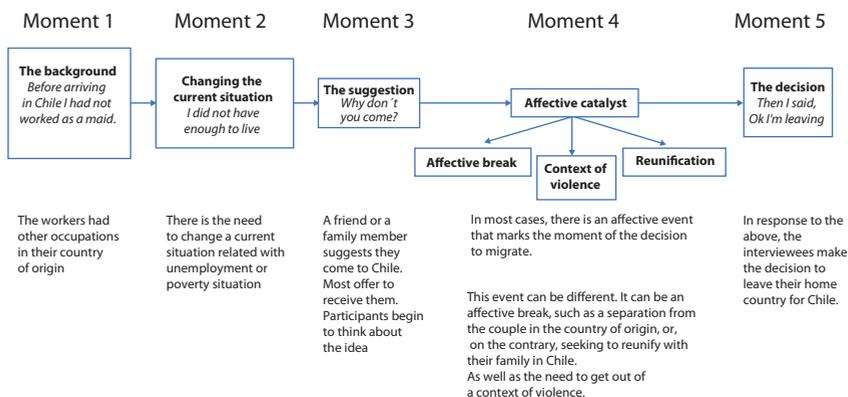
Results

The analogy of “kilometer zero,” a specific point in many countries from which all distances are measured—usually located in the capital—is used here to illustrate the beginning of a meaningful journey. Similarly, this concept applies to roads, where each section is numbered based on its distance to a specific location, and to cities, where a central point such as the post office often serves as a reference. For the interviewees, this moment represents a critical moment of decision.

This study presented a sequence of five thematic axes (see Figure 1), starting with “The Background”, which reveals how women workers did not engage in domestic work in their home countries. The second axis shows the need to “Change the current situation” presented by the participants, motivated by unfavorable economic or contextual conditions. The third axis introduces a “Suggestion” from a friend or family member to migrate Chile to work. The fourth axis, called the affective catalyst, highlights the emotional elements that influence the decision to migrate. Finally, the fifth axis incorporates the decision to undertake migration as a culmination of the previous events, at which time the interviewees leave their country to begin their new trajectory in Chile.

It is interesting to note that some interviewees choose to begin their story in the moment when they decide to migrate, omitting references to their childhood or previous moments and leaving that for the end. This study details the decision-making process, from the previous employment situation to the arrival in Chile, outlining the path from contemplation to action.

Figure 1
Outline the results



Note. Own elaboration based on the analyzes.

First Moment: The Background: Before arriving in Chile I had not worked as a maid

In this initial phase, the interviewees shared their experiences prior to migrating to Chile, revealing that they had not worked as maids in their countries of origin. As detailed in the introduction, many had technical training, such as a textile technician, watchmaker or nurse, and in other cases, vocational training, for example, a Venezuelan educator. However, none has been able to validate their training in Chile.

The migration process examined suggests a learning of new work practices and a transformation of social identity. Indeed, previous occupation no longer corresponds to their current employment. This transition allows exploring labor mobility for migrant domestic workers (MDW). Although they were technically or professionally trained in their home countries, factors such as unemployment, the feminization of poverty or violence forced them to migrate. Already in the receiving country, they face the impossibility of continuing in their previous labor areas and opt for domestic service, a sector that, according to studies, shows greater employment opportunities

for MDWs in Argentina (Mallimaci, 2018). The findings of this research are similar to those studies, showing that the participants abandon their original career to undertake a totally different occupation.

Below are two examples of trajectories in which it is visible that their work in the country of origin was different from that of the country of destination. This first narrative corresponds to the worker who is a watch technician and worked in a watch company in Colombia:

I was working in a company called Casio, where I had been working for four years. It is an excellent company, one of the best companies in Colombia for watches. I'm a watch technician. Then as in December I decided to quit because I was a little stressed at work by the boss, then in November I started in another job. (Interviewed n°2, Colombia, watch technician)

This participant left her employment in watchmaking for working reasons, abandoning her last position when receiving her visa to Chile. Until that time, she had not experienced working in the domestic area, performing in areas away from care tasks, which differs significantly from roles traditionally associated with the reproductive and already feminized, such as domestic work (Morini, 2010; Federici, 2015). This change represents a radical transformation in their work trajectory, moving from a job considered “productive” to a paid reproductive one in Chile. Similarly, other interviewees have had experiences of reproductive work in their home countries.

It highlights a contrast between previous occupations in their home countries and their jobs in Chile, where there was none previously performed domestic work. This is related to the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990; Hooks, 1990), which suggests that, because they are women, foreigners and face situations of poverty, they are channeled to certain jobs. This phenomenon of intersectionality predisposes interviewees to domestic work, a work traditionally assigned to women, in line with Segato's (2003) analysis of gender-based violence and labor power dynamics, where race, class, ethnicity and migratory status influence their inclusion in this sector.

Second moment: the need to change the current situation

The situation in the country of origin is interwoven with the personal and individual narratives of the interviewees. In many cases, it is gender issues

that force them to leave their countries; for example, the context of sexual violence in their countries of origin or the feminization of poverty (PNUD, 2015). This explains the need to change a situation that is being experienced in the context of migrant workers' origin.

However, one of the situations they face in the country of origin is unemployment. This case will be exemplified by the situation of the interviewee n°6 from Colombia, who relates that this leads her to think about traveling to Chile since she did not have a job related to her profession in the country of origin:

I had a friend here, so I asked her how Chile was doing and she said it was ok, and I knew it was my opportunity to come because my reality was very bad, 'Chile is not the eighth wonder' my friend told me, but there is work, in case you want to come. By the time I arrived in Chile there was a job boom in the first year. I remember that there was a time when I went to Lider and found a job. My friend offered me her house, she told me that I would not be rich but at least I would find a job, so she offered her house so that I could stay and so I could decide. So, she told me 'Well, it is up to you, I give you the opportunity to stay here, to be at my house, all that, but remember that you are not getting rich or anything, but at least she tells me about a job. (interviewed No. 6, Colombia)

The interviewee, affected by unemployment and unable to cover her basic needs or pay debts, contacts a friend in Chile to explore work options, which leads to considering migration as a solution. This dialog starts the process of considering other alternatives that other people might offer. The unemployment is just one example of adverse situations that include violence in the country of origin, highlighting the story of domestic violence and abuse for 15 years by her former partner in Peru, a situation that constantly repeated. Migrating to Santiago de Chile presents itself as a way to escape this cycle of abuse. Thus, the stories combine economic needs and elements such as violence of origin. These structural aspects are intertwined with personal experiences, exploring how personal narratives help build identities through McAdams' (2006) narrative identity theory, relevant when considering previous experiences of violence that drive migration and leave a mark on their identities. The analysis highlights that, although economic reasons are a common reason to want to change their situation, gender-based violence is a determining factor in the migration of women. This analysis is framed

within a broader context of political and economic crises in their countries of origin, underlining the importance of understanding each personal story within a biographical-narrative framework, which influences their migratory decisions and the continuous construction of their identities.

Third moment: the suggestion: ‘Why don’t you come?’

In the stories, the idea of migrating develops progressively, from the emergence of the need to change a situation until someone specifically suggests moving to Chile. According to McAdams (2012), self-building is relational, depending on interactions to understand the world and form projects. In this context, the presence of others is relevant in the migratory trajectories of MDWs. Most start migration after conversations with friends or family who mention job opportunities in Chile, sometimes offering accommodation. However, women do not immediately decide to migrate, but meditate on the information for months or years. In the absence of specific data on the impact of personal networks on migration decisions in Chile, this study examines these elements, illustrated by a narrative in which a worker discusses the employment situation in Chile with a friend.

I had a friend here, so I asked her how Chile was doing and she said it was ok, and I knew it was my opportunity to come because my reality was very bad, ‘Chile is not the eighth wonder’ my friend told me, but there is work, in case you want to come. By the time I arrived in Chile there was a job boom in the first year. I remember that there was a time when I went to Lider and found a job. My friend offered me her house, she told me that I would not be rich but at least I would find a job, so she offered her house so that I could stay and so I could decide. So, she told me ‘Well, it is up to you, I give you the opportunity to stay here, to be at my house, all that, but remember that you are not getting rich or anything, but at least she tells me about a job. (Interviewed No. 6, Colombia)

In this case, the worker talks to a friend who explains that there was work in Chile. It also happens in other cases that talk to family members who live in Chile. This is the case of the interviewee n°5, who, despite the fact that the cousins who lived in Chile do not know her, offer the interviewee at home, specifically, one of the cousins. Most of the interviewees initially stay at the home of those who suggested traveling to Chile. It means that these personal

networks not only inform them, but at the same time offer to receive them. For this reason, there is always the intervention of others in this trajectory, making Chile as the destination and not another place.

This is key when 1) deciding to migrate and 2) deciding where to migrate. In this way, and seen from the perspective of McAdams (2012), the others are relevant when building the migration project. From the narrative theory, the voice of the others is relevant in some moments of these migratory trajectories.

Taking up the structural and biographical elements, Segato (2003) argues that gender relations, power structures in the labor field, as well as social, influence how women perceive their opportunities and limitations. The voice of others, in this case, can be central to migrant domestic workers, as they can receive direct (as seen in this example) or indirect messages about job opportunities and quality of life in other countries. Therefore, when migrating, they are influenced by people who have already migrated and, apparently, have succeeded in their work trajectories abroad.

Massey (1990) also highlights the importance of migration networks and transnational connections in the migration process. The voice of others, such as family, friends or acquaintances who have already migrated can be a decisive factor in the decision to undertake the journey, since these references can provide information about job opportunities, accommodation and living conditions in the destination country, which in this case is Chile.

Affective breakdown

The decision-making process to migrate is not a spontaneous event, but a compilation of significant moments leading to action. The emotional break is one of these crucial moments, marking the moment when the decision to migrate is made. Studies in the sociology of emotions, such as those of D'Oliveira-Martins (2018) and Delsignore (2019), emphasize the influence of emotions and affections on decisions and life trajectories, and this is notable in the migratory context. At the local level, research such as Garcés *et al.* (2022) have examined domestic work in Chile as an intrinsically affective work. However, literature has barely explored how these emotions specifically affect the decision to migrate.

The analysis of emotions and affections is important to understand how experiences such as family reunification, the search for job opportunities, or

the flight from situations of violence, shape migration decisions and, therefore, the work and personal trajectories of domestic workers. For example, one of the interviewees tells her personal experience of violence and how it made her decide to migrate:

I was in a 15-year relationship, 15 years of abuse. He beat me too much. I think that sometimes he got to leave my eyes black... I always remember a birthday that I spent locked up, hidden in my dad's house because he had hit me so hard, I was using a straw because I couldn't chew... He hit me so hard that I said no, I can't take it anymore, I'm sick of it, I can't take it anymore. (Interviewee #5)

The narrative reflects that the decision to migrate of the interviewee was motivated by a desire to escape from a relationship of abuse, evidencing an emotional breakdown that motivated her departure from Peru. This type of emotional breakdown, both before and during migration, is a recurring factor in the narratives of many interviewees. In some cases, these breakdowns may also be familiar, such as that of one of the interviewees who left her job to care of her father. However, these affective aspects have not been widely studied in migratory trajectories.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on immigrants' objective conditions, such as income and housing, there is little research on their subjective well-being, including personal perception of life quality and emotional well-being (Angelini *et al.*, 2014; Delsignore, 2019). Understanding this subjective well-being is relevant to gaining a complete view of immigrants' experiences. This includes how social relationships and support networks affect their adaptation and sense of belonging in a new country, which is especially relevant to understanding the emotional and psychological well-being of domestic workers in migratory contexts.

Reunification

The third emotional factor driving migration is the quest for reunification. Unlike the scenarios where people intend to escape from an adverse affective situation, in this context, the decision to migrate is based on the desire to meet with loved ones already established in another country, such as Chile. This was the case of an interviewee who followed her partner to Chile in or-

der to maintain family unity. Her narrative illustrates how previous separation was her motivation to migrate.

The interviewee relates: “My son is 22 years old, my daughter-in-law was pregnant and I brought him to Colombia... I decided to come to Chile because my partner is here, my partner has been in Chile for about 4 years. At 6 months I brought my daughter-in-law and my granddaughter” (interviewed n°1, Venezuela). This decision to migrate underlines the importance of family reunification, as Fleischer and Marín (2019) examine it, stressing that, historically, women have played a traditional role in this type of migration. In this case, the interviewee not only reunites with her partner, but also strives to reunite her son and granddaughter, and hopes to eventually bring the rest of her family from Venezuela.

Well-being, commonly associated with economic and practical factors, is only one side of the coin. Family reunification, from the perspective of this research, is also considered an emotional choice that guides the interviewee’s migration. Thus, the research highlights the importance of emotional ties and significant relationships in migration, such as that of the interviewee who migrates in pursuit of company and family support. Understanding this affective dimension is key to comprehensively understanding the trajectories of migrant domestic workers in Chile.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this analysis reflect the complexity and interconnectedness of socio-economic and emotional factors that guide the decisions of migrant domestic workers in Chile, based on the unique stories of each participant. Through the lens of intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990), it is evident how the interaction of gender, class and ethnicity shapes the work and personal trajectories of these women.

A first finding and one of the central ones in this study is the intersection between affections and migratory decisions. Migration decisions, being important life choices, arise from a combination of personal, relational and socioeconomic circumstances.

Chapter five observed the presence of significant emotional breakdowns within the studied trajectories, which translate into couple breaks, separations because couples migrate first, or also violence in their homes. These

moments, which act as emotional catalysts, have an important impact on their decisions, since although, the economic and labor reasons that the literature reports are still recognized by the participants at the first moment of the interview, at a second moment when we go deeper on the narrative conversation, the interviewees show that this break shows the specific moment in which they decided to migrate. For example: having two years thinking about migrating to Chile as a job option, but finally making the decision at the time of the emotional break. The existing literature, by not comprehensively addressing these subjective dimensions and given the limited attention that has been paid to them so far, highlights the need for a research perspective that encompasses both objective and subjective factors in the analysis of migration trajectories.

Therefore, the stories told by these women reveal multiple dimensions of their migratory trajectories. They are not limited to work or economic reasons; they are also imbued with the search for safety, the escape from violence and, in some cases, the response to crisis situations in their countries of origin. These findings confirm the theories of Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) on the importance of affections in care research.

Second, the migration trajectories of these women are diverse, and several of them faced significant uncertainties and risks. This pattern is directly related to existing opportunities and restrictions, highlighting the influence of socio-economic and legal conditions on their migration and employment experiences. None of the participants had worked in domestic service before arriving in Chile, and all of them had a different career in the country of origin. Upon arriving in Chile, these workers face a challenging work environment, characterized by exploitation and a notable lack of legal protection, especially marked for those without work visas.

Moreover, as domestic workers, MDWs find themselves in a trade that has historically been stigmatized. Domestic work, often seen as an extension of the traditional “female role,” rarely gets the economic or social recognition it deserves. This devaluation is intertwined with gender biases, increasing the vulnerability of these women to discrimination and marginalization.

However, far from being merely passive in these conditions, migrant workers exercise forms of resistance and adaptation that demonstrate their agency. The creation of support networks through migration networks, the maximization of temporary spaces for personal and family development, are examples of how migrant workers are not passive subjects, but agents.

The research addressed critical ethical and emotional considerations in qualitative research, as suggested by Sieber (1992), who highlights the importance of carefully addressing ethical aspects in personal and sensitive topics. This ethical approach was critical to ensuring the protection and well-being of participants. Elaborating life stories made visible aspects not easily perceptible in the literature, such as: that the main cause of migration is labor and economic, but that affective decisions emerged clearly in chronological narratives, showing complex nuances in their migratory experiences beyond objective factors.

Moreover, the research focused on migrant domestic workers in Chile, which may limit the generalization of the findings to other contexts. The qualitative methodology, although rich in personal details, may not represent all migratory experiences, and participants' perceptions are influenced by personal and emotional factors. The theoretical selection of participants, while seeking diversity of experiences, may have excluded certain voices. Future research should expand these studies to different populations and contexts to obtain a more complete and nuanced view of migrant workers' experiences in the domestic sector.

References

- Anderson, B. (2000). *Doing the dirty work: the global politics of domestic labour*. Zed Books.
- Arango, J. (2003). La explicación teórica de las migraciones: Luz y sombra. *Migración y Desarrollo*, (1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.35533/myd.0101.ja>
- Arriagada, I. and Todaro, R. (2012). *Cadenas globales de cuidados: El papel de las migrantes peruanas en la provisión de cuidados en Chile*. Naciones Unidas, CEPAL.
- Arteaga, C., Galaz, C. and Abarca, M. (2019). Resistencias y desigualdades de género: nuevas comprensiones en los discursos académicos. *Persona y Sociedad*, 33(1), 11-32. <https://doi.org/10.35533/pys.331.ca>
- Avaria, A., Cabieses, B. and Obach, A. (eds.). (2021). *Salud y migraciones: Relevancia, consideraciones generales y desafíos para el Chile de hoy*. RIL editores Universidad Autónoma de Chile.
- Ávila, E. and Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (1997). I'm Here, but I'm There: The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood. *Gender & Society*, 11(5), 548-571. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124397011005003>

- Authier, J.-Y., Bonvalet, C. and Lévy, J.-P. (2010). *Élire domicile: La construction sociale des choix résidentiels*. Presses Universitaires de Lyon.
- Balán, J., Browning, H. L. and Jelín, E. (1977). *El hombre en una ciudad en desarrollo. Movilidad geográfica y social en Monterrey*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Bertaux, D. (2005). *Los relatos de vida. Perspectiva etnosociológica*. Bellaterra.
- Bidaseca, K., (2011). 'Mujeres blancas buscando salvar a mujeres color café': desigualdad, colonialismo jurídico y feminismo postcolonial. *Andamios*, 8(17), 61-89. <https://bit.ly/3z6Jl8a>
- Bravo, J. (2019). Mitos y realidades sobre el empleo migrante en Chile. In N. Rojas y J. Vicuña (eds.), *Migración en Chile: evidencias y mitos de una nueva realidad*, LOM ediciones.
- Bolívar, A., Domingo, J. and Fernández, M. (2001). *La investigación biográfico-narrativa en educación: Enfoque y metodología*. La Muralla. <https://bit.ly/3KO1nic>
- Boric Bargetto, L. V., Gissi-Barbieri, N. and Saldívar Arellano, J. M. (2021). Migraciones transnacionales en contextos latinoamericanos: experiencias, prácticas y dis-continuidades en la creación de futuros posibles. *Antípoda. Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, (43), 3-23. Departamento de Antropología, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de los Andes. <https://doi.org/10.7440/antipoda43.2021.01>
- Chang, G. (2000). *Disposable Domestic: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy*. Haymarket Books.
- Cirami, L. and Ferrari, L. E. (2018). ¿Cómo investigar las trayectorias laborales? Revisión bibliográfica sistemática y análisis de los principales enfoques teórico-metodológicos. *Anuario de Investigaciones*, XXV. <https://bit.ly/3z8nFIO>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *Legal Forum*, (1). University of Chicago. <https://bit.ly/4bcDM6V>
- Comelin, A. and Leiva, S. (2017). Cadenas globales de cuidado entre Chile y Bolivia y migración circular. En J. Berríos, I. Bortolotto (eds.), *Interculturalidad y movilidad humana*. Santiago de Chile: Fundación Scalabrini/INCAMI.
- Constable, N. (1997). *Maid to order in Hong Kong: stories of migrant workers*. Cornell University Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Delsignore, G. (2019). Excluidos de la felicidad. La estratificación social del bienestar emocional en España. Eduardo Bericat. Centro de Investigaciones

- Sociológicas (CIS). Colección Monografías 310, 2018. *Revista Española de Sociología*, 28(2). <https://doi.org/10.22325/fes/res.2019.06>
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2017). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 5ta ed. SAGE Publications.
- Díaz Gorfinkiel, M. (2016). Las cadenas globales de cuidados en América Latina y la inserción laboral de las mujeres migrantes en el sector de los cuidados. *Migraciones Internacionales*, 8(3), 1-32. <https://doi.org/10.17428/rmi.v8i3.965>
- D'Oliveira-Martins, M. (2018). *Arlie Russell Hochschild: Un camino hacia el corazón de la sociología*. Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS).
- Dos Santos, J., Bohn, L. and França Almeida, H. J. (2020). O papel da mulher na agricultura familiar de Concórdia (SC): O tempo de trabalho entre atividades produtivas e reprodutivas. *Textos de Economia*, 23(1), 1-27.
- Dutra, D. (2015). Marcas de uma origem e uma profissão: trabajadoras domésticas peruanas em Brasília. *Caderno CRH*, 28(73), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-49792015000100012>
- Espinosa Miñoso, Y. (2009). Etnocentrismo y colonialidad en los feminismos Latinoamericanos: Complicidades y consolidación de las hegemonías feministas en el espacio transnacional. *Revista Venezolana de Estudios de la Mujer*, 14(33), 37-54. <https://bit.ly/4clN8N6>
- Esnouf, D., Lerpold, L., Bucken-Knapp, G. and Zelano, K. (2023). Ambiguous citizenship policies: Examining implementation gaps across levels of legislation in Jordan. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 12, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-023-00321-7>
- Federici, S. (2015). *El patriarcado del salario: Críticas feministas al marxismo*. Traficantes de Sueños.
- Fleischer, A. and Marín, R. (2019). *Family ties: How family reunification can impact migrant integration*. International Migration Outlook 2019. OECD iLibrary.
- Fraser, N. (2015). *Justice interruptus: critical reflections on the "postsocialist" condition*. Routledge. (Obra original publicada en 1997)
- Galaz, C. V., Poblete, R. M. and Frías, C. O. (2017). Políticas Públicas e Inmigración: ¿Posibilidades de inclusión efectiva en Chile? Editorial Universitaria. Reseñado por Bianchetti Saavedra, A. (2019) en *Perfiles Latinoamericanos*, 27(53). <https://doi.org/10.18504/pl2753-017-2019>
- Garazi, D. (2016). Del "trabajo de servidor" al "trabajo asalariado". Debates en torno a la remuneración de los trabajadores del sector hotelero gastronómico en Argentina en las décadas centrales del siglo XX. *Pasado Abierto*, 2(3). Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata-CEHis/ CONICET. <https://bit.ly/3yOC6Sk>

- Garcés-Estrada, C., Leiva-Gómez, S. and Comelin-Fornés, A. (2021). Interseccionalidades y trabajo de cuidado: migración circular boliviana en el norte Chile. *Apuntes. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 49(90). <https://doi.org/10.21678/apuntes.90.1409>
- González, M. C. (2001). Redes migratorias y mercado de trabajo. *Scripta Nova: Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales*, vol. V 94(11). Universidad de Barcelona. <https://bit.ly/4elfaKy>
- Hill-Collins, P. (1990). Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination. En P. H. Collins (ed.), *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and politics of empowerment* (pp. 221-238). Unwin Hyman.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: The commercialization of human feeling*. University of California Press.
- Hochschild, A. (2001) Global care chains and emotional surplus value. En W. Hutton y A. Geddens (eds), *On the edge: living with global capitalism*. Vintage.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (1994). *Gendered transitions: Mexican experiences of immigration*. University of California Press.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2001). *Doméstica: immigrant workers cleaning and caring in the shadows of affluence*. University of California Press.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2007). *Gender and U.S. immigration: contemporary trends*. University of California Press.
- Hooks, B. (1990). *andearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. <https://bit.ly/3xpu95K>
- INE. (2020). Estimación de Personas Extranjeras en Chile. Residentes habituales en Chile al 31 de diciembre de 2020. <https://bit.ly/3vWxp7v>
- Fleischer, A. and Marín, R. (2019). *From evidence to action: Tackling gender-based violence against migrant women and girls*. UN Women.
- Lan, P.-C. (2006). *Global Cinderellas: Migrant domestics and newly rich employers in Taiwan*. Duke University Press.
- Leiva, S., Mansilla, M. Á. and Comelín, A. (2017). Condiciones laborales de migrantes bolivianas que realizan trabajo de cuidado en Iquique. *Si Somos Americanos*, 17(1), 11-37. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0719-09482017000100011>
- Leiva Gómez, S., y Ross Orellana, C. (2016). Migración circular y trabajo de cuidado: Fragmentación de trayectorias laborales de migrantes bolivianas en Tarapacá. *Psicoperspectivas*, 15(3), 56-66. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5027/psicoperspectivas-Vol15-Issue3-fulltext-766>
- Lugones, M. (2008). Colonialidad y género. *Tabula Rasa*, (9), 73-101. <https://bit.ly/4bQHPP5>

- Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A. and Taylor, J. E. (2000). *Worlds in motion: understanding international migration at the end of the millennium*. Oxford University Press.
- Mallimaci Barral, A. I. (2018). Circulaciones laborales de mujeres migrantes en Buenos Aires: de empleadas domésticas a enfermeras. *Cadernos Pagu*, (noviembre). <https://doi.org/10.1590/18094449201800540012>
- Martínez Franzoni, J. and Sánchez-Ancochea, D. (2014). *La búsqueda de políticas sociales universales en el Sur: actores, ideas y arquitecturas*. Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica.
- Martínez-Salgado, C. (2012). El muestreo en investigación cualitativa: Principios básicos y algunas controversias. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, 17(3), 613-619. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-81232012000300006>.
- Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. SAGE Publications.
- McAdams, D. P. (2012). *Exploring the relational self: Understanding identity in context*. Guilford Press.
- Ministerio de Desarrollo Social y Familia, Gobierno de Chile. (2022). Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional (CASEN) 2022. <https://bit.ly/3HZmxbT>
- Mohanty, C. T. (2008). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Feminist Review*, 30(1), 61-88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/302821>
- Morini, C. (2010). *Per amore o per forza. Femminilizzazione del lavoro e biopolitiche del corpo*. Ombrecorte.
- Munshi, D., Broadfoot, K. J. and Smith, L. T. (2010). Decolonizing Communication Ethics: A Framework for Communicating Otherwise. En G. Cheney, S. May y D. Munshi (eds.), *The Handbook of Communication Ethics* (1st ed., pp. 106-120). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203890400>
- OIM. (2020). Informe sobre las migraciones en el mundo 2020. En *Informe sobre las migraciones en el mundo*. <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789213584804>
- OIM. (2022). Informe sobre las migraciones en el mundo 2022. En *Informe sobre las migraciones en el mundo*. <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789213584798>
- OIT. (2020). *Panorama Laboral 2020: América Latina y el Caribe*. Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe. <https://bit.ly/4bjQaSA>
- ONU Mujeres. (2021). *In focus: Women refugees and migrants*. <https://bit.ly/3z8zyyq>
- Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM). (2019). *Informe sobre las Migraciones en el Mundo 2020*. Ginebra: OIM. <https://bit.ly/4b1FOBM>
- Parrenas, R. S. (2001). *Servants of globalization: women, migration, and domestic work*. Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859004071433>.

- Pérez, M. (2017). *Migración y violencia de género: Mujeres en movimiento*. Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM). Manual sobre migración y violencia de género.
- Pujadas, J. J. (2002). *El método biográfico: El uso de las historias de vida en las ciencias sociales*. Editorial Complutense. inaltera.org.
- Roberti, E. (2017). Perspectivas sociológicas en el abordaje de las trayectorias: un análisis sobre los usos, significados y potencialidades de una aproximación controvertida. *Sociologías*, 19(45), 300-335. <https://doi.org/10.1590/15174522-019004513>.
- Ruiz Jabbaz, S., y del Campo Peirano, A. (2013). Empoderamiento de trabajadoras de casa particular sindicalizadas: un estudio de caso en Chile. *Psyche*, 22(1), 15-28. <https://doi.org/10.7764/psyche.22.1.635>
- Salem, S. (2016). Intersectionality and its discontents: Intersectionality as traveling theory. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 22, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506816643999>
- Sandoval, R. (2017). Una política migratoria para un Chile cohesionado. In B. Cabieses, M. Bernales y A. M. McIntyre (eds.), *La migración internacional como determinante de la salud social en Chile: evidencia y propuesta para políticas públicas* (pp. 39-49). Santiago de Chile: Universidad de Desarrollo. <https://bit.ly/45tr2pW>
- Segato, R. L. (2003). *Las estructuras elementales de la violencia: Ensayos sobre género entre la antropología, el psicoanálisis y los derechos humanos*. Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, Prometeo 3010.
- Segato, R. L. (2011). El sexo y la norma: Frente estatal, patriarcado, desposesión, colonialidad. *Revista Estudios Feministas*, 22(2), 593-616. <https://bit.ly/3W8srhs>
- Sewell, W. H. (1992). A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.1086/229967>
- Siebert, J. E. (1992). *Planning ethically responsible research: A guide for students and internal review boards*. Sage Publications.
- Stefoni, C. (2011). *Mujeres inmigrantes en Chile: ¿Mano de obra barata o trabajadoras con derechos?* Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado. <https://bit.ly/45seLC9>
- Stefoni, C. (2018). *Panorama de la migración internacional en América del Sur*. Serie Población y Desarrollo. Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL). <https://bit.ly/3KPJwr9>

- Valenzuela, M. E. and Mora, C. (eds.). (2009). *Trabajo doméstico: un largo camino hacia el trabajo decente*. Oficina Internacional del Trabajo.
- Walton-Roberts, M. (2019). Occupational (im)mobility in the global care economy: the case of foreign-trained nurses in the Canadian context. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(14), 2583-2599. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1592397>
- Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: adventures in theory and method*. 2da ed. McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.