



“I wanted to have a Christian family”: Affinities Between Religiosity and Family Styles Among Catholics and Evangelicals in a Low-Income Neighborhood in Santiago

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Received: 30 January 2023 / Accepted: 25 April 2023 / Published online: 8 June 2023
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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between religiosity—as experiential and practical religious involvement—and family styles—as effective kinship expectations and configurations. We begin by identifying three gaps and one risk in the previous literature: excessive focus on (Evangelical) conversion; the paucity of comparative Catholic/Evangelical studies; the absence of an extended family and intergenerational approach; and, although to a lesser extent, a risk of conflation of the religious phenomenon. Based on ethnographic observations and interviews conducted in a low-income neighborhood in Santiago, we investigated native Catholic and Evangelical individuals and couples with similar levels of religiosity and socioeconomic status. We have observed two contrasting family styles. While among Catholics, we found a deep appreciation of intergenerational solidarity with a matrifocal bias, with a secondary importance on the marital relationship; among Evangelicals, we observed a strong conjugality and relative relegation of intergenerational relationships. We explore these results using the lens of “affinities” between religious and family spheres, close to Max Weber’s classic concept of elective affinities. Evangelical religiosity produces solid boundaries with the secular world, including the influence of contextual family culture and non-nuclear kin, combined with an emphasis on individual autonomy and responsibility, which correlates with the notion of conjugality as an elective bond. Catholic religiosity is instead much more tolerant of the secular world, allowing a contextual family culture to permeate family configurations. The Catholic emphasis on Grace as an unconditional and gratuitous divine act, combined with popular devotion to Mary, reinforces the centrality of matrifocal intergenerational ties.

Keywords Religiosity · Family · Culture · Elective affinities · Latin America

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Introduction

In recent decades, Latin América has shifted from being a predominant Catholic to a more plural region (Pew Research Center 2014; Garrard-Burnett, Freston, and Dove 2016). In this scenario, the Chilean case is particularly striking. According to the Bicentenario Survey (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile 2021), in 2006, 70% of Chileans declared themselves Catholic. This proportion remained stable at around 60% between 2012 and 2017, with a significant drop as of 2019, reaching 42% in 2020. This phenomenon has been related, on the one hand, to the recent process of religious disaffection and institutional crisis of the Catholic Church, expressed in the growing proportion of Chileans who declare no religious affiliation: from 12% in 2006 to 37% in 2021, according to the same source. On the other hand, the advance of Evangelical Protestantism¹ has represented a challenge to Catholicism, especially in low-income strata. Census data show that, while in 1920, Evangelicals represented only 1% of the population, the proportion went from 5.7% in 1960 to 6.2% in 1970, doubling from 1960 to 1992, when it reached 13% (Beyer and Fontaine 1991). This growth moderated in the following decades, reaching 14% in 2021 (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile 2021). Although the increase seems to have reached a ceiling, the stability of Evangelical identification seems to be due to a relatively successful intergenerational transmission (Fediakova 2014; Lindhardt 2020). Thus, Pentecostalism today is significantly composed of new generations of natives, that is, of people whose parents or even grandparents are also Evangelicals. Although Pentecostalism has been historically rooted almost exclusively in low-income sectors, recent studies have shown educational and socioeconomic upward mobility, especially within younger generations (Fediakova 2014; Neckelmann 2019; Lindhardt 2020).

Chile is a privileged location to observe how different religions affect their faithfuls' lifestyles. According to Lindhardt (2012a,b), the most significant effect of Pentecostalism on cultural change in Chile "lies in the movement's potential to bring about transformations in the private domestic spheres by redefining gender relationships and economic priorities" (p. 177). Despite its recent decline, Catholic culture has deep and persistent historical roots (Parker 1996; Morandé 2017), which makes it interesting to observe how the country's two main religious environments are shaping the individual's primary relationships and family trajectories.

The aim of this article is to explore the relationship between religiosity, understood as experiential and practical religious participation, and family styles, defined as effective kinship expectations and configurations. The paper begins by outlining three gaps and one risk in the previous literature: an excessive focus on (Evangelical) conversion; the paucity of comparative Catholic/Evangelical studies; the absence of an extended family and intergenerational approach; and, although to a lesser extent, a risk of conflation of the religious phenomenon. Later, we describe the methods

¹ In this article, and in concordance with colloquial language, we use Pentecostals and Evangelicals as synonyms. Although Evangelicals can include other branches of Protestantism, it is commonly associated with Pentecostalism as it represents the large majority of Protestants in Chile

employed in this study, which consist of ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews conducted in a low-income neighborhood in Santiago, to native Catholic and Evangelical individuals and couples with similar levels of religiosity and socio-economic status. Subsequently, we analyze the research findings, contrasting two distinctive family styles with the help of emerging conceptual frames. We discuss these results using the lens of “affinities” between the religious and family spheres, close to Max Weber’s classic concept of elective affinities. Finally, we acknowledge the limitations of the study and present its main conclusions and contributions.

Religious-Rooted Cultural Context and Family Styles

Sociohistorical literature has established a relationship between different cultural-religious contexts and the emergence and consolidation of specific family styles (Zollinger Giele 1972; Reher 1998; Bloch 2012). Traditional Protestant regions, such as Northern Europe and North America, exhibit a focus on the nuclear delimitation of the family group and a primacy of the conjugal bond, while in regions with a Catholic background, fundamentally in Southern Europe, there is a tendency to highlight extended family configurations and a preponderance of intergenerational relationships (Reher 1998; Pfirsch 2011; Mönkediek and Bras 2014).

As Parsons (1943) described in his classic analysis of the American kinship system, the nuclear conjugal family model assumes that, with marriage, the newlywed’s loyalty is reoriented toward their spouse and future children, to the detriment of their family of origin. At the same time, the literature describes a relationship between an emphasis on individual autonomy associated with cultures with Protestant roots and conjugality as the base of reciprocal expectations, obligations, and responsibilities in the family sphere. This structuring capacity finds its source of value and legitimacy in the autonomy of the new couple in relation to previous generations (Parsons 1943; Hubert 1965; Mönkediek and Bras 2014). In societies in Catholic Mediterranean Europe, on the other hand, it is expected that the new generation’s transition to adulthood will be carried out with the support and solidarity of the older generations. This difference also appears in the care of dependent people: while, in Mediterranean societies, the family takes care of solidarity with its most vulnerable members, in the Nordic model, these tasks are ensured largely outside the family (Reher 1998; Pfirsch 2011).

Family Styles in Latin America and Chile

Latin American family features have similarities with the South European Catholic region, but with specific characteristics. Based on their studies on kinship, carried out in Mexico City in the 1970s, Lomnitz and Lizaur (1978, 1987) postulated that the “basic unit of solidarity” on which family sociability rests in Latin America is the “great trigenerational family” and not the nuclear family of two generations. The outstanding aspect of this family model is that the bonds of solidarity between parents and children are not substantially altered by the latter’s marriage. On the contrary, expectations of reciprocal help and intergenerational

solidarity may even increase. The filial bond extended to three or more generations constitutes the foundation of family formation, while conjugality is inserted within intergenerational continuity (Lomnitz and Lizaur 1987).

More recent empirical research has shown the relevance of Lomnitz's hypotheses about the large trigenerational family as a valid cultural matrix to understand family relationships in contemporary Chile. Several articles have highlighted not only the comparatively high prevalence of the patterns of the extended family in most of the region's countries but also its stability over time, despite the sharp transformations of demographics and the increased socioeconomic development. Thus, even though the size of households has systematically decreased in all Latin American countries, their multigenerational structure has not been reduced (de Vos 1987; Iacovou and Skew 2011; Ruggles and Heggeness 2008; Palma 2018). In this context, the Chilean case is striking because the prevalence of extended families has remained well above countries with equivalent levels of social and economic development (such as Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay), even increasing in certain groups (Palma and Scott 2018). In addition, multigenerational family configurations in Chile can be found through different social strata (Araos and Siles 2021; Cabib et al. 2022). The multigenerational nature of the family organization in Chile has recently been highlighted in relation to the study of family response strategies to crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Herrera et al. 2021; Palma and Araos 2021).

In contrast to the Protestant-rooted model of conjugality, which is based on the spouses' autonomy from the families of origin, in Latin America, the beginning and formation of conjugal relations have emerged in continuity with intergenerational relationships. Moreover, this feature is combined with a matrifocal bias within multigenerational configurations (Montecino 1996; Araos 2019). This means that families are usually centered, in practical, cultural, and affective terms, on maternal figures—more specifically grandmothers—who operate as the basis of family and domestic life (Smith 1973; Tanner 1974; Yanagisako 1977). In many cases, especially in low-income strata, this is accompanied by a high tolerance for the masculine's intermittent, weak, or nonexistent participation as spouse and father (Montecino 1996; Araos 2019).

In this context, the practical configurations of kinship (F. Weber 2013) accentuate the bonds of filial solidarity while loosening the expectations of conjugal solidarity, hence resulting in fragile conjugal bonds and long-standing paternal absenteeism (Montecino 1996; Milanich 2009; Salazar 2016). In Latin America, the weakness of the masculine role within the domestic sphere has been described in the literature as the preponderance of "machismo," which is particularly associated with low-income strata and often expressed in the abandonment of wives and children and the consequent failure of the male as a provider (Brusco 1986, 1995; Montecino 1996, 2002). Latin American machismo describes a pattern of male behavior characterized by the man's alienation from the home and his identification with the outside world ("the street") rather than with the domestic realm (Brusco 1995). The substantial divergence of roles, goals, and common understandings between men and women results in fragile and asymmetrical conjugal bonds (Salinas 2016).

Pentecostalism, Gender, and Conjuality

Among the studies exploring the relationship between family and religion in Latin America and Chile, those interested in observing the effects of the expansion of Pentecostalism have predominated widely. Lindhardt and others have shown that the incidence of Pentecostal conversion in the domestic sphere is mediated by the redefinition of masculinity and by a “resocialization” of men in low-income sectors (Brusco 1995; Montecino 2002), moving toward what Lindhardt described as “domesticated men” (2012, p. 178).

These studies and others have shown that Evangelical conversion introduces men into a community of belonging that effectively promotes daily ascetic behavior and that, in turn, establishes demands for a “mature manhood” (Van Klinken 2012, p.222), with a consequent increase in expectations of men’s paternal and conjugal roles (Brusco 1986, 1995; Montecino 2002). According to Brusco (1995, 1986), Pentecostalism reinforces the idea of marriage as a conjugal society oriented toward the well-being of the couple and their children. In this context, the family aspirations of men and women tend to converge. Pentecostalism strengthens the role of men as providers and promotes an active and relevant feminine role within the public life of the religious community (Brusco 1995; Freston 2008; Lindhardt 2009). Brusco (1986) described this status improvement as the “antidote to machismo” (p. 4), which has a notorious impact on the recovery of previously fragile marriages and on the production of stable conjugal relationships that combine a certain symmetry with the reinforcement of the authority of the paterfamilias (Brusco 1995; Chesnut 1997; Montecino 2002; Lindhardt 2012a,b)².

Both Smilde (1997) and Lindhardt (2012a,b) analyzed the specific sense of religion, observing the effects of certain religious valuations and beliefs in the faithful’s everyday lives. Smilde observed that, in Venezuela, the traditional female submission to men is counterbalanced by the Evangelical idea of spiritual equality, in what he called a “religiously bounded patriarchy” (1997, p. 354). Lindhardt (2012a,b) focused on Pentecostalism’s capacity of generating a sense of identity and personal change. According to his research carried out in Chile, this religiosity radically transforms the lives of men, returning them to the home and producing family obligations. At the same time, he shows that Pentecostalism improved the feminine status, through the experience of spiritual marriage with Jesus, which sustains women’s autonomy and religious value even in a context of absence or weakness of conjuality.

Catholicism, Marianism, and the Extended Family

As we have pointed out, most of the literature regarding religiosity and family in Latin America has focused almost exclusively on the study of Evangelical believers,

² Such an effect can be observed at an aggregate level in contemporary Chile. According to data from the Bicentenario Survey 2020, there are more married individuals among Evangelicals (80%) when compared with Catholics (68%), a difference that is clear only among those who declare high levels of religious participation. This difference disappears among people with medium and low levels of religious involvement

attributing by default certain characteristics of the predominant family style to the dominant Catholic culture. Thus, few studies have included Catholics, and there is an overall striking lack of comparative research between Catholics and Evangelicals. The few comparative studies we were able to find showed different conjugal configurations in both groups. For example, using quantitative data on Brazil, Verona et al. (2015) showed that young Evangelical women were more likely to be in a relationship for the first time and have a formal first marital union compared with Catholic women with equivalent levels of religious participation and similar socioeconomic and demographic conditions (Verona et al. 2015). These results would support the idea that, within Evangelical groups, there would be an explicit promotion of early and formal marriage unions, particularly for women, thus avoiding single motherhood and informal cohabitation.

Regarding Catholicism, Marianism has been predominant in explaining the effectiveness of religion in the production of family styles in Latin American low-income strata. Religious piety around the Virgin Mary has been interpreted as the counterpart to the thesis of machismo. Various authors have established a relationship between Marian devotion and the subordinate position of women to men, both within the family and in other social spheres, especially in disadvantaged sectors (Stevens 1974; Montecino 1996; Palma 2018). This position has been characterized by the moral exaltation—of religious origin but secularized—of humility and sacrifice, patience, and of a deep sense of obedience and submission to the demands and desires of men (parents, children, spouses, or siblings). In turn, men are described as obstinate, intemperate, and foolish. Behind this conception of the Virgin as a selfless mother, which sustains a feminine moral status, lies the symbolic masculine hierarchy, which reproduces women's condition of subalternity in the practical sphere. This literature attributes cultural efficacy to Marianism, without distinguishing between different levels of effective religiosity of the people studied. Critics have shown the limitations and empirical inaccuracies that create a devalued and stereotyped image of low-income Latin-American women and men (Navarro 2002; Gutmann 2007; Fuller 2012).

Gaps and Challenges in the Comparative Study of Religiosity and Family Styles in Chile

The literature reviewed observes almost exclusively the efficacy of religiosity—mainly from Pentecostal conversion—on transforming gender relations within the conjugal nucleus in lower classes, neglecting other relevant issues.

First, although newer literature has moved from the narrow focus on conversion (Fediakova 2014; Lindhardt 2020), most previous analyses have disregarded non-converted or native Evangelicals, focusing on the effect of the conversion process on pre-existing family relationships. Our study incorporates this group of faithful, who begin their adult family life within the framework of a distinctive religiosity. That decision, we think, is relevant when we intend to compare Evangelicals and Catholics, whose great majority were born in a Catholic family.

Second, even considering important comparative studies conducted in the 1990s (Burdick 1990; Mariz 1994; Lehmann 1996), we identified a lack of comparative studies on the subject of family relations, especially with qualitative approaches. There is less research on Catholics than on Evangelicals, and those who include both affiliations are relatively rare (see, e.g., Neckelmann 2019). Moreover, comparative research often considers Catholicism simply as a general context, which leads many times to comparing “apples and oranges.” We propose to study active faithful of both Evangelical and Catholic affiliation, trying to make sure that both groups are similar in terms of (high and regular) religious involvement, socioeconomic status, and urban territorial location.

Third, the relationships with members of the extended family, notably intergenerational ones, have been ignored. This nuclearizing bias has been criticized at the level of the sociology of the family in general (Furstenberg 2020), and in Latin America in particular (Pfirsch and Araos 2019). Studies on religiosity and family are not an exception. It seems to us that when targeting only nuclear bonds—between spouses and parent-child—previous literature has drawn a general picture in which Pentecostalism appears as a counterculture that strengthens or restores the family life of the poor, contrasting by default with a Catholic culture that instead tolerates or even fosters asymmetric and fragile relationships. This neglect—with few exceptions (see, e.g., Neckelmann 2019)—of the extended kinship group and of intergenerational relationships is especially problematic considering the salience of both elements in the configuration of families in Latin America. It seems illustrative that one of the most exhaustive and recent investigations on Pentecostalism in Chile (Lindhardt 2012a,b) does not mention the faithful’s families of origin, focusing only on the conjugal relationships. Considering this, our study expands the scope from nuclear family relationships to relationships with members of the extended kinship group, emphasizing intergenerational bonds.

Fourth, we think that some of the previous literature trivializes the phenomenon of religiosity in two ways. On the one hand, especially in quantitative studies, religiosity is often reduced to mere affiliation or frequency of church attendance (Beyer and Fontaine 1991, Pew Research Center 2014; Verona et al. 2015; Somma, Bargsted, and Valenzuela 2017), ignoring key aspects of practical religiosity such as the contents of faith, everyday and extraordinary religious rituals, prayer, reading and interpretation of sacred texts, catechesis, or religious pedagogy, among others. On the other hand, we see in certain literature a risk of merging religiosity with other social phenomena, especially with different aspects of social capital, such as moral prestige, sociability networks, social cohesion, power relations, or economic security (e.g., Lalive d’Epinay 1968; Brusco 1995; Ireland 1999; B. Martin 2001; Montecino 2002). That means that the effectiveness of religiosity on structuring people’s life is not attributed to the religious dimension itself—e.g., issues related to salvation, experience of transcendence or the ultimate meaning of existence—but to other vital dimensions that would be behind religious practices, such as sociability, politics, or economic interest. Recognizing the relevance of understanding the relationship between the religious phenomenon and the other dimensions of social life, we follow rather the direction opened by some scholars of Evangelism in Latin America. Informed by classic approaches to the sociology of religion (Durkheim 1915; M. Weber 2002; Luhmann 2009), they understand religiosity as phenomenon that has its own sphere of action

and effectiveness, linked with the sacred, transcendence, and salvation. Pioneering examples are the investigations of D. Martin (1990) or Sepúlveda (1987) and more recently, those of Bravo Vega (2016), Bahamondes González (2021), Smilde (2007; 1999), as well as the empirical and theoretical works developed by Lindhardt (2012a, 2012b). In line with those works, our study emphasizes the particularity of the religious experience as a social sphere that, although closely linked to others such as morality, sociability, power relations, or economic security, cannot have its effectiveness reduced to a merely instrumental role.

In summary, in our research, we identified important gaps and risks in the literature. Recognizing the relevance of the existing findings and analyses, we believe that they offer an incomplete picture, because of the excessive focus on conversion, the scarcity of comparative studies, and the absence of an extended and intergenerational family perspective, as well as, although to a lesser extent, the risk of conflation of the religious phenomenon. As we will show in the next section, our study seeks to overcome these limitations and risks, exploring the relationship between religiosity and family styles, comparing native Catholic and Evangelical faithful, considering both nuclear and extended family relationships, and observing the specificity of religious experiences to understand the affinities between these two spheres.

Methods

Between August 2019 and May 2021, we conducted ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews—face to face and remotely—in a lower-middle-class neighborhood located in the southwestern area of Santiago, Chile’s capital. Although our fieldwork was carried out at a small scale, we got rich and deep material on each of our study cases, which allowed us to elaborate empirically informed hypotheses on the relationship between religion and family styles.

The main objective of our research was to observe family styles among people with high religious involvement, comparing Catholics and Evangelicals. With this in mind, we considered four specific objectives: (1) to identify and compare understandings, valuations, and biographical trajectories concerning conjugality, gender relations, and parenthood at the nuclear family level; (2) to identify and compare understandings, valuations, and biographical trajectories concerning intergenerational relationships within members of the extended kinship group; (3) to identify and compare religious trajectories, habits, and discourses; and (4) to hypothesize the links between Catholic and Evangelical religiosity and the production of specific family styles.

The Catholic Parish and the Pentecostal Temple³ were located across the street from each other, on the border of three peripheral communes: La Florida, La

³ In order to safeguard the identity of the people and the confidentiality of the information, we do not specify the name of the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Temple studied. We also replace all personal names with pseudonyms. However, given the diversity of Pentecostal denominations in the country, including neo pentecostal Churches (Lindhardt 2022; Bravo Vega 2016), it is important to specify that the Temple we observed belonged to one of Chile’s older and most conservative denominations, the Evangelical Pentecostal Church

Pintana, and La Granja. This location has important implications in terms of the social composition of the neighborhood, where we found significant religious pluralism and a certain socioeconomic heterogeneity. While towards La Florida, the neighborhood is much more composed of lower-middle class population, towards La Pintana and La Granja poorer groups predominate, which we clearly observed in the material conditions of the houses and public spaces.

Access to the respective religious communities had distinctive characteristics from the beginning, which would have consequences for our findings. While in the Catholic parish we reached the priest through a mutual contact, we arrived at the Evangelical Temple on our own. The priest received us at his residence, located in an independent house inside the church. He agreed to collaborate with our investigation, but he explicitly asked not to be the mediator in contacting active members of the parish, to avoid exerting pressure. Our Catholic participants were people who we directly contacted after the mass—mostly participants of an elderly praying group, as well as workers of the parish, mostly adults and elderly women. In contrast, on our first visit to the Evangelical temple, in the context of one of the services that took place during the week, we talked with the pastor, who, after listening to the reasons for our visit, made explicit the kind of approach he would promote: “I’m going to find you some people so that you can talk to the more educated.” This intentionality in the search for informants meant that at least one of the spouses had tertiary education and that they played a preeminent role in the community. The pastor always held a greater control over our access to the members of the temple, while we had more freedom in the case of the parish. For this reason, although we expected to find faithful with relatively higher educational and economic levels among those interviewed from the parish than from the temple, in practice, the reverse occurred. Furthermore, our contacts among Pentecostals were younger and more mixed in terms of gender than among Catholics.

The fieldwork’s first 2 months were dedicated to participant observation in both churches: we introduced ourselves to the religious community, familiarized with regular religious practices, and built trust with our interlocutors. Once we were able to get to know some of the community members better, we began a second stage of ethnographic interviews in their homes, which had to be initially interrupted and then resumed online due to the strict mobility restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main characteristic of ethnographic interviews is that they are situated in the daily context of the interviewees, which allows for the introduction of elements of observation; in turn, they aimed at obtaining in-depth observation from an unstructured approach to the narratives and circumstances that surround them (Guber 2011; Quiroz 2015). We closely observed four Evangelical and five Catholic families, conducting interviews with individuals or couples who were active in their respective churches. During these conversations, we sought to situate the family group in its context, reconstructing its trajectory of formation, relationships, and daily lives of its members. Regarding the analysis, we considered the trigenerational family configuration as the analytical unit, and the longitudinal life course span (Bernardi et al. 2019) instead of isolated individuals, using the methodology of family monographs (Pina-Cabral and Lima 2005). Notwithstanding the fieldwork that we carried out over several months played a central role in an iterative

conceptualization along the whole research process, for the writing style of this article, we used an illustrative emphasis on the conceptualization/fieldwork relationship. With this choice, we intended to make explicit the conceptual axes which we used for the comparative analysis of both case studies.

Results

Companionship and Conditional Intergenerational Solidarity Among Evangelicals

Among Evangelicals, we found a family style characterized by the preeminence of conjugality, which had some specific features that reminds of the ideal-type of companionship marriage associated with Protestant bourgeoisie (Coontz 2005). With an emphasis on electiveness and complementarity between spouses, marriage was understood as a stable bond aimed at the well-being of the couple and children, where the aspirations of men and women coincided within the framework of a clear delimitation of the feminine and masculine spheres. A notorious element was the daily presence of the man in the home. Although leadership was explicitly assigned to the husband as the head of the household and main provider, both spouses shared parenting tasks within the domestic realm. This family style was strongly correlated with a symmetrical religious involvement between spouses, both in the temple and in the house as a continuum. At the same time, it is accompanied by a conditional inclusion of members of the extended kinship group, based on religious criteria, as well as a definition of intergenerational bonds between adults as mediated by autonomy.

Religious Homogamy and Marriage as Companionship

An outstanding result among Evangelicals was the explicit requirement of religious homogamy between spouses. Here, we present an illustrative case. We met the brothers Fernando and Arturo (both in their 30s) and their respective wives at Fernando's house. Fernando and his wife, Dafne, invited us to lunch after Sunday school. The house was a few blocks away from the church. Fernando joked with us about his neighborhood, calling it "La Florida Alto," suggesting a class superiority with respect to the other parts of the commune. The two-floor house was in a "closed" passage, that is, protected from the main street by a fence, a sign of status. On the way to his house, Fernando told us that he owned a jewelry workshop in the city center and that he was a commercial engineer, a professional title he obtained while working. The house caught our attention for its tidiness and cleanliness. Dafne, a housewife, oversaw cooking and serving the food while we talked, and she did not let anyone help her. Only when she finished cooking did she enthusiastically join the conversation. At the time of the interview, they had two daughters, ages 9 and 2, and Dafne was pregnant.

Fernando and his brother were born into an Evangelical family, where grandmothers from both family branches were converted. According to their story, their childhood, despite having been "happy," was marked by poverty, a situation

that they were grateful to have overcome. Dafne, in turn, came from a “Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman” family, which was why Fernando wanted to end the relationship while they were dating. Dafne’s conversion was then a requirement to get married, as Fernando recounted:

I told her, “We have to end it here because it turns out, I know you’re not going to understand. ...” I couldn’t find a way to explain it to her ... so she said to me at that moment, “It’s okay, but there has to be a way for us to be together, maybe I’ll go with you to church.”

Throughout their marriage, this requirement continued to express itself in symmetrical religious participation, so that the latter was not conceived as individual but conjugal, producing a continuity between the church and domestic sphere. For Dafne, her conversion inaugurated a new way of life:

So it was there when I started to join him. And it’s quite a change because, normally, in your daily routine, you don’t have to use long skirts ... so for me it was quite a change. I saved my pocket money to buy a skirt. I did not have shoes to go to church ... it means to change your whole way of life because it implies a way of life, a lifestyle. I had to change a large part and that’s when I started to join him and I started walking with him. ...

In the case of Kimberly and Arturo, religious homogamy was key in the beginning of their relationship. Kimberly emigrated from Uruguay to Chile to marry Arturo after they met at an international church event. At the time of the interview, they had a 9-month-old son. Like Arturo, Kimberly was born into an Evangelical family, in her case, a family of many Evangelical generations from her father’s side. Her narrative reveals the sense of mutual choice surrounding the idea of “meeting minimum requirements” to choose each other to marry. Arturo stated:

We talked [...] and I told her: “Look [...] I would like [...] to look for someone who can meet some minimum requirements in terms of being a Christian in the first place [...]” because I wanted to have a Christian family, I wanted to have Christian children, my world was closely linked to participating in the church. She also wanted a Christian husband [...], so there were goals that brought us closer together.

This conjugal style, which we observed in our Evangelical interlocutors, was similar to the matrimonial model of companionship (Coontz 2005, p. 132 et seq.). As the term indicates, marriage was conceived here as a relationship of “companionate” where affinity, mutual choice, and the strict division of tasks between husband and wife were the central features, accentuating an associative complementarity. This style of conjugal companionship was well described by Fernando:

We find in the Bible a tremendous cultural richness because it teaches us about the relationship between men and women and says that men should treat women like a more fragile vessel, like something delicate, and says that a man should love his wife, like Christ loved the church. And that is a very beau-

tiful thing because it is intertwined with our history. And to the woman, he says, “respect your husband.” Why? Because men need to feel ... we like to be respected, because we are essentially self-centered. ...

The religious appreciations of marriage and complementarity between spouses were at the base of the conjugal companionship ideal shaping the Evangelical families with whom we were able to talk. This companionship was also displayed in religious life, where we observed a joint participation mediated by the demand for conjugal homogamy.

Differentiated Roles and Practical Symmetry

Among the Evangelicals we interviewed, differentiated gender spheres coexisted with an explicit sense of equality, which strengthened the value of marriage as an association that was not only based on complementarity but also on a certain symmetry at the practical level. Masculine authority was tempered by an insistence on partnership within marriage. A strongly traditional discourse took place in the context of a significantly egalitarian practice, akin to what Gallagher and Smith called “symbolic traditionalism and pragmatic egalitarianism” (1999) and Martin (2001) defined as the “Pentecostal gender paradox.” This emphasis on mutuality placed limits on traditional forms of male domination that in Latin America had been usually unfriendly to family life. Although the masculine role of provider was combined with a strong emphasis on affective paternity, the role of women as housewives, here strongly oriented toward child rearing, was highly valued both by themselves and their husbands. Although women described this role as a privilege, which depended on the ability of their husbands to provide, men highlighted the importance and value of this unpaid work, which was understood as a heavy moral burden. Separate spheres and roles were conceived in this way as a mutual decision.

The value of the traditional domestic role of women was also combined and moderated with the expectations of women pursuing higher education and having a profession that would allow them to be economically autonomous, particularly when thinking of new generations. As Dafne explained, moderating her own example in the case of her 9-year-old daughter:

My daughter, the older one, is like a good mother with her little sister. She likes to look at her sister. She once told me, “Mom, I’m ready to be a mother.” But we have always told her that we hope that she can study, that she can, I don’t know, afford a house, that her husband doesn’t have to give her a house, but that she herself can do it. Now, if she wants to do it earlier (be a mother), we won’t interfere. The idea is to give her advice.

The conception of marriage as a partnership was based on significant equality within the framework of differentiated family roles. There was an important religious dimension of this conjugal style based on the spiritual equality underlying the relevant position of women in religious life. As a common enterprise, family implied valuing the differentiated contribution of men and women, which coincided with a traditional vision of gender roles. However, in practical terms, these roles can only

make sense if they are based on freedom and the complementarity of expectations, placing men and women in a position of equality in the family environment.

Conditional Intergenerational Solidarity

Within the framework of a reinforced nuclear family, intergenerational solidarities acquire specific characteristics. Thus, the model of *conjugal companionship* is related to a resignification of other kinship bonds, where ties with children, parents, and collateral and in-law relatives became also mediated by autonomy and choice, as well as by religious homogamy. A manifestation of that is the exclusion or marginalization of members of the extended kinship group based on religious criteria.

The case of Victoria and Atilio illustrates the importance of religious homogamy among Evangelicals in the quality and closeness of intergenerational ties. The son of a single mother, Atilio, was raised by his mother's new partner. However, he resented the abandonment of his progenitor. According to his narration, the most significant relationship within his family of origin was with his grandmother because of the influence she exerted on his path to conversion. This religious influence coincided with an affective bond that was relatively absent when he described his relationship with his parents. When he arrived in Santiago from a town in Northern Chile in his youth, he met Victoria's father, a pastor who continued his induction into Evangelical religiosity. Atilio became a regular visitor to Victoria's home, and so began their romantic relationship. Victoria was the definitive step in Atilio's conversion, and together, they decided to congregate in La Florida to support Victoria's father as pastor, despite living relatively far away.

Besides attending the same church and sharing a high level of religious commitment, Victoria and her parents were neighbors. However, this spiritual and residential closeness occurred within the framework of significant autonomy, especially in the space of children's upbringing and domestic administration, as Victoria recounted:

We live independent lives ... our table, our kitchen, everything is totally independent, but we invite each other. For example, normally, from Monday to Friday, we do our lives at home, but on the weekend, we say "Hey, come here for lunch," or they tell us "Hey, come here for tea," and so on.

A similar situation was that of Miguel and Melani. Already married, for practical reasons, they moved to the second floor of her parent's house, both of whom were Evangelical pastors. In this context, the couple put great effort into maintaining their autonomy, setting up an independent environment, including a separate kitchen. Soon afterwards, Melani's parents moved south to work for an Evangelical community. This allowed her and her spouse to continue living in the house, but Melani never felt that it was completely hers. At the time of the interview, they had just moved into their new family home, which filled them with joy.

Intergenerational autonomy depends on and results in the exaltation of the conjugal bond as the only chosen family tie, which has repercussions on the expectations

regarding children. Both Victoria and Melani had minor children, and in both families, the expectation of their future autonomy was strongly linked to the conception of religious belonging. Among Evangelicals, religiosity was not primarily understood as an inherited tradition but rather as a lifestyle requiring an autonomous decision (“I teach my children that being a Christian is a life option,” said Victoria), which assumes the risk that children could abandon their religion of origin when becoming adults, or remain but moving to a different church than their parents. Melani and Miguel shared this view: religious life requires an autonomous decision, as Melani expressed:

For us, the ideal is that they always stay in the church, but if tomorrow they decide to switch to another church or decide not to go to church anymore, it will be their decision. We fulfill the task of teaching them, of guiding them, but later, as adults, it is their decision. ...

The expectation of the religious autonomy of children went hand in hand with that of residential and vital independence. Atilio, for example, hoped that his children would become independent, which once again resulted in the emphasis on marriage as a primary bond. “At the end, those who are going to stay together are us, as a married couple,” Atilio acknowledged.

Thus, we observed a family style that could be defined as based on the appreciation of autonomy expressed both in religious terms and in family relationships, strengthening conjugality and giving it a sense of companionship and complementarity. In turn, intergenerational relationships, although appreciated, were not understood ultimately as unconditional and given, but as *conditional intergenerational solidarity* once choice once adulthood is reached.

Soft Conjugality and Total Filiation Among Catholics

The model of companionship contrasted with the Catholic conjugal style. Although most of our interviewees explicitly valued religious marriage, claiming that “marriage is for life,” the family trajectories and practices they reported revealed fainter expectations about the role of conjugal relationships in the configuration, stability, and strength of family life. At the same time, they assigned a tributary position to conjugality when compared with filiation and intergenerational bonds more broadly. We have termed this *soft conjugality*, observed across all the Catholic cases we studied in different nuances and degrees depending on the interviewee’s different conjugal trajectories and marital status. Although marital relationships were often fragile, intergenerational relationships were virtually unbreakable—what we have termed *total filiation*.

Asymmetrical Religiosity and Soft Conjugality

Among Catholics, we found lower expectations on religious homogamy between spouses, which did not appear as an explicit requirement to get married, as well as in the lack or low of expectation of symmetrical religious involvement as a requirement

for the formation and development of married life. In general, we found highly religious women who, when married, had husbands with little or no religious involvement. Only in one case did we find symmetric religious involvement within the couple. Interestingly, in this case, a more intense involvement from the husband in parochial life did imply a higher domestic involvement, as we found for Pentecostals.

José and Estela, both in their sixties, led a prayer group for elderly people. On several occasions, they invited us to their home, where the group met, and which was a few blocks away from the parish. After decades of being a self-employed electrician, José started a home-based food products business where Estela informally collaborated. At the same time, she supported her son in a small enterprise in the service sector. Estela came from a rural family, highly attached to parish life, while José had no familiar religious socialization. He began participating in a parish as an adult, and there, he met Estela. From this moment on, José's involvement in parish life was intense, to the point that, according to Estela, "No one could get him out of there!" They even had some marital conflicts because José spent more time in the parish than at home. In Estela's words:

One day I told him, "Either I'll take your bed to the parish, or you come to sleep here" [...]. It was already too much because our son was very young. He told me, "Mom, when is my dad coming?" Because he didn't see him. He left to work at five in the morning and returned at midnight [...]. And from work, he went right to the parish, then he didn't see the child. [...] Then, I said, "No, this has to change, it can't be like this anymore."

This scene may seem like an anecdote. However, Estela expressed a key feature of her marital trajectory, as well as of the other cases of Catholic families, that reveals the relationship between religiosity and the style of conjugality that we observed among Catholics.

Even when both spouses were observing Catholics, there was a tendency toward individualized and asymmetric religious participation, although generally much more intensely so among women, unlike in Estela's and José's case. Among Catholics, the couple—more broadly the close family group—was not conceived as a central unit of involvement in the religious community nor as a space where parish life should be reproduced on a domestic scale, as we observed among Pentecostals. Instead, the parish community was the place where each person found the space for religious participation, without a necessary correspondence between it and the domestic sphere. As the case of José and Estela showed, the increase in José's parochial engagement led him to an estrangement from the domestic sphere and a weakening of his paternal role, which produced Estela's claim. Later, both told us that José moderated his participation in the parish, though he remained the head of the prayer group.

A second example showcasing a much sharper shape of soft conjugality can be seen in Luisa's marital story. Luisa, who was part of the prayer group mentioned above, was 60 years old when we met her. She worked full time as a maid in a high-income neighborhood. She welcomed us into her home, which she shared with two of her three adult children and two grandchildren. Luisa's marital relationship was over about 15 years ago, after 25 years of what she described as a difficult marriage.

Although the couple separated permanently, they never divorced. Luisa told us that she was always very religious: “I spent the Holy Week stuck in a chapel, every day, just like now.” Before getting married, her future husband, Ricardo, accompanied her to church, “but just to spend time with me.” However, that accompaniment ended when they married. They had a religious wedding, and Ricardo promised her that he would make the sacrament of confirmation, but he never did. As Luisa recalled, he even prevented his children from being baptized and from making the sacrament of the first communion.

For Luisa, marriage implied a substantial reduction in her participation in the parish: “I only went to mass, and only when I was lucky.” However, she always kept praying the rosary, a habit she acquired in her childhood with the nuns. Occasionally, she also joined the procession of Santa Teresa de Los Andes. It was only after her marital breakup that Luisa resumed her “full” participation in the Church: she began to be actively involved in catechesis (*cursillos*), retreats, and a weekly prayer group with nuns. This is the reason why Luisa described her marriage as a “lapse” in her religious involvement, at least as far as parish life was concerned.

The cases of José and Estela, on the one hand, and Luisa and Ricardo, on the other, were in many ways opposed regarding the quality and stability of the conjugal relationship. Nevertheless, we could identify common elements of soft conjugality, which were also present in the other Catholic families we studied, sharply contrasting with what we found among Evangelicals. First, in terms of religiosity, there was neither a tendency toward symmetric involvement among Catholics nor a continuity between the ecclesial and domestic spheres. Second, in relation to family life, there was a marked asymmetry in domestic responsibilities and participation for husband and wife, together with feeble expectations about conjugal solidarity, and, as we will describe below, a tributary position of conjugality compared with filiation and intergenerational relationships.

Total Filiation, Matrifocality, and Intergenerational Solidarity

Low conjugal solidarity expectations were in several cases accompanied by conflictive, unstable, or ephemeral marital trajectories. Nevertheless, as the case of Estela and José showed, soft conjugality could also be compatible with lasting marriages. In these cases, the solidarity of one or both spouses with respect to their families of origin has prevailed, limiting autonomy and centrality to restructuring family life. A brief mention of Jenny’s case may illuminate this feature.

When we met, Jenny worked at the parish as a part-time priest’s assistant. She was 45 years old and had been married for 21 years to Andrés, a manual worker in his 50s. Jenny told us that, after their religious wedding, the couple settled “in Andrés’ family’s house [...]. He built a room, a three by three [meters] accommodation, very tiny.” According to Jenny, the 8 years they lived in her mother-in-law’s house were very hard to bear, not so much because of material precariousness and spatial narrowness, but because her husband continued to take on the role of son with respect to his mother, who was the mistress of the house. In such conditions, it was difficult to gain autonomy as a couple, as she expressed:

Sometimes, I had already cooked [...], and the mother came [...] and told him, “I brought you a plate of food” [...]. Damn, there is the lady’s food; there is the mother’s food. He was used to that; he preferred his mother’s food [...]. Oh, it was for me a kind of disregard for my food.

According to Jenny, her husband felt comfortable living with his mother: “He got married but continued in his same world [...], he didn’t want to leave this world. Because he had that attachment, his mother was there.” In contrast, she experienced the constant frustration of her husband’s privileged solidarity with his family of origin, to the detriment of his new nucleus. Although this tension eased a bit when the couple moved into their own house, the difficulty in getting Andrés to prioritize his own nuclear family was something that accompanied Jenny’s marital trajectory until today:

I always had a different view of things, and I felt that my husband’s view was far away from mine. I felt like I was carrying a load on my own. Taking care, worrying about the children, and making sure that everything was fine. I don’t know, paying the bills, taking care of the money that came to the house. There were plenty of responsibilities that I had to assume. There were debts that he acquired by helping his brothers; they left him with loans [...]. I would choose him to marry again, even though I don’t feel fully accompanied.

Jenny’s words embody a mixture of resignation and acceptance regarding a married life where she has not felt “fully accompanied” by Andrés and where their marital relationship has always competed with a disadvantage arising from the strength of Andrés’s bond with his mother and siblings. Something similar happened with Estela and José but in a reversed way. Estela came from a large family from a southern town, and despite having settled in Santiago with her husband since the beginning of their relationship, she maintained “one leg in each place.” Regularly, Estela made visits to her mother—whom Estela called “the matriarch”—and siblings, configuring a kind of double residence that intensified as her mother grew older. This can be seen as another example in which the conjugal trajectory was kept under the umbrella of strong intergenerational relationships.

We call *total filiation* to an unconditional and limitless filial solidarity, whose strength does not decline when the children become adults and form their own family, extending itself through several generations. With a marked—but not exclusive—matrifocal bias, filiation acquires a centrality in the structuring of family and domestic life, while conjugality remains in a secondary or, in some cases, even irrelevant position.

It is illustrative here to return to the case of Luisa. As described, Luisa was the head of a domestic configuration of three generations, assuming the main domestic responsibilities, both in practical and financial terms. Her youngest son (a 34-year-old hairdresser, single, and with no children) and her eldest daughter (a single 39-year-old sporadic worker with two children) lived in her house in a stable way. In this house, conjugal fragility characterized the trajectories of the two adult generations, while the family configuration rested on the stability of the unconditional and extended maternal bonds.

This matrifocal and multigenerational environment was very familiar to Luisa because it was also the one in which she was raised. She never knew his biological father or his identity. “We never met him. We don’t even know his name.” She and her sister grew up with their maternal grandmother, whom Luisa always called “mommy,” along with her three maternal aunts. In her words, “I have always said that I don’t have a father, but I have five mothers. Three aunts and my grandmother, who raised me, plus my mother who had me.” The filiation experience described here not only implies the centrality of the grandmother–mother and the primacy of practical or nurturing motherhood but also a motherhood embodied in multiple simultaneous and durable maternal roles.

There is an association between the family experience described so far and Luisa’s religious experience during her childhood and adolescence. Both environments had a common denominator: a strongly feminized and maternalized socialization. “[We are] only women!” Luisa told us at one point. All these women were “very attached to the Church.” “I have an aunt who was only missing her cassock,” she told us laughing. Such religiosity was manifested fundamentally in the daily habit of prayer. As Luisa told us, “I always saw my grandmother praying,” which ended up defining her own religiosity:

[I am] always praying the rosary. I mean, I wake up in the morning, I cross myself, I entrust myself to God, I say a prayer, I pray “the guardian angel,” and then, I leave. Then, when I get there, [I say] “Thank you for arriving here safely.” I pray the rosary on the subway, on the bus.

In turn, Luisa attributed her religious education “to the nuns” of her boarding school, with whom she established a very close bond until adulthood and with whom also constituted a feminized daily space for her. In this sense, it is striking that Luisa was able to resume the intensity of her religious life when she reconstituted her house as a preponderantly feminine place after her conjugal separation. Men, as husbands and fathers—but not as sons—appeared as disruptors of this domestic-religious order, one based on an intergenerational extended motherhood, which was, in turn, multiplied in various female figures.

These examples show that, in its popular form, Catholic religiosity did not seem to oppose a contextual family culture where the marital experience was very often fragile, symbolically reinforcing instead the experience of a strong and unconditional filiation. This is particularly clear in the centrality of the cult to the Virgin Mary. Marian devotion has a strong penetration into the domestic sphere and in everyday life, giving a positive moral and symbolic value to family experiences that do not align themselves with the nuclear ideal. In our field, we have verified this association between Marianism and family configuration, but we also observed a particular way of signifying the relationship with Christ, as illustrated in Raquel’s case.

We met Raquel on our first visit to the parish. She opened the door for us because she worked as the parish priest’s secretary. She was 73 years old at the time and lived with her younger sister, her only son, aged 31, her daughter-in-law, and her 3-year-old granddaughter. Raquel told us that she and her sister, both single, had always lived together, and with their mother, a widow who had died 3 years ago. When Raquel’s mother became sick, she decided to retire after 30 years of working in a company where she became administrative manager to take care of her. Raquel became a mother

when she was “already grown up” at the age of 42. When she told the child’s father, with whom she had a relationship for about a year, that she was pregnant, he did not react well. She responded by releasing him from the responsibility of paternity, after which he “disappeared.” Although it was initially problematic for her to confront her mother and sister with the news of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, she accepted with some ease that her partner would not assume paternity. In this situation, Raquel told us that she found in Christ a sort of religious substitution for her son’s father:

I, as always, was very attached to the Church and to Jesus, whom I love. I told him, “Father God, look, here is your son, he is not going to have a biological father, but you are his father, so I offer him to you since he is in my belly. So, you can guide him” ... because I speak like that with Christ, with God. “You take care of him, and you’re going to be his father, and his guidance, and you’re going to guide him on the road” ... So many people tell me all the time, “But how come you didn’t look for a person, you didn’t look for a husband, a couple.” “No,” I tell them. “I already have a person who always accompanies me. Day and night, and for a lifetime.” So, I feel accompanied by him.

For Raquel, there seemed to be no contradiction or problematic relationship between her Catholic faith and her condition as a single mother. On the contrary, she found a way to fully accept her situation, with all the associated problems and difficulties, in the figure of Jesus, who she described as a “dad” for her son. She explained that, because she had the unconditional God’s presence, she did not need to look for a partner to fill that role. Unlike what Lindhardt (2012a,b) found among Pentecostals, where single adult women described a “spiritual marriage” with Jesus in a very specific way, in the case of Raquel, the focus was placed on Jesus’ condition as “father,” not as a “spiritual husband.” Once again, the filial dimension was religiously reinforced, making the absence of a stable conjugal relationship more tolerable for Raquel. Thus, her son was raised “only by women”—her mother, her sister, and her. Having found “a lot of support” in the church since the beginning of her motherhood, she incorporated her son into parish life from a very young age. After thinking of entering the seminary, her son met a young woman in the catechesis for confirmation, with whom he married and had a daughter. Raquel offered them to live in her house so that her granddaughter would not have to enter the nursery as a baby. She and her sister dedicated themselves to the baby’s care. Just a few months before the interview, Raquel’s son, his wife, and his granddaughter moved into their own home. However, Raquel clarified, “My doors are always open. I tell them that if they have a problem, the doors are open for them to come back.”

Discussion

Based on our results, we have hypothesized about the associations between two distinctive family styles and specific aspects of the religious practices and understandings of our interlocutors. We propose that there are specific forms of *affinity* between

the characteristics of Evangelical and Catholic religiosity in low socioeconomic strata and specific family styles. Here, we are loosely inspired by Max Weber's classic concept of "elective affinities." With this concept, Weber (2002) accounted for coupling between two cultural spheres, the Protestant religious ethic and the early capitalist way of conducting life. Although Weber never explicitly defined the term, elective affinity has been understood as "the process by which two cultural forms—religious, intellectual, political, or economic—enter, based on certain significant analogies, or affinities of meaning, into a relationship of reciprocal attraction and influence, mutual selection, active convergence and mutual reinforcement" (Löwy 2004, p. 100; original in French).

In our research, we observed that certain ways of performing and understanding family ties in the domestic context better matched with some religious representations and practices than others, affecting and reinforcing each other. The term affinities bypass the attribution of direct causality, posing instead a reciprocal (i.e., bi-directional) conditioning and reinforcement between selected orientations of religious implication on the one hand, and family styles on the other. That differs both from what Brusco (1986) understands as a strategic form of collective action in the case of converted Pentecostal women, and from what Smilde (2007) calls "a reason to believe" among low-strata Venezuelan men who convert to Pentecostalism as a solution to persistent life problems. In both cases, the authors focus on conversion and on how people—given certain life contexts, including their familiar environments—opt for a specific religious denomination, which is not the case in our fieldwork. As we displayed in the previous analysis, religiosity can both foster and reinforce, as well as put up barriers against or be porous to the influence of certain contextually prevalent styles of making family. On the one hand, in the Evangelical case, we found a religiosity that emphasized autonomy and voluntary belonging and that set boundaries with the predominant culture, putting an accent on conjugality as a partnership oriented to religious salvation. On the other hand, in the case of Catholic religiosity, we observed greater inclusiveness, as well as an emphasis on relationships based on what was given and gifted, here favoring the preponderance of an intergenerational solidarity based on the symbolic and structuring value of motherhood.

Individual Conversion, Distancing from the World, and Elective Bonds

Among Evangelicals, practical religiosity was explicitly experienced as a source of meaning that ordered the whole of life, especially family life and conjugality. Both the explicit requirement of religious homogamy between spouses and of symmetrical religious participation expresses a correspondence between the church and the home, and a somewhat rationalized religiosity that systematically permeated the daily lives of the Evangelical faithful.

In Latin America, Pentecostalism has spread through conversion processes, where conversion is experienced as a voluntary and radical action of adherence to God's call and a break with the non-Evangelical "world." Evangelical religiosity is not an inherited tradition but a lifestyle that requires an autonomous decision.

Within the second or third generations, even though people are born Evangelical, the autonomous and founding nature of conversion continued to be expressed in the elaboration of individual testimonies, often coinciding with the transition to adulthood, which marked this voluntary adherence to a religiously demarcated lifestyle (Neckelmann 2019; Lindhardt 2020).

In contrast to the secular “world,” Evangelical religiosity has been found to produce explicit and solid borders with respect to the base culture, establishing a radical difference between those inside and those outside. The insistence on action, autonomy, and choice, as affirmed in the centrality of conjugality, appeared in the autonomous religious act of separation. The conjugal bond has a special value as the only chosen family tie, related to a voluntary and distinctive adherence to a religiously demarcated lifestyle, which configures a religiosity that problematizes several aspects of what is taken for granted in the culture of context and that is notably expressed in the configuration of the family.

This countercultural orientation means that Evangelicals tend to develop a distinctive family style (Gallagher and Smith 1999; Gallagher 2003) that stands in opposition to the traditional features of low-income Latin American families, such as single mothering, the matrifocal extended configuration, and the weak presence of adult men in the domestic sphere (Trevino Nolivos 2002). At the same time, Pentecostalism is deeply related to autonomy and individual responsibility, which unfolds in the structuring centrality of conjugal companionship—with a stable and strong presence of the male figure both as father and husband—and a sharp emphasis on nuclear family solidarity. In this aspect, Latin American Pentecostalism can be seen as quite similar to historical Protestantism, which, by rejecting priestly celibacy as the highest state of moral virtue, elevated marriage to a higher ethical space, despite denying its sacramental character (Mobley 2015). Protestants have sought to consolidate the marriage bond by insisting on reciprocal obligations of love and companionship (Bloch 2012), transforming the nuclear family into the center of religious and moral expectations and a place of self-fulfillment for both men and women (Zollinger Giele 1972; Reher 1998). Marriage conceived as “companionship” means that affinity, mutual choice, and the strict division of tasks between husband and wife become central features, accentuating an associative complementarity. Its value is centered on the couple and not determined primarily by the children, with an emphasis on complementarity between spouses.

Marriage as an association is not only based on complementarity but also on a certain symmetry at the practical and spiritual level. The religious and biblical meaning of marriage is a primary realm for the expression of the alliance with God and of the affirmation of the equality in dignity between men and women (Trevino Nolivos 2002). We observed an associative conception of marriage as a relationship oriented toward a common goal (Valenzuela and Cousiño 2000), one strongly rationalized around the explicit objective of “forming a Christian family.” The voluntary origin of marriage here implies an ethical content: our interlocutors understood marriage as something productive from the point of view of achieving religious salvation, similar to what Weber described as “value rationality” in the case of ascetic Protestantism (M. Weber 2019).

Marianism, Ethics of Grace, and Total Inclusion

Among Catholics, we found a reduced importance of religious homogamy between spouses, as well as low expectations of symmetrical religious involvement, even when both spouses were religiously active. There was not a continuum between the domestic and the religious realms, but instead an individual and personal religious participation and a marked asymmetry in domestic responsibilities and participation for husband and wife, together with feeble expectations about conjugal solidarity.

In short, intergenerationally extended filiation was the structuring bond of family life among Catholics. This centrality unfolded in practical and symbolic terms, offering the cultural matrix for understanding and valuing family life. Thus, we found a certain laxity or porosity in Catholic religiosity, which allowed the prevailing family culture to permeate. Catholic religiosity in general—especially popular Catholicism—is much more inclusive with respect to the secular world (Hénaff 2003). In an historically rooted and pervasive Catholic cultural context, as is the Chilean one, this religiosity marks tenuous boundaries between those who are observants and those who are not, allowing high tolerance thresholds for established cultural forms to permeate the structure of family life. These cultural forms are part of Catholic lifestyle, even if they seem to contradict the dogmatic—institutional and theological—religious orientations, as occurs with respect to the tributary or even fragile nature of conjugality and the elusive presence of men in the domestic sphere. Catholic religiosity does not put barriers to a contextual family culture characterized by the preeminence of intergenerational solidarity and an extended matrifocality. Fragile marital bonds reinforce the experience of a strong and unconditional filiation based on the primacy of practical motherhood, embodied in multiple simultaneous and durable maternal roles.

Along with this porosity, there were also specific elements of the studied Catholic religiosity that actively reinforced and fostered these family features. We observed an affinity between this family style and the religiously founded valuation of filial relationships and motherhood as the expression of an ethic based on gift or gratuity (Hénaff 2003). In other words, we found affinities between Catholic religiosity and a specific family style, here mainly related to popular Marianism. Marian devotion has a strong penetration into the domestic sphere and in everyday life, giving a positive moral and symbolic value to family experiences that do not align themselves with the nuclear ideal.

The concept of “Marianism” was initially coined by Stevens as the counterpart to machismo to account for the “secular building of beliefs and practices related to the position of women in society” (1974, p. 18). Henceforth, the literature has tended to conceive of Marianism in Latin America as the pure submission and passivity of women regarding masculine desires and power. Our analysis suggests an idea of Marianism that contrast with the literature on the topic in two ways. On the one hand, we understand Marianism as an empowered centrality of women in articulating domestic solidarity and of maternal filiation as the main source of meaning for family life. This centrality presents a close affinity with those religious sensibilities characterizing popular Catholicism and that crystallize in Marian piety, as shown by Navarro (2002) in an essay on the active role of women in the formation and

expansion of domestic-based primitive Christianity. Regarding the ongoing forms of popular Catholic devotion in Latin America, Valenzuela (2019) affirmed that religious Marianism nourishes and is nourished by secular culture in its most ordinary and daily aspects: “Mary is at the core of our culture through the exaltation of the maternal symbol that is so powerful among us, especially in a society in which the male is the source of pure disorder and violence. Mary permeates the entire religious culture through portable images (which are carried everywhere in cars and handbags), domestic images [...], and public images that can be seen in the streets and on the highways. Mary overflows the temple and settles in the heart of people’s daily life, as well as on extraordinary occasions.” (2019, p. 4; original in Spanish).

On the other hand, Marianism can be also defined as a religious-based valuation of unconditional bonds funded on filiation, which explains that even Jesus is described as a “dad” for a fatherless son rather than a “spiritual husband” for a single mother. In this sense, Marianism can be linked to a broader feature of Catholicism, which is probably one of the fundamental cultural differences with Protestant Christianity. According to the discussion established by Marcel Hénaff (2013) in relation to Max Weber’s theses on the Protestant ethic, the ethos that characterizes Catholic culture, beyond the boundaries of ecclesiastical tradition, is the “ethic of fraternity” founded on a particular conception of Grace. In the historical context of Christianity, Grace expresses a divine donation as an unconditional and gratuitous act, in relation to which Protestantism came to formulate the human impossibility of response, leading to the doctrine of predestination. In Catholicism, Grace remained close to ancient charity, where it is possible to respond to divine generosity with charity, that is, gratuitousness in the order of the interpersonal relationships, as a complex form of reciprocity described by Marcel Mauss in his essay *The Gift* (1990).

Although Hénaff applies this analysis to contemporary economic rationality, rooted in a Catholic or Protestant ethos, he points out the strong influence on the family sphere. We place our analysis in continuity with this intuition, affirming that the Catholic familiar ethos we found in our study lacks the countercultural specificity of Protestantism, clearly recognizable in our Pentecostal interviewees. This Catholic ethos is embodied in social relations based on the exchange of gifts, services, support, and care within the frame of intergenerational obligations regardless of religious status. This kind of solidarity is key to understanding the strength of close relationships between generations, which often turns into extended multigenerational and matrifocal domestic configurations.

Limitations and Further Research

The present study has some limitations related, firstly, to the composition of the Catholic and Evangelical churches in terms of the age of their faithful. Thus, despite the similar conditions of our interlocutors, as secured by the common location of both churches, we found differences in the age of our interviews. Our contacts among Pentecostals were younger and more mixed in terms of gender than among Catholics, which may have affected their family configurations. Secondly,

as mentioned earlier, access to both communities and the role of the priest, on the one hand, and pastor, on the other, was different. The pastor always held a greater control over our access to the members of the temple, while we had more freedom in the case of the parish. For this reason, although we expected to find faithful with relatively higher educational and economic levels among those interviewed from the parish than from the temple, in practice, the reverse occurred.

Conclusion

Our findings allowed us to identify, although with nuances and variations, two contrasting family styles between Evangelicals and Catholics with high religious involvement and who live in the same urban area of a medium–low socioeconomic status. Each family style configured itself according to which kinship bond—conjugal or filial—occupied the central and structuring position for the practices and discourses of entire family life. The preeminence of a certain family bond—conjugal or filial—implies that this bond resignifies the other family bonds, as well as contribute to set up the boundaries that define the relevant family group as the basic unit of solidarity (Lomnitz and Lizaur 1987).

In line with the literature, we found among Evangelicals a family style similar to the *conjugal companionship* (Coontz 2005), centered on a strong conjugality and emphasis on the autonomy of the nuclear family (stable heterosexual couple and minor children) with respect to the extended family group and between generations. Conjugal companionship also implies a resignification of intergenerational relationships, which are conceived as subject to conditions and choice and mediated by autonomy, as well as by religious homogamy, what we call *conditional intergenerational solidarity*.

Among Catholics, in turn, filiation acquires a practical and symbolic centrality in the structuring of family and domestic life, while conjugality remains in a secondary or, in some cases, even irrelevant position. We have termed *soft conjugality* to the relatively low expectations about the role of conjugal solidarity in the configuration, stability, and strength of family life. In turn, we have called *total filiation* to an unconditional and limitless filial solidarity, with a marked matrifocal bias, whose strength does not decline when the children become adults and form their own family, extending itself through several generations.

Overall, our results contribute to a comparative understanding of the relationships between Catholic and Evangelical religiosity and distinctive kinship styles, filling a gap in the comparative studies on religion and family in Latin America. Using the Weberian notion of “affinities,” we describe the mutual implication of both spheres within low-income strata. In doing so, our results contribute to the literature on the relevance of religious culture and practice in the daily lives of people in urban, contemporary Chile and Latin America. We propose empirically informed hypotheses that can open possibilities for new research, both qualitative and quantitative, on the comparative approach to religiosity and family ties in contemporary societies.

Acknowledgements The authors acknowledge Andrés Biehl for his comments, the interviewees and informants who generously participated in this research, the reviewers for their comments, and the fieldwork assistants: Constanza Bravo, Gonzalo Bórquez, and Benjamín Lustig.

Authors' Contributions Conceptualization: Maureen Neckelmann, Consuelo Araos, and Catalina Siles. Methodology: Consuelo Araos and Maureen Neckelmann. Formal analysis: Maureen Neckelmann, Consuelo Araos, and Catalina Siles. Investigation: Maureen Neckelmann, Consuelo Araos, and Catalina Siles. Writing—original draft preparation: Maureen Neckelmann, Consuelo Araos, and Catalina Siles. Writing—review and editing: Maureen Neckelmann, Consuelo Araos, and Catalina Siles. Project administration: Consuelo Araos. Funding acquisition: Maureen Neckelmann and Consuelo Araos.

Funding This research was funded by the “XVI Concurso de Investigación y Creación para Académicos,” organized by the Dirección de Pastoral y Cultura Cristiana and Vicerrectoría de Investigación, of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Grant number: 10492/DPCC2018.

Data Availability Due to confidentiality, data material will not be available.

Declarations

Institutional Review Board Statement The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Scientific Ethical Committee for Science Social, Arts And Humanities of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (protocol code: 190115004, date 12 August 2019).

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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