



Articles

Routines of Riparian Women of the Amazon Region: Activities and Roles in the Family, at Work and in the Community

Rotinas de Mulheres Ribeirinhas da Região Amazônica: Atividades e Papéis na Família, no Trabalho e na Comunidade

Rutinas Ribereña las Mujeres de la Región Amazónica: Actividades y Roles en la Familia, en el Trabajo y en la Comunidad

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the perception of the routines of women who live in Amazon riverside communities, identifying the roles and activities related to domestic work, açai gathering and actions in community associations. The participants were three women from two island communities in Belem, Ilha Grande and Combu, who earn their living solely from açai gathering, work at home and in community associations. The instruments used were the sociodemographic schedule (ISD), the Inventory of Routine (IR) and Field Diary (DC). All activities are defined by gender. Although riparian women follow the rigid family concepts of gender division in regards to labor, the participation women in paid professional activities, in this case, açai gathering, has increased. The woman's place in riparian family structure is considered dynamic and encompasses a cluster of systems that maintain interdependent relationships. In this sense, the context acts as a facilitator for development, producing constancy and change in the characteristics of riverside women and during the course of her life, family and community.

Keywords: women, routine, roles, activities, Riparian Amazon

Resumo

O objetivo deste estudo foi investigar a percepção das rotinas das mulheres que vivem em comunidades ribeirinhas da Amazônia, identificando-se os papéis e as atividades relacionadas ao trabalho doméstico, ao trabalho da coleta do açai e à atuação em associações comunitárias. Participaram 03 mulheres de duas comunidades de Ilhas da Belém Insular, as Ilha do Combu e Ilha Grande, e que exercem exclusivamente o trabalho remunerado da coleta do açai, as atividades domésticas e atuam nas associações comunitárias. Foram utilizados como instrumentos o Inventário Sociodemográfico (ISD), o Inventário de Rotina (IR) e o Diário de Campo (DC). Todas as atividades são definidas em função do gênero. Apesar de acompanharem os rígidos conceitos familiares de divisão sexual do trabalho, a atuação das mulheres ribeirinhas apresenta um aumento da participação feminina em atividades profissionais remuneradas, no caso, a coleta do açai. O posicionamento da mulher ribeirinha na estrutura familiar é considerado dinâmico e abrange um aglomerado de sistemas que mantêm relações interdependentes entre si. Nesse sentido, o contexto atua como um facilitador para o seu desenvolvimento, produzindo constância e mudança nas características da mulher ribeirinha e no curso de sua vida, da família e da comunidade.

Palavras-Chave: mulheres, rotina, papéis, atividades, Ribeirinhas Amazônica

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio fue investigar la percepción de las rutinas de las mujeres que viven en las comunidades ribereñas de la Amazonia, identificar las funciones y actividades relacionadas con el trabajo doméstico, el trabajo de recoger el acai y el rendimiento en las asociaciones comunitarias. 03 mujeres participaron en dos comunidades de Belén Islas Insulares, la isla de Ilha Grande y Combu y comprometido colección trabajo remunerado exclusivamente de açai, actividades de trabajo domésticase en asociaciones comunitarias. Los instrumentos utilizados fueron el horario sociodemográfica (ISD), el Inventario de rutina (IR) y Diario de campo (CC). Todas las actividades son definidos por el género. Aunque el papel de las mujeres ribereñas seguir los rígidos conceptos de familia división sexual del trabajo, el papel de las mujeres tiene un aumento de ribera aumentar la participación de las mujeres en las actividades profesionales pagados, colección de açai. Se puede considerar que la colocación de la estructura de la familia de la mujer junto al río es dinámico y considerado abarca el conjunto de sistemas que mantener relaciones interdependientes. En este sentido, el contexto actúa como facilitador para el desarrollo, la producción de la constancia y el cambio en las características de las mujeres y ribeirinha en el curso de su vida, la familia y la comunidad.

Palabras Clave: mujeres, rutina, roles, actividades, Ribereña Amazon

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The modernization of society has demanded new standards of organization from the woman, therefore from family and even society. Functions acquired by women, especially in the work market, have made it possible to occupy new contexts, activities and develop different roles. Correlatively, it is possible to think about similar impacts on subgroups which she is part of, especially the family started to exert new functions and new support networks were developed in family as well as in community; a new form of organization regarding families and their surroundings.

Family transformations brought changes into the traditional ways of executing its functions (Simionato-Tozo & Biasoli-Alves, 1998). It has highlighted the approximation of the father figure to the family group and the increase of services offered to the family in order to assist in the care and education of children. On the other hand, the changing of feminine participation in paid professional activities alters the gender division of work, affecting the position of women in family structure, at work and community (Carloto & Mariano, 2010; Romanelli, 1986, 1998; Vaitsman, 1994).

Some recent studies analyze the participation of women in the current Brazilian work market and present which family-related factors interfere with insertion into job market (Bruschini, 1994, 2000; Ribeiro, Sabóia, Castello Branco, & Bregman, 1998). However, the constant necessity to conciliate family and professional roles ends in the restriction of women to work. In fact, studies show that the kind of insertion and feminine participation in the job market depend on a complex combination of personal and family characteristics such as age, number of children, position in the family, support network, conjugal status and family composition. Therefore, in the contemporary scenario, the conflict between ensuring sustenance, family survival and, at the same time, taking care of children and a husband still persists. Such an impasse weakens the woman's condition, especially those from lower social classes who are responsible both for producing goods and raising children.

Complexities generated by this double assignment either compromise women's job dedication or turn them into second-rate workers since women are still the ones mainly responsible for household chores and the care of children and other family members, which overloads those who also perform economic activities (Bruschini, 2000).

The role played by women in several social contexts has been considered a fundamental characteristic for defining people and their relations, thus making it necessary to have a dynamic understanding, because it covers a group of systems that maintain interdependent relations (Bronfenbrenner, 2002). Such an assumption is widespread in development studies, one which sees individual and context as inseparable (Carvalho-Barreto, Bucher-Maluschke, Almeida, & DeSouza, 2009; Ceconello & Koller, 2003; Siqueira & Dell'Aglio, 2007). In this manner context acts

as a facilitator for development as the particularities of person and environment interact reciprocally, producing constancy and change in a person's characteristics and in the course of their life (Bronfenbrenner, 2002).

In this perspective, the most immediate environment, called microsystem, emphasizes the roles, activities and face-to-face relations that are established throughout development. This environment also builds a dynamic and reciprocal interaction between two contexts or more situations which is the case of a mesosystem in which a person participates actively, being formed or expanded whenever they start to be a part of new environments. In some cases, for instance, this system includes the relations maintained by the woman at home, work group and in the community association. In this sense, the mesosystem has these institutions as representatives, which predominantly influence the person, interfering in interactions at all environmental levels (Carvalho-Barreto et al., 2009).

It is understood that the dynamics of such relations are materialized daily, in family routines, and therefore such routines become the main indicators of traditional ways of family group organization (Anderson, 2012; Fiese et al., 2002). Because the research on routines is able to identify which activities, roles and relationships are the day-to-day family dynamics, such studies allow for the characterization of typical aspects of each ecological environment involved in the organization and structuring of daily life, revealing in turn, ecology of each context. An example of the investigation of these relationships is investigating the effects of financial deprivation on family dynamics and time-use possibilities (Budescu & Taylor, 2013; Bruschini & Ricoldi, 2009; Sarriera, Tatim, Coelho, & Bucker, 2007).

Thus, the findings on family routines can allow verification of the impact of routine on the family subsystem organization, and in more general terms, the organization of the ecological system, family system and human development (Ferretti & Bub, 2014; Haugland, 2005; Schaaf, Toth-Cohen, Johnson, Outten, & Benevides, 2011). However, as verified in the work of Pinto, Pontes, and Silva (2013), despite the heuristic value of such questions and ecologic perspective for their basis, still seems a largely unexplored aspect in literature, especially nationally.

Nevertheless, such a feminine condition is manifested in several socio-ecological contexts, women who are mothers and take part in larger community networks as community leaders present a bigger dilemma in the organization of the routine, daily activities, roles played in each context. It is understood that the action of these women in experienced contexts, especially the family work group and community association, represents action from mesosystems, generators of immediate and long-term changes in family groups and community.

As a sample of populations with this profile in the Amazon, it is possible to use the paradigmatic example of female laborers who gather açai. In this case, there are effects of their participation in several contexts. The women play the roles inside the family scope, such as taking care of household activities as well as contribution to the family budget and still actively participate in the community organization a whole.

With little social organization and political influence, also quite distant from decision-making centers, riparian women are forcibly included in general government policies without considering the specificities of their way of life. In general, this results in big problems that affect them in the economic sphere, education and healthcare in these communities. Knowledge of the perception of women about their routines reveals their own spaces for women's emancipation and especially the rearrangements present in subsystems in which they play a part, their roles, activities and relationships are revealed by their daily practices for their use of time. It is assumed that the activities

reveal occupied spaces and that these spaces only be ensured with the rearrangements of the subsystems they are a part of.

Considering that women from traditional coastal communities usually have set roles, they, together with community leaders, should demand a reorganization of the subsystems in which they participate. This research aims to investigate the perception of the routines of women who are from riparian communities in the Amazon, identifying their roles and activities and relations, especially those defined in domestic work such as gathering of açai and their actions in community associations.

Method

Participants

Three female agro-extractivists took part in this research. Two were from the Ilha Grande/São José Community and one from the Ilha Combu/Santo Antônio Community, in the island region Belém – PA (Table 1). The participants represent a case study of riparian communities that have, as a common characteristic, solely being involved in açai-extracting work, domestic activities and participating in community association movements. All the women who took part in the research are married, in common-law marriages; their families are characterized as extended, composed of grandchildren, nephews and son-in-laws who live around the family core. Participants were chosen according to their profile, availability and objectives of this study.

Table 1

Relation of Agro-Extractivist Women, Total of Children, Children that Live With the Family and Aggregates

Agro-extractivist women ^a	Total number of children ^b	Number of children – live with the family	Number of family aggregates
Aparecida	6	3	3 (1 daughter-in-law and 2 grandchildren)
Beatriz	4	-	1 (grandson)
Clarice	3	-	2

^aFor ethical reasons the names used are fictitious.

^bThe children that do not live with the family, in most of times, live in the same community and the same land, or some live in Belém-PA.

Environment: Community

The research was performed in the state of Pará, in the island region of Belém. The participant families belong to two communities (Ilha do Combu and Ilha Grande), approximately 12 km from the capital – Belém, and the commute between the capital and these islands is only made by boat. In this typically Amazonian area, characterized by the presence of *várzea* (floodplain) vegetation, straits, creeks and canals, there are about 375 families living (Teixeira & Alves, 2008) or approximately 1.700 inhabitants that are concentrated in four small communities. The houses of these inhabitants are distant and must be accessed by boats or canoes.

Residents earn their living by extracting natural resources, mainly açai, from forests. These facts allow inclusion of the population into the way of life denominated as “ribeirinho da Amazônia” or Amazon river life (Harris, 2000; Loureiro, 2000). By definition, this style of life and notion of time are different from the way of living in midsize cities and capitals. However, for a great part of the population, the commute between these two realities is a daily

routine. The commute to the capital is necessary in order to sell the extracted resources, go shopping, go to classes or perform small services, which combine to make a unique way of life. The community lives a sociocultural reality marked by the contrast between natural richness and the social poverty in which the majority of the local population is found (Teixeira & Alves, 2008).

Instruments and Techniques

For purposes of characterizing the participants, the Sociodemographic Inventory - *Inventário Sociodemográfico* (ISD) was used in this research. The ISD, which has 45 items, is composed of questions concerning personal identification of family members, schooling, occupation, family relations network, family history, future perspectives and characterization of family system, domicile, sewage disposal and economy.

In order to describe the contact experiences and other complementary information that may be collated in a triangular way with the other instruments, field notes were taken at each contact with participants, and were posteriorly transformed into field journals according to the model of Rubio and Devillard (2001).

The Family Routine Questionnaire – *Questionário de Rotina Familiar* (QRF) was developed based on the works of Silva (2006), Silva, Pontes, Lima, and Bucher-Maluschke (2010) and Silva et al. (2011), and adapted for this study. The QRF consists of a spreadsheet where the rows indicate periods of a day divided into dawn, morning, afternoon and night, and the columns designate the activity performed such as place, company and complementary observations. The QRF enables the identification of organizational patterns of organization of the family subgroup with distribution of roles, activities and companies.

Procedure

The research was submitted and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Health Sciences at the Federal University of Pará – *Comitê de Ética do Instituto de Ciências da Saúde da Universidade Federal do Pará CEP-ICS/UFPA*, opinion number 130/10. All participants were required to sign a “Terms of Commitment” and a “Terms of Free Informed Consent”, before information about research’s content.

The selection of participants was made from the continuous approach of the researcher into the socio-geographic context where the residents and participants of the present research live. This approximation resulted from the integration of the researcher to the studied environment through successive and regular interactions with the group approached. The choice of participants was performed according to aspects of accessibility, availability and considering the participation of women in domestic activities, gathering of açaí and social movement in the community.

Data collection at families’ houses and, at the moment of the visit, participants received all information about the research, guarantee of secrecy, and the freedom to give up at any time, along with the terms of consent form. The researcher applied the Family Routine Questionnaire tool (QRF) – *Questionário de Rotina Familiar* (QRF) individually, in only one session for each participant, with an average duration of 40 minutes, to be answered about the perceptions of their own activities. The interviewees were asked to describe the sequence of typical activities they carried out, the company and place where they were done one day of weekday (Monday to Friday) and one weekend (Saturday and Sunday).

The data from (QRF) was considered on par with information depicted in the field journals – *diários de campo* (DC), which allowed for identification of qualitative aspects of routine activities completed by the participants. The

field journals were written after periodic visits to the community inhabitants' residences as described by Mendes et al. (2008).

Results

Based on the data collected, specific analyses were used. The data referring to ISD characterized the participants. The (QRF) enabled the description of the main activities developed by family subsystems. In theoretical parameters established, it was possible to develop seven categories of activities performed within the families, and in the community divided in three dimensions.

The first dimension is consistent with the subsistence activities and basic cares concerning family unity, such as: Economic Subsistence – *Subsistência Econômica* (SE), Nourishment Subsistence – *Subsistência Alimentar* (SA), Domestic Task – *Tarefa doméstica* (TD) and Physical Care – *Cuidado Físico* (CF). Such categories took as principle, the relationship between family unity and the way subsystems are organized for their maintenance and division of responsibilities and roles. This is the particular case of families organized in family production mode.

The second dimension of activities concerns a group of categories involving contexts of family gatherings independent from ways of surviving. In this sense, basically, the following subcategories were found: Religious Practice – *Prática Religiosa* (PR) and Leisure – *Lazer* (L). Finally, the dimension of activities related to the category of developed actions in the community association, the Community Activities – *Atividades Comunitárias* (AC). The latter category is based on contacts maintained by people from the community having the purpose of developing actions to improve the quality of life quality of families and community. The definition of the respective categories can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Categories of Activities Developed by Riparian Women

Categories of Activities	Definition
Economic Subsistence <i>Subsistência Econômica</i> (SE)	All activities which the objective was obtaining resources of financial nature (money), for example, açai gathering activities, transport and commercialization of açai in Belém.
Nourishment Subsistence – <i>Subsistência Alimentar</i> (SA)	All activities involved in the acquisition and preparation of nourishments. It is considered, in this case, only the acquisition of nourishments that exist around the residence and that concern the own survival, for example, "hunting", "fishing" and "fruits collection" and "preparation of food".
Domestic Task – <i>Tarefa Doméstica</i> (TD)	Every task related to home space, except preparation of food. Examples of this activity: "sweeping the house", "dishwashing", "picking wood", "fixing the house" etc.
Physical Care – <i>Cuidado Físico</i> (CF)	All tasks concerning the physical care of other people, generally children and brothers. The examples are: "nourishing", "bathing", "putting to sleep" etc.
Religious Practice – <i>Prática Religiosa</i> (PR)	All activities of religious character, from "praying alone" to "participating i worship".
Leisure - <i>Lazer</i> (L)	All activities and occupations which the individual is able to practice freely, for amusement, recreation and entertainment. They are: "watching television", "listening to music and radio", "visiting relatives" and "going to parties and celebrations".
Community Activities <i>Atividades Comunitárias</i> (AC)	Activities practiced in the community association, such as: meetings, events and parties that have as objective to raise funds in favor of promoting benefits to the community.

A spreadsheet was made using Microsoft Office Excel 2003 software from the data collected using the information of each participant, such as period of activity development, category of activity verbalization, possible company and where it was performed.

In order to facilitate a better visualization of data, Diagrams of Family Activities – *Diagramas de Atividades Familiares* (DAF) were built with Alfa version DraftSight software according to the procedure described by Silva et al. (2010), which encompasses the description of intrafamily subsystems involved in the development of an activity. For the purpose of representing the DAF information, a family tree presentation of the group that shared the residence, work location and community association. Lines of different colors bypassed the subsystems of activities in which the members were involved; these are identified in figures from the complementary descriptions made in the surroundings. The images enable knowledge of the tasks and who performs them, as well as the moments of meeting, closer living together or isolation, besides providing useful thoughts about the nature and the characteristics of family encounters.

With the aim of differentiating the formation of subgroups around established routines during the week, two DAF were done for each family, one was for the day and other for the weekend, more specifically Saturday and Sunday. In function of the data presented, a different way of presenting the DAF for weekends was chosen, for these days the representation is closer to the ECOMAPA presentation (Agostinho, 2007), which identifies relations and family connections with the living environment. However, before the description of this diagram, a report on the description of the family subsystem involved will be shown.

Aparecida's Family

In the family group of Aparecida (54) and Carlos (54), eight people live together in their residence, given that inside the same property two more houses of two different families are grouped, constituting a large family core. Thus, in their residence, six people live there in addition to the couple: these two grandchildren, children raised by a daughter of Aparecida that lives in Belém, Gilson (18), Marcus (14), and the son Machado (42), daughter-in-law Maria José (33) and the sons of the couple, Dinísio (21) and João (18). There is also the grandson Francisco (5) that lives in the same place with his parents, but eventually stays with the grandmother Aparecida. There are also two other married daughters that live on the same property as the family, Larissa (35), the mother of Francisco and Isabela (30). Due to the proximity, families keep in contact daily and help each other. Aparecida's family is on the second phase of the family cycle, given that the ages of the second generation vary between 5 and 21 years. Aparecida studied until 2nd grade of elementary school. The family lives off of açaí gathering, fishing and other products extracted from the forest.

The DAF from Aparecida's family group, visualized in Figure 1, represents the roles played by Aparecida and members of the family. Despite involving more than one residence and family subgroup, as the routines are intertwined, in this DAF the components of the large family core that involves Aparecida's family are considered. Aparecida's (A) main roles, are food subsistence – *subsistência alimentar* (SA) and domestic tasks – *atividades domésticas* (TD) that she performs by herself and sometimes has daughter-in-law Maria José (MJ) and daughters Isabela (I) and Larissa (L) for support. The activity of economic subsistence – *subsistência econômica* (SE) is performed with the husband and sporadically with grandchildren and children. The support by the daughters in carrying out food subsistence activities – *subsistência alimentar* (SA) and domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD) are performed, most of the time, at the end of afternoon and weekends, because at other times of day, they are

involved in activities in their own homes and the daughter-in-law Maria José (MJ) who works as a community health agent, stays all day out of the house, which restricts time actually spent together.

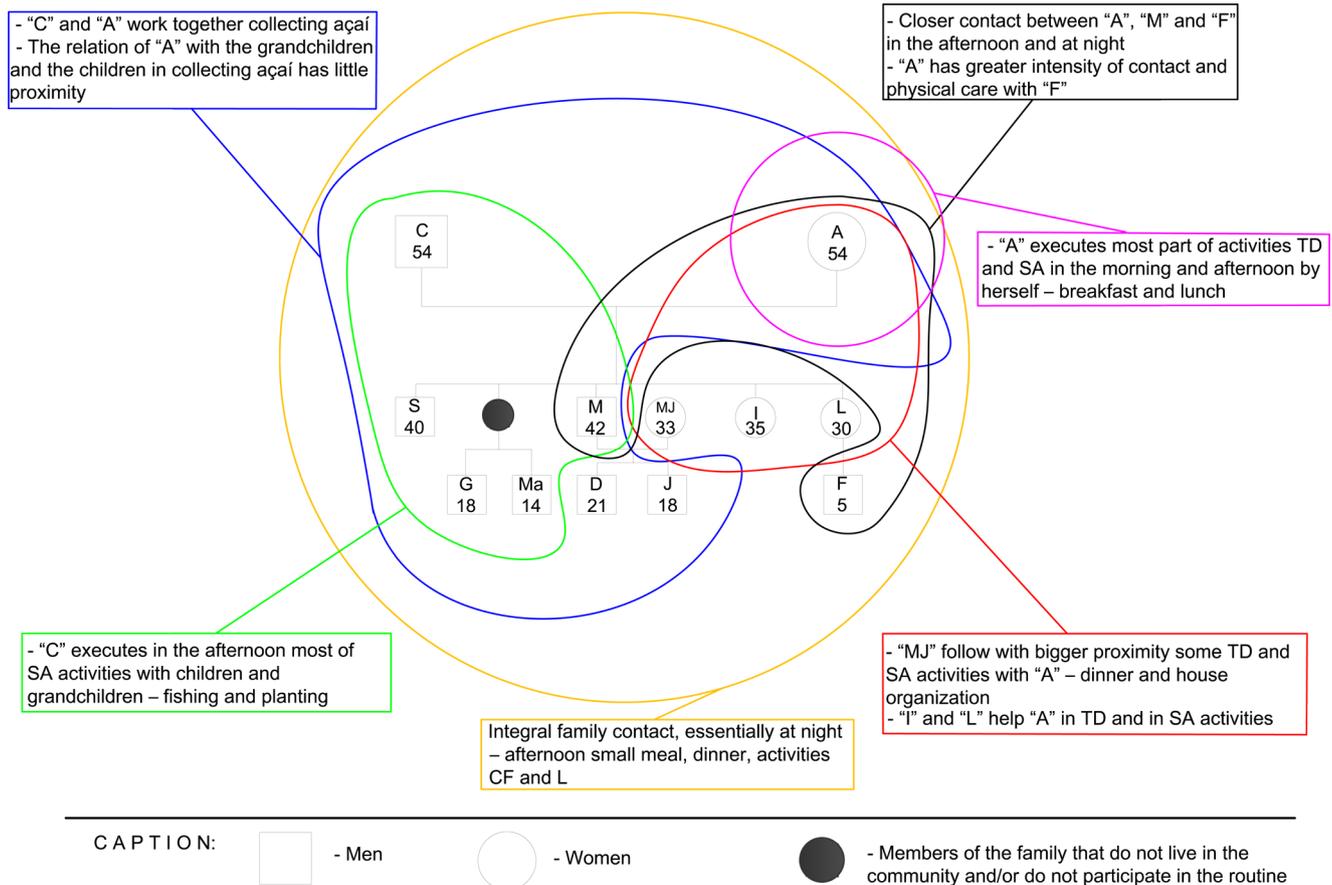


Figure 1. Diagram of Aparecida's family activities during a weekday.

However, according to the descriptions from DC, the relationship with the daughter-in-law is close, especially at moments when they are home at night, the houses being near each other, separated only by a small path of wood, but the kitchen is a common place for both houses, which leads them to share and take turns with domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas*(TD) and food subsistence – *subsistência alimentar*(SA) as seen in the DAF, traced by the red line, enabling us to affirm that Aparecida (A) and her daughter-in-law (MJ) compose a subsystem of activities inside the family group. Besides the roles performed together with other members of the family, Aparecida (A) also does activities regarding food subsistence – *subsistência alimentar*(SA) and domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas*(TD) alone in the morning as seen in the DAF with a pink line.

Inside the family group, Aparecida (A) also presents important bonds with the married son Machado (M), the grandsons Gilson (G), Marcus (Ma) and Francisco (F). It is highlighted that the relationships with the son Machado and the grandson Francisco were of great affinity, Francisco was frequently observed around Aparecida, while carrying out her activities, creating a task of physical care of Aparecida while performing other tasks, especially domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD), the identification of this relation in the DAF is shown with a black line. On the other hand, the relation with the grandsons she raises, Gilson (G) and Marcus (Ma), presents difficulties,

justified by Aparecida because of their adolescence, conflicts happen because the grandsons are not committed to the activity of açaí gathering and domestic tasks.

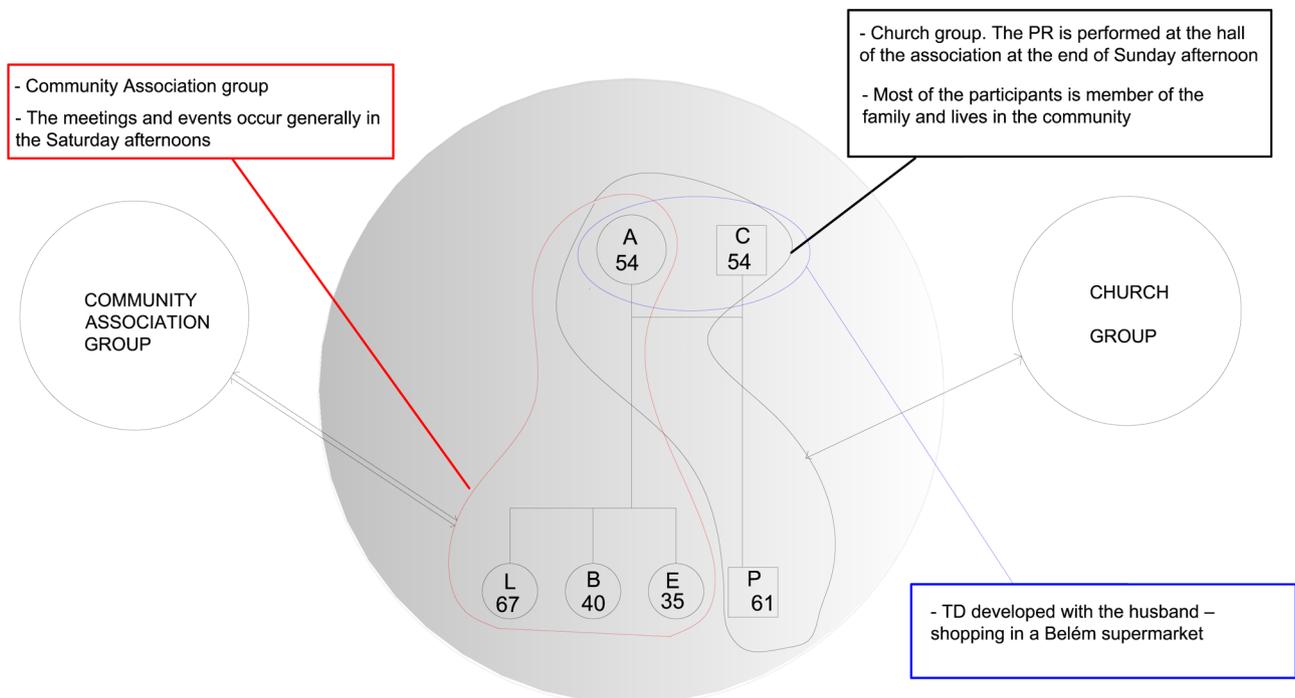
Therefore, according to the DC, it is possible to describe that Aparecida does not show conflicts related to the time dedicated to gathering açaí. Her routine is divided between the role played in activities of economic subsistence – *subsistência econômica* (SE) and domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD) and eventual physical care of the youngest grandson. The part of economic subsistence – *subsistência econômica* (SE) of Aparecida is performed together with her husband Carlos (C) in the context of gathering açaí – the açaí palm tree, *Açaizeiro*. The same relations are also maintained with sons Silvio (S) and Machado (M), the grandsons she raises Gilson (G) and Marcus (Ma), and grandsons Dionísio (D) and João (J). However, the grandsons go to the gathering only sporadically, when they are off studies. Besides, sons and grandsons gather açaí in another forest and that is why they meet each other only when they carry the açaí to a determined spot for organization and commercialization. With the sales in Belém, the profits are divided among sons and grandsons. These relations are identified with a blue line and observations in the DAF, in the top figure.

From the reported home activities, Aparecida does not take part in the care and planting on the property around the house, fishing, and commercialization of açaí in Belém, these are executed by the husband Mário (M) and sons. The activities performed by Aparecida's family (A) are also moments of full and positive contact during the day and develop physical care – *cuidados físicos* (CF), which includes meals, swimming in the river and leisure – *lazer* (L) related to watching television and conversations with the entire family group. Activities that are shown in the DAF with a yellow line are moments of daily meetings with the family group.

The division of tasks made by the couple shows certain rigidity in regards to the lines of activities established among the subsystems. The execution of such activities determines the moments of approach, as in the açaí gathering, but with distinct tasks that distance the couple. Another highlighted relationship is grandmother-grandson (grandson Francisco), a configuration of the grandmother-grandson system as a possibility of better settling the parental subsystem that performs particular activities and spends most of the time together, a characteristic of the local socialization, described in the DAF.

According to the Aparecida's report, the ease in conducting multiple roles is related to the proximity of the forest, where açaí is gathered, and the family residence. There are no considerations about her roles as the grandchildren's caretaker and the support received in the execution of domestic tasks.

The DAF of Aparecida's family group, shown in [Figure 2](#), represents the activities performed on the weekend, Saturday and Sunday. Aparecida's weekends are dedicated to community activities – *atividades comunitárias* (AC), domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD) and religious practices – *práticas religiosas* (PR).



CAPTION: □ - Men ○ - Women — - weak bond == - strong bond

Figure 2. Diagram of Aparecida's family activities during the weekend.

The community activities are characterized as groups that form extrafamily relations, as it can be observed in the DAF, and these bonds are identified in the community association group. Despite the fact of being considered extrafamily relations, all bonds are identified as family members, and are constituted in several actions in the community as party promotion and bingo for fundraising destined to the association, meetings and vocational course that intensify bonds maintained with the community. The components with greater bonds with Aparecida are: Lourdes (L), sister-in-law and community leader, along with two other members of the community association, Beth (B) and Eva (E), nieces of Aparecida. The domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD) are developed in the company of the husband, and consist of grocery shopping on Saturday morning in the shopping area of Belém. Also in the company of the husband, Aparecida develops the religious practice – *prática religiosa* (PR), always on Sundays in the community association hall, and most of the participants are member relatives of the community, except the priest - *Padre* (P), who performs celebrations in the community at least once a month.

Beatriz's Family

Beatriz (58) and Joel (63), according the data from DC, used to live in Belém, but, about eight years ago, they came back to the community in Ilha Grande, escaping from the high cost of life in the city and urban violence. Living with the couple is the grandson Marcelo (10), who also came from Belém, because the daughter of Beatriz did not have anyone with whom the child could stay so she could work. Beatriz has four children, but only two, married, live in the community, Vilma (35) and Bernardo (42), the other two live in Belém. She also has a brother, Mário (M) and among the nephews and nieces that keep in contact with Beatriz, the ones that stand out are the nephew Paulo (P) and his wife Célia (C), with whom she keeps close relations with an intense exchange of favors.

Beatriz studied up to 3rd grade of elementary school. The family lives off of açaí gathering, fishing, and other products extracted from the forest. Besides that, Beatriz produces “chopp” (popsicle in a small plastic bag) to sell at her house, which provides an extra income for the family.

As it can be identified, the constitution of this family group is given in function of its history of riparian living and escape from risk factors in the city.

The DAF of Beatriz (B) represents the activities performed on a normal weekday, visualized in Figure 3. In the morning period, Beatriz (B) completes the domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD) and food subsistence – *subsistência alimentar* (SA) without the help of other family members, such tasks are identified in the DAF with a pink line. Besides this, she performs parental duties on the grandson Marcelo (Ma).

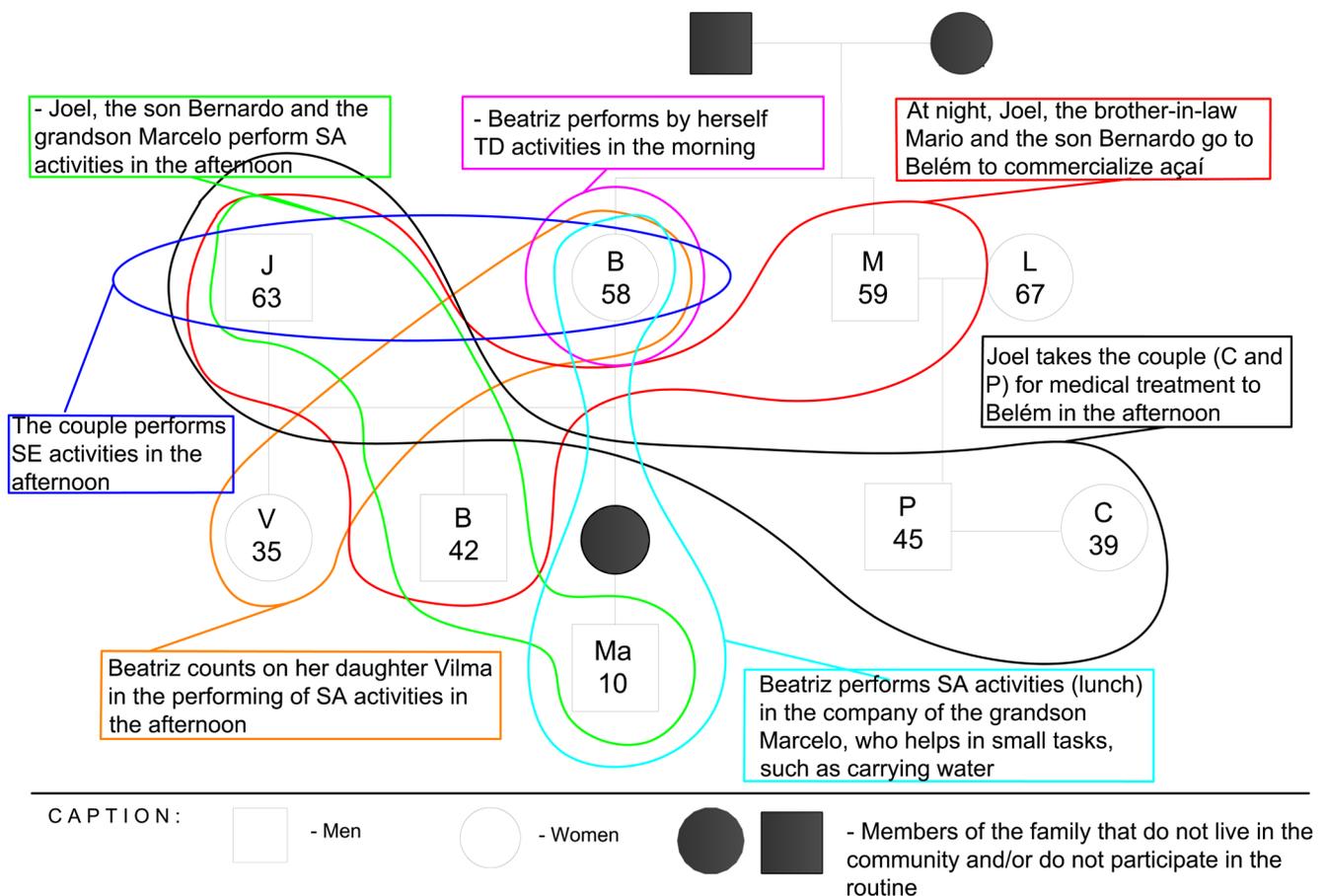


Figure 3. Diagram of family activities of Beatriz during a weekday.

The relation of Beatriz (B) and the husband Joel (J) is of great proximity in the work context of gathering açaí. The couple gathers açaí together the entire morning, besides the gathering of other products of the forest that takes part in the tasks of economic subsistence – *subsistência econômica* (SE) of the family. This relation is identified with a blue line and with observations on the top of the figure.

At some period during the day, Beatriz (B) is assisted by the grandson Marcelo (Ma) with domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD) and with activities of food subsistence – *subsistência alimentar* (SA), an activity that is represented

in the DAF by the light blue line. From the data in the DC, it is verified that the routine of relations with the grandson Marcelo (Ma) is sometimes confrontational because he has difficulties in interacting with the grandparents in the work of açai gathering and domestic tasks. As it is possible to observe in the DC, complaints from Beatriz are continuous.

However, the domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas*(TD) of Beatriz in the afternoon count on support from the daughter Vilma (V). These activities are highlighted in the DAF with brown lines. The mother-daughter relationship is very tight and cooperative. The help received from the daughter Vilma may facilitate possible conflicts of roles developed by Beatriz, as observed in the DC from the reports of Beatriz.

The activities in which Beatriz (B) does not take part are related to weeding, taking care of plants or going fishing in the river, because the husband Joel (J) together with the son Bernardo (B) and the grandson (Ma) perform these activities, which are highlighted with a green line and observations in the DAF. Another activity, which Beatriz does not do, is the commercialization of Açai, performed by Joel (J), the brother-in-law Mário (M) and the son Bernardo (B), who go to Belém in order to carry out the activity, is identified in the DAF with a red line. In addition, Joel (J) commutes alone and monitors the nephew of Beatriz, Paulo (P) and his wife Célia (C), during medical treatment in Belém, activity identified in the DAF with a black line.

The DAF of Beatriz's family group, visualized in [Figure 4](#), represents activities performed on the weekend, Saturday and Sunday. On the weekends, Beatriz (B) is dedicated to actions related to community activities – *atividades comunitárias* (AC), domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD) and religious practices – *práticas religiosas*(PR). The community activities are characterized as groups that compose extrafamily relations. However, the bonds of Beatriz (B) identified in the community association are members of the family, and this is observed in the DAF and identified with a red line. They are João (Jo), Nogueira (N) and Fernando (F), the main coordinators of the association and nephews of Beatriz. Despite participating in meetings and movements at the community association, Beatriz doesn't consider herself very active in the group activities since she is an older person with physical limitations which prevent her from helping and being more active inside the community association, the meetings occur at the end of the afternoon on Saturday, in the hall of the association located beside the community school.

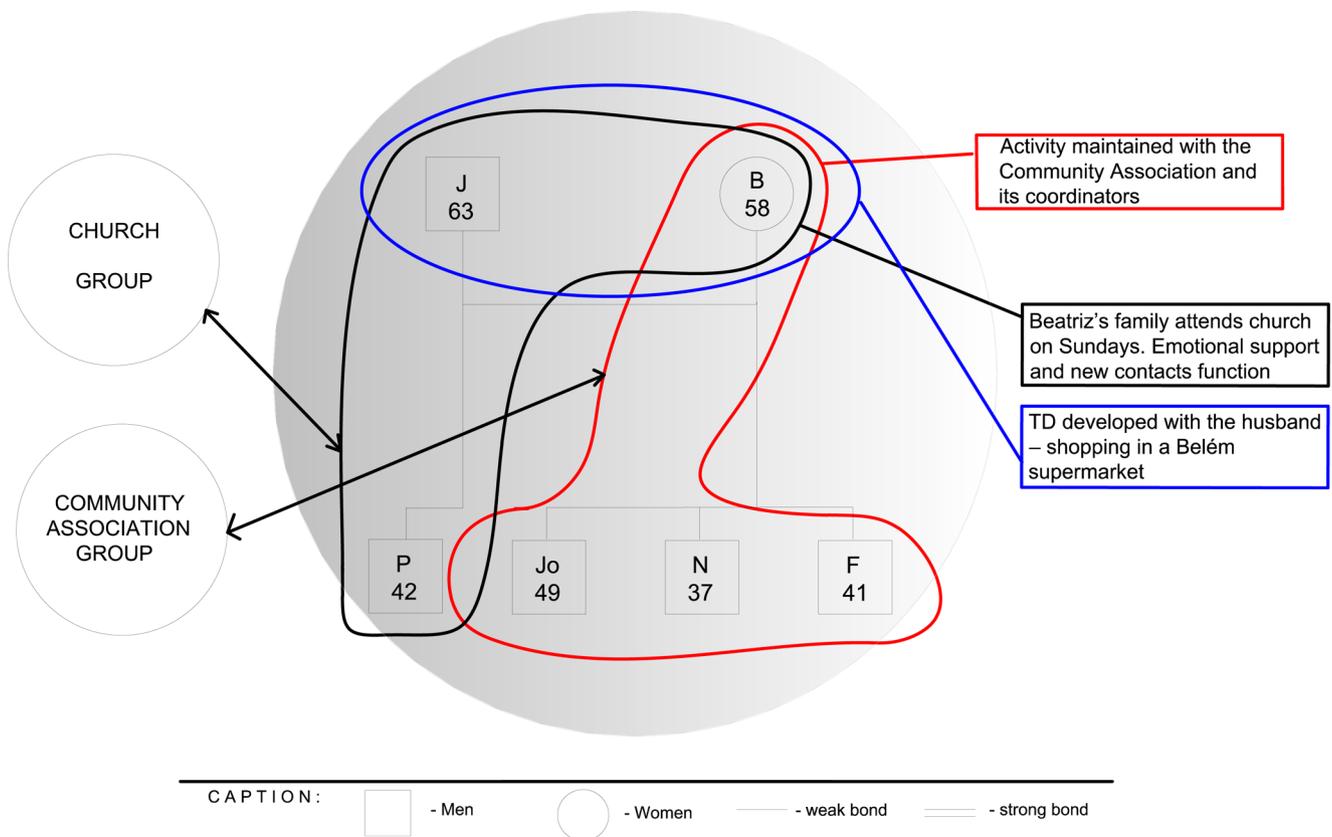


Figure 4. Diagram of family activities of Beatriz during the weekend – Saturday and Sunday.

The domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD), shopping done at supermarket in Belém, and the religious practices – *práticas religiosas* (PR) are done in the company of the husband Joel (J). Beatriz (B) affirms that she finds great emotional support from the Pastor (P). The church services happen on a nearby island. This activity is identified in the DAF, Figure 4, with a black line. With the exception of shopping, the activities of Beatriz are more restricted to home, while her husband's seem to be demarcated in the environment outside of home; a clear demarcation of gender.

Clarice's Family

Clarice (67) and Eduardo (66) live in a community with their granddaughter Vânia (21) and the great granddaughter Ana (3). There are also the children Roberto (37), Paulo (37) and Amélia (29), who are married and live on the same property with their respective spouses and children. Because of the great proximity of the houses, they see each other daily and maintain a close relationship. Clarice studied until 4th grade of elementary school. The family lives off of the gathering of açaí, fishing for shrimp and other products extracted from the forest.

The DAF of Clarice's family group, viewed in Figure 5, represents the activities conducted in a normal day of week. Clarice (C), the husband Eduardo (E) and the children carry out the activities of SE together that are related to gathering açaí. During this activity, two workers that live in the neighborhood, Samuel (S) and Barbosa (B), neighbors and friends, who have been sharing the work and the profits of collecting açaí for five years, are considered by Clarice, people of great enterprise and good coworkers. That is the reason they prefer to work sharing the profits than being paid daily.

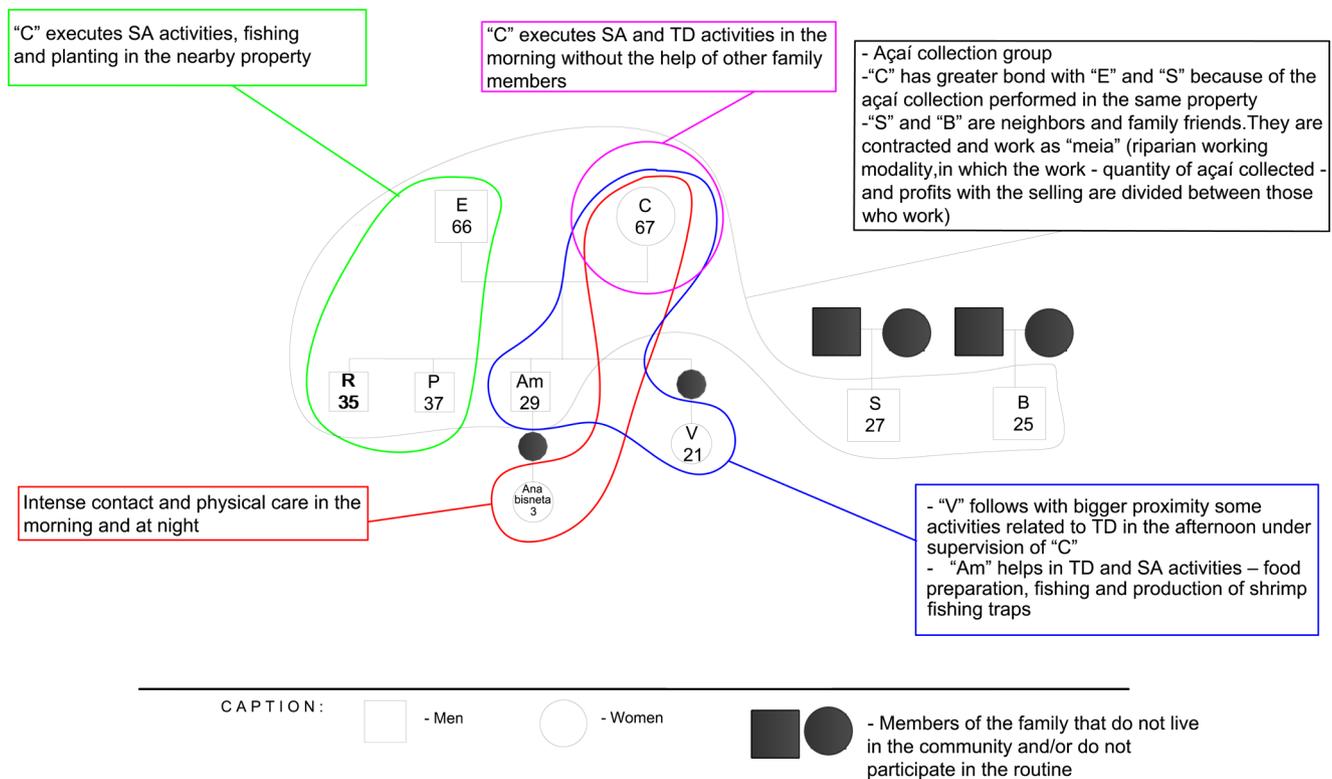


Figure 5. Diagram of Clarice's family activities during a weekday.

The property where the açai extraction is done is on another island, about 40 minutes by boat. The entire family goes there. On the land where the açai palm trees – *açaizeiros* are, the group is divided in order to complete the work. The activities performed by Clarice's family group (C) are circled by a black line in the DAF. The data presented shows that in Clarice's family, there is division of work based on gender. This division of tasks demonstrates certain rigidity along the lines inside the activity of gathering açai and how such tasks determine the moments of approximation and separation of the couple.

Based on notes from the DC, it is possible to describe the cooperation in the work of extracting açai, not only by members of the family, but also by people from the community, making itself easier for Clarice, so she can play her role in the activities of food subsistence – *subsistência econômica* (SE) without conflicts and conciliating it with roles performed on the family level.

The domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD) and food subsistence – *subsistência alimentar* (SA) completed by Clarice (C) in the morning do not receive attention of family members, as it can be seen in the DAF in the pink dashed line. However, in the afternoon, the granddaughter Vânia (V) helps the grandmother in the domestic tasks – *tarefas domésticas* (TD), food subsistence – *subsistência alimentar* (SA) and economic subsistence – *subsistência econômica* (SE), for example, taking care of pig and chicken breeding around the house. In addition, Clarice (C) manufactures the traps for shrimp fishing and straw containers used in the storage and transportation of açai with the support of Amélia (Am), her daughter. These activities are indicated in the DAF with the blue line. However, there are activities in the family group in which Clarice does not take part, namely the shrimp fishing and maintaining of family boats, activities executed by the husband Eduardo (E) and the sons Roberto (R) and Paulo (P), who are incorporated into the family subsystem. These activities are demonstrated in the DAF by a green line. Besides

that, Clarice, eventually, takes care of her great granddaughter Ana (A), family subsystem shown in the DAF by the red line.

The daily life of Clarice (C) is full of moments when everyone is together and having conversations, for example, at the moments when they go to the forest in order to extract açaí, during the meals or at the end of the afternoon. In these relations, the ones who stand out are the married children Roberto (R), Paulo (P) and Amélia (Am) who live on the same property nearby, enabling daily contact with the husband Eduardo (E) and the relations with the granddaughter Vânia (V) and the great granddaughter Ana (A). The relations with the husband and with the married children are very tight, on the contrary, the relation with the granddaughter Vânia (V) has some conflicts because of the difficulty of the granddaughter in helping with domestic tasks and açaí gathering because she studies part of the day in Belém, in addition, Clarice (C) is financially responsible for her. That is why there is a great demand from the grandmother for Vânia to get a job and contribute with the family expenses.

The DAF of Clarice's family group, viewed in the [Figure 6](#), represents the activities done on a weekend, Saturday and Sunday. In the field of community relations, Hilda (H), cousin and community leader, neighbors and friends, Maria José (MJ), Rosa (R), Marília (Ma) and Graça (Gr) are highlighted and described in the DAF, [Figure 6](#). These members of the association, specifically, share the routine of activities developed in the community association. The member of the association named Francisca (Fr) also participates together with Clarice (C) in the routines of the association even though they disagree about some ideas and positions inside the institution. The routines of activities inside the community association may be altered when new projects occur such as registration in order to benefit from housing projects, processing courses, training for the cultivation of açaí and products derived from the forest.

In the field of extrafamily relations, also identified, is the church group – *grupo da igreja* (GI), especially the priest – *padre* (P) for the close relationship and support to Clarice (C). The masses are celebrated twice a month in the community, relation identified in the DAF by the black line. There are other moments of great mobilizations of the church group, for example, the recent building of a chapel for the celebration of masses that, before, happened at the headquarters of the community association.

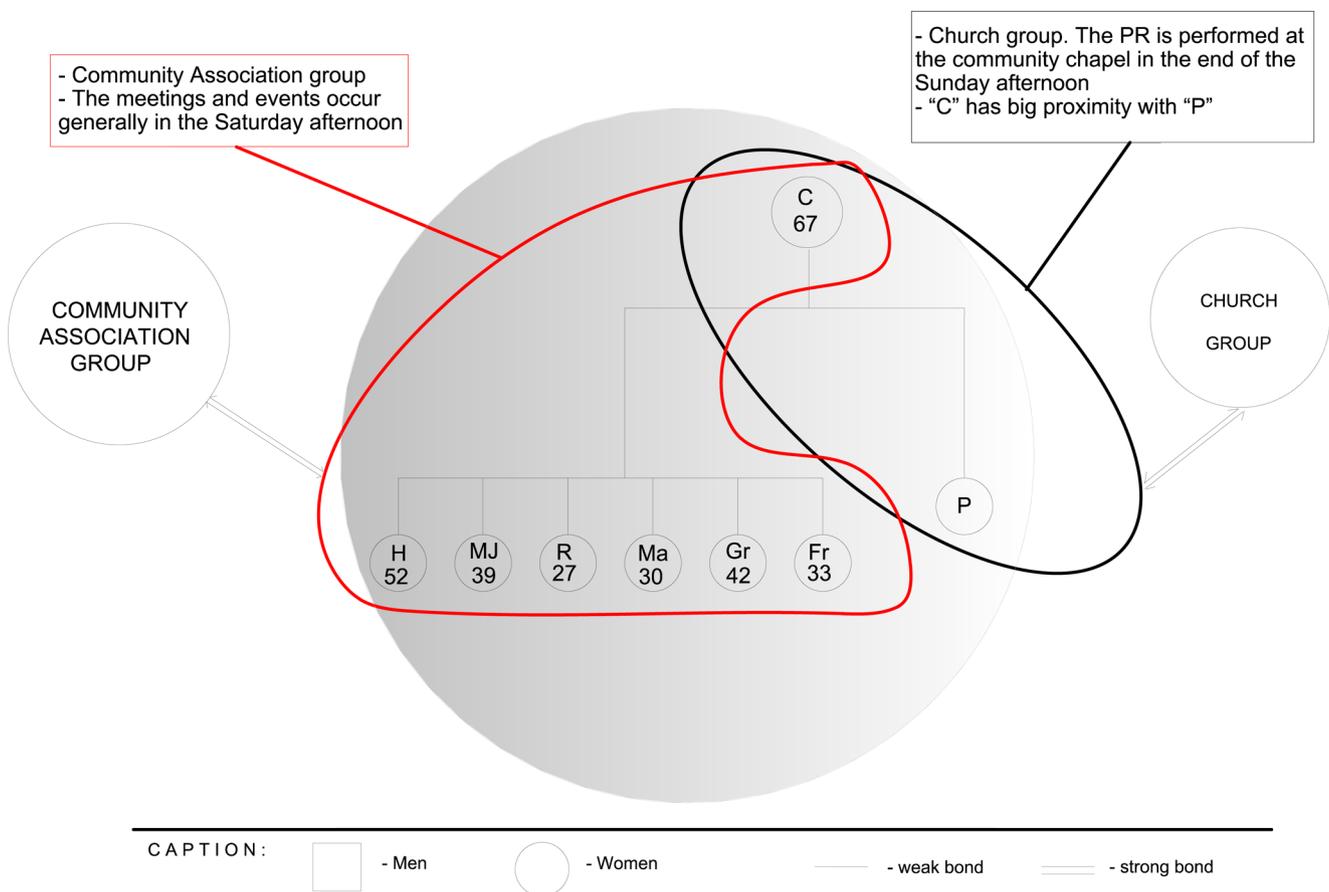


Figure 6. Diagram of Clarice's family activities during the weekend – Saturday and Sunday.

Discussion

The diagrams of family activities, organized from the routine data, permitted the identification of roles and activities related to domestic work, gathering of açaí and actions in community associations of riparian women. All activities are marked by relations that the spouses, children and relatives establish and they also are quite demarcated in function of gender. There is a clear division of tasks and roles between men and women and such division institute the *status* occupied by the spouses and the group of possible relations.

Women are given the responsibility of maintaining the family by doing domestic tasks, such as caring for children and the family environment and food preparation. The women also take part in the gathering of açaí, and in this context there is also division of work based on gender, the family's men climb the açaí palm tree – *açaizeiro* and carry heavy loads of gathered fruits. The function of women is to shuck and sort the fruits, activity of great physical effort. Thus, women participate actively both in domestic activities and food subsistence, such as the activities of economic subsistence, that guarantee family livelihood. Besides that, especially on weekends, the women of riparian communities that were studied act strongly in community associations, in actions and activities with the aim of bringing development and improvement of life conditions of the communities, this is a women's exclusive task.

In general, it has been noticed that women keep their relations and contact on a family and community level, while men tend to more external activities, such as selling products. It is possible to affirm that the greater diversity of activities performed by women implies a greater diversity of roles, thus, demanding a larger network of support. Therefore, it has been noticed in the three studied cases, that the families are composed of family subgroups of relatives living around, generally on the same property, not only have houses in common, but share activities and encounters.

An arrangement that makes the transgenerational transmission of roles has been verified. So, the older children become responsible for supporting their parents in the tasks executed, depending on the person's gender. Thus, the boys learn, very soon, to exert activities related to the tasks of the fathers and, the girls, to exert activities related to tasks of the mothers. There is an initiation into gender roles, and, in the female case, it seems to be more premature and intense. It is assumed that the exercise of such tasks makes the conformation of mother-older daughter, grandmother-grandchildren, and brother-sister subsystems possible. In this sense, comparing the diversity of subsystems in which mother and father participate, it is concluded that the mother's is more varied, maybe because the woman has the role of mediator of relations between the subsystems, working as the link responsible for establishing intermediation among family subsystems. On the other hand, the family gatherings in function of activities developed by subsystems enable the division of roles in riparian families. Additionally, the daughters-in-law are incorporated into the networks of support to the matriarchs.

Interestingly, it is this arrangement that, despite the accumulation of activities and overlapping of roles is that it creates the possibility of participation in community life, especially in the leadership role. With the family understood, next comes the support of daughters, sons and daughters for maintenance tasks, family subsistence contrastingly provides a space for community participation. On the other hand, in spite of an apparent lower feminine status, community-based concerns and greater female participation, it is practically a matter of gender. It should be noted that community relations enable a network extension in feminine activities. While men play a role related more towards external activities and having a higher number of external contacts, women's community activities enable an escape from domestic space and strict relations defined by this space.

As seen in the results, the relations of support to riparian women maintained in the family context, at work or in community actions are, most of the time, restricted to kinship or to very close groups of neighbors and friends. These relations give support so the women can realize several roles and execute their activities in double shift workloads and still act in community actions. The constant necessity of conciliating family roles and work may restrain and overload the women. In fact, studies reveal (Bruschini, 2000) that the kind of insertion and the way of feminine participation in the job market depend on a complex combination of personal and family characters, such as age, number of children, position inside the family, network of support, marital status and family composition.

Besides the contribution of relatives in supporting riparian women so they can exert several social roles, it is observed that the execution of activities occurs, most of the times, in the domestic scope and surroundings, without leaving the boundaries of the community. This is a factor that can facilitate their actions in the development of economic subsistence work, which can be conciliated with domestic tasks, establishing related roles in turn. On this account, according to studies of Bruschini (2000), women continue being the main ones responsible for domestic activities and caring for children and other family members in addition to performing economic activities. In fact, the transformations in contemporary society led to very restricted alterations to the woman's social role.

The role of worker has just been added to the previous model of mother and wife. Nowadays, women have found themselves divided between multiple roles and searching for the best way to conciliate them.

On the other hand, it has been noticed in this study that riparian women present the opportunities to join community association as a manner of making new contacts and integrating into other contexts in her roles and opportunities, such as participating in activities of economic subsistence, for example, the açai collection, ways of making part of community associations as an occasion for acquiring new contacts and integration in other contexts. Due to such factors, the position of woman in the family structure has to be considered in a dynamic perspective. If on one side, the activities performed and consequently their roles, correspond to traditional arrangements of the society demarcated by sexual divisions of work, on the other, the occupation of space inside community associations, explains the nontraditional mode of her network of relations with impacts on the community. Data from the DC show that other women figures are pressured to have an occupation and a different contribution in the family group (see Vânia's situation in Clarice's family).

In this perception, the relations of riparian women are maintained in a more immediate environment, the microsystem, giving emphasis to roles and activities with family and community members. It is also possible to observe in the routines of these women the contexts in which they are inserted establish a dynamic and reciprocal interaction between contexts, namely the house, the açai palm trees place as a workplace – *açaizeiro* and the community association, characterizing therefore the mesosystem, in which the riparian women participate actively. In this sense, the mesosystem presents these institutions as representatives, who exert preponderant influence on a person, interfering in interactions in every environmental level.

It is understood that the dynamics of these relations are materialized in the daily routines of riparian women, and such routines become the main indicators of ways of organization that are typical of the family group (Fiese et al., 2002) and the basis for the interdependence with the context (Bronfenbrenner, 2002). It is understood that the lives of these women in the living contexts, in special the family, the group of work and the community association, representative actions of mesosystems, generators of immediate and long term changes in the family groups and community.

Final Considerations

The notion that routine activities are organized accordingly to roles and responsibilities structured in each cultural context and each family's culture (Serpell, Sonnenschein, Baker, & Ganapathy, 2002) allows the investigation of routines to unravel how the roles performed by women are articulated within the bigger systems in which they take part, especially the parental and communitarian ones.

It was verified that the position of the woman in the family structure is considered dynamic and covers an agglomerate of systems with independent relations between them. In this sense, the context acts as a facilitator to her development, producing constancy and change in the characteristics of the riparian woman and in the course of her life, family and community. So, it is through the routines of these women that the contexts in which they are inserted establish a dynamic and reciprocal interaction such as between the house, açai palm trees place as a workplace – *açaizeiro* and the community association, thus characterizing the mesosystem in which they actively take part.

Despite the aspects revealed, the data collected here does not clarify the perception of women about their own condition and relation with the support network, which, in a certain way, guarantees their participation in the diversity of activities and roles found. It is believed that future studies might further clarify these aspects.

However, studies about roles activities of women are easily found in the literature. The lack of information concerning this phenomenon in contexts of riparian populations is very blatant. In this sense, in addition to enabling acquisition of knowledge about this group, the data in this work make it possible to give these populations social visibility and consequently contribute to scientific studies of coastal communities and the various consequences in the community that can be drawn from this work. They may also contribute to the construction of public policies compatible with way of social and symbolic organization of the different social groups, avoiding the establishment of incipient actions that could be lost due to the lack of a real sense of these people's daily life. Thus, the knowledge produced by researches like these may avoid the frustration of managers and improve the quality of life of riparian populations as described in this article.

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Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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