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# **Gender, Families and International Migration**

**Maria Eugenia Cosío Zavala<sup>1</sup>**

## *Abstract*

International migration, particularly of women, causes major changes in family groups and gender relations in the countries of departure and arrival. New concepts and new analysis of factors related to migration broaden the scope of reflections, limited to men before, and restricted mainly to the labor markets and to economic variables. In contemporary migration systems, where women have full agency, the different stages of family life are central to decide the temporality and the orientation of the spatial trajectories for women and men, as well as for children and other relatives. A gender perspective is therefore necessary to understand and explain migration.

Key words: migration, gender, care, work, family

## *Résumé*

Les migrations internationales, notamment de femmes, provoquent des changements majeurs dans les groupes familiaux et les relations de genre dans les pays de départ et d'arrivée. De ces mutations surgissent de nouveaux concepts et de nouvelles analyses sur les facteurs liés aux migrations, qui élargissent le champ des réflexions, limitées aux hommes auparavant, et qui se restreignaient avant tout aux marchés du travail et aux variables économiques. Dans les systèmes migratoires contemporains, où les femmes sont des actrices à part entière, les différentes étapes de la vie familiale sont centrales pour décider de la temporalité et de l'orientation des trajectoires spatiales, pour les femmes comme pour les hommes, ainsi que pour les enfants et autres parents. Une perspective de genre est donc nécessaire pour analyser et expliquer les migrations.

Mots clés : migrations, genre, care, travail, famille

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## Gender, Families and International Migration

International migration, especially of women, causes major changes in family groups and gender relations in the countries of departure and arrival. These changes have given rise to new concepts and analyses of the factors linked to migration, which broaden the field of reflections. Previously male-centered, they were restricted to labor markets and economic variables. However, in contemporary migration systems, where women are independent actors, the different events of family life are central for the temporality and direction of spatial trajectories, for both women and men, as well as for children and other relatives, those who leave and also those who remain in the country of origin.

We will ask the following question: how can a gender perspective improve the understanding of the relationships between migrant movements and family dynamics in contemporary societies? We will discuss several examples of feminine migration, in a comparative approach, particularly in Europe and Latin America. We will present two dimensions:

1) *the feminization of migration*. This particularly involves migrant women moving toward Europe, Asia and North America. The case of Latin America is particularly interesting, as very feminized flows to Europe, and female South-South movements are significant in the subcontinent.

2) *the interactions between gender systems and international migration*. We are interested in the changes of spatial mobility concerning gender relations within couples, women's autonomy and empowerment, gender inequalities, transnational families, and new masculine and feminine roles. As labor markets are segmented by gender and migratory status, economic crises affect settled migrants, forcing them to return to their country of origin, in accordance with their gender and generation (parents, children, grandparents). For example, during the 2008 economic crisis in a host country such as Spain, there were processes of family des-unification (in contrast to previous family reunification) and women were the last to leave (Pedone *et al.*, 2014). This shows the importance of women as economic providers, heads of family migration networks, and key figures in the processes of family reproduction. However, they are often discriminated in the countries of destination. Migration gives them both more power and more responsibility (Rosas, 2014).

In the context of migration, families experience disturbances in their structures and forms of organization, with long-distance kinship. The relationships of men and women in couples, as well as with children, fathers, mothers, fathers-in-law, mothers-in-law, brothers and sisters, are redefined again and again, causing radical family changes.

Research on international migration has been interested in gender relations and family transformations, as women are present and visible, and a significant proportion of them migrate alone, contrary to what was traditionally thought (Lauby and Stark, 1987). The concept of "feminization of migration" emerged when the ratio of female migrants to men increased (UN, 2011; Pfeiffer *et al.*, 2007). Although comparative studies have shown that feminine migration is

not recent (Schrover, 2013; Donato, 2015); it became more visible from the 1980s onwards, when migrant women began to be perceived as "social and economic actors" (Vause and Toma, 2015, pp. 46-47). Before, when the majority of migrants were men, family changes were rarely studied, as economic variables were central in the research on international migration.

Recent theoretical and methodological publications have been concentrated on the relationship between gender and migration. Some books are treating this subject, such as "Le genre au cœur des migrations" (2012) by Claire Cossée et al., "Género y migración" (2012) coordinated by Esperanza Tuñón and Martha Luz Rojas, as well as "El género en movimiento. Familias y migraciones" published in 2014 by Maria E. Zavala de Cosío and Virginie Rozée<sup>2</sup>.

The integration of gender and family dynamics contributes to improve the knowledge of international migration processes, both for women and men. In fact, while the links between migration and labor markets have traditionally been well studied, relations between migration, family dynamics, and gender have been poorly analyzed, as a result of lack of analytical frameworks and of specific data. Traditionally, it was assumed that women followed men in their migration as "*tied movers*" and that men decided on their family's migratory movements; and if women migrated alone for economic reasons, then they should behave as migrant men. However, these assertions have no support, since contemporary migration movements are complex, with both economic and non-economic causes, and migration of men and women are strongly interrelated (Lauby, Stark, 1987). Therefore, if family relationships, non-economic aspects, marriage markets or care of children are not taken into account in migration trajectories, a full understanding of international migration is impossible (Pfeiffer *et al.*, 2007).

In this article, we present some examples of some situations and contexts, mostly based on fieldwork. We principally focus on migration of Latin American women to Europe, the United States and South-South movements.

### **The feminization of migration**

The "feminization" of migration can be defined as the consequences of women's mobility (Morokvasic, 2003). There is a growing number of women in migratory movements. But the proportions of women in the global "stock" of migrants do not show an increase (Figure 1). For better accuracy, we should have data on migration flows, which are difficult to obtain<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The presentations in the book were presented at Symposium 479, during the 54th Congress of Americanists: "Las migraciones femeninas en América latina y las transformaciones en las relaciones de género," which we coordinated with Virginie Rozée, in Wien (Austria) in July 2012, whose objective was to gather and make visible research on the theme of Gender and Migration in Latin America.

<sup>3</sup> Net migration flows are the difference between annual departures and returns to the country of origin.

However, the most important aspect of this "feminization" of international migration is the impact of the strong presence of women in migration flows, such as feminine migration from South America to Spain and Portugal and movements back to their countries of origin during economic crises; migration of Mexican, Central American and South American women to the United States; and migration between neighboring countries in South America (such as Peru to Chile, Bolivia to Brazil). These are some of the examples presented in this work.

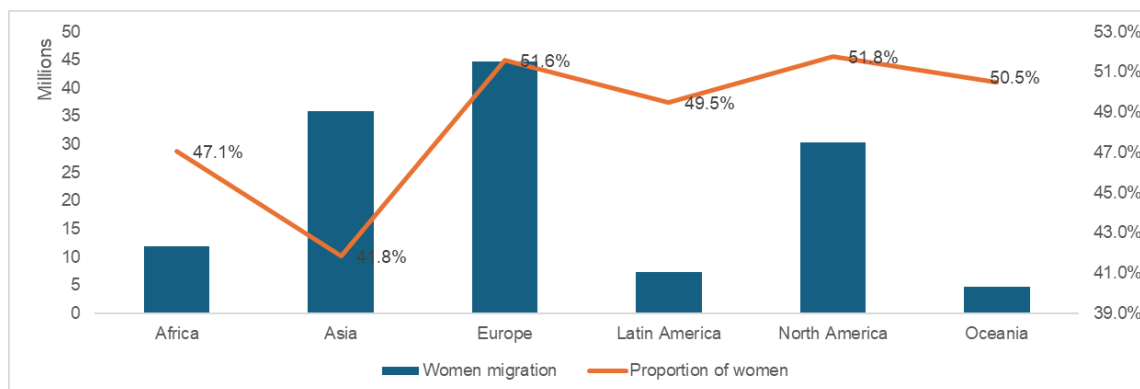
## Measuring the feminization of international migration

### §1. Stocks

Data provided by the United Nations Population Division on the number of foreigners in destination countries<sup>4</sup> do not confirm the impression of a massive feminization of migration. The figures show that the proportion of women in the global "stock" of migrants, living in a country other than their country of birth, was relatively stable during the period 1990-2020: it increased slightly between 1990 (48.8%) and 2000 (49.3%) and decreased (48.1% and 47.9% respectively) between 2010 and 2019 (UN, 2003, 2011, 2013, 2019).

Figure 1 shows the proportions of women in the stock of migrants, by regions in 2020: 47.1% in Africa, 41.8% in Asia, 51.6% in Europe, 49.5% in Latin America, 51.8% in North America and 50.5% in Oceania (UN, 2020).

Figure 1. Number of migrant women and proportion of women in the total number of migrants by region. 2020

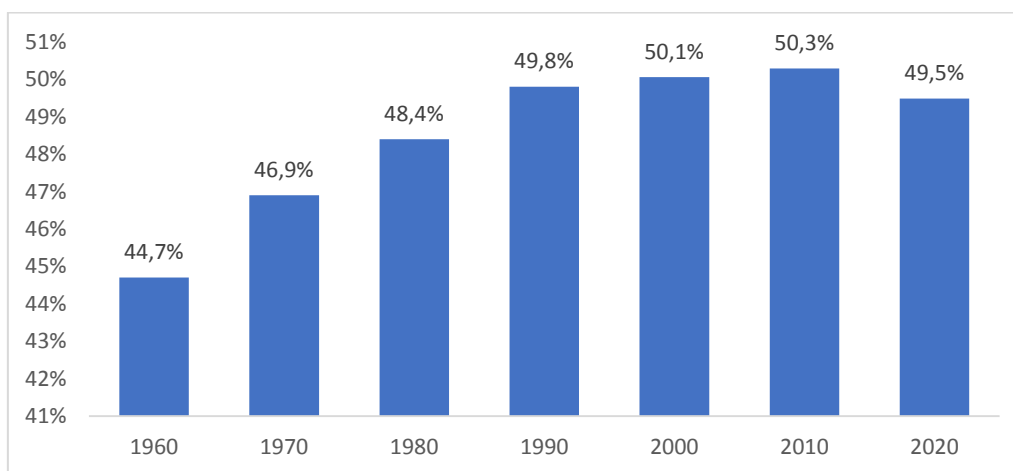


United Nations (2020), Population Division. International Migrant Stock: 2020

<sup>4</sup> The population of foreign nationality does not represent the total number of immigrants, as some received the nationality of the country of destination. However, these data are usually used to estimate immigrants living in a country that is not their country of birth

Latin America experienced an upward trend in the proportion of feminine migrants between 1960 and 2000, followed by a recent decline (Figure 2): in 1960, 44.7 % of the stock was female migrants; in 1990, 49.8 %; in 2000 and 2010, the proportion was 50% and then it decreased (49.5%) in 2020 (UN, 2011 and 2020). The increase in female migration flows to the United States and Spain, and female migration between border countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela) is mainly explained by international care markets<sup>5</sup> (Araujo & Hirata, 2021) while, between Bolivia and Brazil, flows are linked to Bolivian women's commercial activities in Brazil (Guimarães & Baeninger, 2014).

Figure 2. Percentage of women in the migrant stock. Latin America. 1960-2020



Source: United Nations (2020), Population Division. International Migrant Stock: 2020

## §2. Net migration rates in Latin America

To better analyze the feminization of migration, net rates of international migration<sup>6</sup> offer a more dynamic view of migration flows. Prieto estimated net migration rates for Latin American countries between 1950 and 2010 (Prieto, 2012). There is a trend of increasing net rates of international migration in Latin America among women of recent generations. The author explains that:

"Women in the most recent cohorts show a more intense migration intensity than older cohorts, regardless of the direction of net migration. [...]. A longitudinal analysis reveals that for countries such as Peru and Uruguay, these are more period effects, as all cohorts, young and old, participate in the net emigration of the last decade. In other countries, such as Mexico, with a long tradition of male emigration, there is a greater involvement of cohorts of young

<sup>5</sup> Migrant women work in domestic tasks and care for the elderly and children, particularly in Argentina, Chile and Spain.

<sup>6</sup> Net migration flows are calculated by subtracting the outflows of the population (emigration) from the inflows (immigration), in a given country, during a period of time. Rates are assessed over a year with net flows in the numerator and the average population of the year in the denominator

women in the recent period, but not among those of older age. So the hypothesis of a cohort effect is more likely in this case" (Prieto, 2012, p.: 120).

With the net migration rates between 1950 and 2010, Prieto was able to construct typologies. The superiority of young men and women, under the age of 30, is a common feature in all countries and periods. However, in adult ages they are different kinds of migration by sex. The smallest one is an older female emigration group (in Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua). All other types of migration are either gender-balanced or male-dominated (Prieto, 2012). In conclusion, Prieto shows that there is no general feminization of migration. However, some specific migration flows are predominantly feminine.

Migration flows of Venezuelan emigration could not be observed in Prieto's research, due to the lack of data. These massive and sudden migrations have considerably changed the migratory panorama of Latin America, in an unpredictable way. Venezuela was a country of high immigration since the middle of the twentieth century (Picouet et al., 1986). In 2019, a statement by the UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) wrote that: "The pace of the outflow from Venezuela has been staggering. From some 695,000 at the end of 2015, the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela had skyrocketed to over 4 million by mid-2019, according to data from national immigration authorities and other sources. In just seven months since November 2018, the number of refugees and migrants increased by one million."<sup>7</sup>In 2023, there were about 10 million Venezuelans abroad, including many families, so women and children are very present<sup>8</sup>. International ethno-survey projects are underway to study these movements<sup>9</sup>.

## **Gender Systems and Migration**

Women's empowerment is a central issue in gender studies (Casique, 2001; Mason, 1997). However, despite a focus on gender inequalities, a gender perspective is not limited to changes in women's autonomy, in their decision-making or freedom of movement. "We use the concept of gender as a system of signs and symbols, representations, norms, values and practices, which transforms gender differences into social inequalities, organizing the socially constructed relations between men and women in a hierarchical way, giving to the masculine a higher value than the feminine. Like any socio-cultural and historical construction, this system has objective and subjective aspects,

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/refugees-and-migrants-venezuela-top-4-million-unhcr-and-iom>

<sup>8</sup> <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/1261382/venezuela-numero-de-refugiados-por-pais-y-situacion-de-la-aplicacion/>

<sup>9</sup> Ethno-survey projects on Venezuelan migrants (2021), by El Colegio de Mexico, Brown University, the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, and the Universidad de la República de Uruguay. In: <https://mmp-lamp.colmex.mx/comunidades-seleccion/>

preceding individuals, but which they restructure in their daily lives"<sup>10</sup> (Zavala de Cosío, 2010, p. 146). This definition of gender is much broader than the question of empowerment, which is a part of it. In fact, the socio-cultural and historical construction of the power and different roles of men and women directs the behavior of individuals during their migratory journeys. So a gender perspective in international migration has a high explanatory meaning.

We can analyze how migratory movements involve gender roles, with respect to the decisions and consequences of migration; new marriage conditions; transformations of family life between those who leave and those who stay; changes in relationships between children, their parents and other family members; integration of migrants into the labor market. Gender roles will change, but also the organization of family life in the destination place, which can be a simple stopover or a more or less definitive destination. We will focus on Latin American women, with data from field surveys in Latin America, Spain and the United States. The following examples have been observed in Spain, France and Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru (Zavala de Cosío and Rozée, 2014).

### **Transnational Matrimonial Markets**

International feminine migration has a strong impact on marriages and unions in populations of origin and destination. Typically, young migrants migrate as single people and in many cases return to their starting point in order to enter unions or marry, as is the case with migrants from northern Guatemala in the United States (Aragon, 2013).

However, in other contexts, when a huge number of migrant women are present, as Latin American women in Spain, marriage markets change. In the chapter: "The Rape of Latin Women: Latin American Migration and Marriage Markets in Spain"<sup>11</sup> (Domingo et al. 2014), the authors point out that the number of mixed marriages, between people of foreign and Spanish nationality, tripled between 1998 and 2010, from 9,267 marriages in 1998 (4.5% of the total) to 27,219 in 2010 (16.3%). In more than half of the cases (58%), one of the spouses is of Latin American origin, and 7 out of 10 unions correspond to Spanish men with Latin American women, in their first or second marriage. The authors draw a parallel between the segmentation of the labor market, which attracts migrants to low-skilled jobs, and that of the marriage market, with the increase in these mixed marriages, which:

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<sup>10</sup> "Utilizamos el concepto de sistema de género entendido como un sistema de signos y símbolos, representaciones, normas, valores y prácticas que transforma las diferencias sexuales entre los seres humanos en desigualdades sociales, organizando las relaciones entre los hombres y las mujeres de manera jerárquica, valorando a lo masculino como superior a lo femenino. Como una construcción sociocultural e histórica incluye tanto aspectos objetivos como subjetivos que preceden a los individuos pero que ellos a la vez recrean continuamente en su quehacer cotidiano"

<sup>11</sup> "El rapto de las Latinas: Migración Latinoamericana y mercados matrimoniales en España "

"would correspond to a demand for women willing to take on more traditional roles (from the point of view of the Spanish man), as a reaction to the extraordinary improvement in the situation of Spanish women of the most recent generations, in a marriage market that immigration has helped to segment"<sup>12</sup> (Domingo *et al.*, 2014: 38).

This demographic explanation can be supplemented by sentimental and gender motivations. Roca Girona, in his chapter "Seeking Love, Redefining Gender Relations"<sup>13</sup> explains the preference of Spanish men for Latin American women and Slavic women, because they are perceived as wives who center on family and home, and because they are "loving" and "docile". Their beauty and sensuality explain the preference of Spanish men for these immigrant women (Roca Girona, 2014).

From the migrants' point of view, they also find advantages in marriages with natives of the destination country, as many of them have left their families for reasons of domestic violence: "It is important to highlight, according to other sources, the problems of domestic violence and separation from the partner as motivating factors for emigrating"<sup>14</sup> (Molano Mijangos, Robert, García Domínguez, 2012). Although domestic violence is rarely reported directly, it is recalled in conversations, as Cavagnoud points out: "the desire for greater autonomy and emancipation from an abusive partner [...] is no exception to the rule in the case of Bolivia" (Cavagnoud, 2014, p. 96).

Mixed marriages often make possible the legalization of the migration situation. In Spain, children born of these unions have the same rights as nationals. Migrant women in mixed unions also enjoy greater attention and independence, with greater freedom of movement. And as migrant wives are perceived by men as docile and obedient, they feel themselves much more independent than in their countries of origin, and their rights are much more valuable

For migrant men who live alone (single, separated, divorced and widowed), they can start a union with women from the destination country. However, in Spain, marriages between Latin American men and Spanish women are less than 30% of all marriages between Latin American origin and Spanish; marriage market is less favorable to migrant men (Domingo *et al.*, 2014).

### **Couple's life during migration**

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<sup>12</sup> "Correspondería una demanda de mujeres dispuestas a asumir los roles más tradicionales (desde el punto de vista del hombre español), como reacción a la extraordinaria mejora de las generaciones femeninas españolas más recientes en ese campo, en un mercado matrimonial en el que la inmigración ha contribuido a aumentar su segmentación"

<sup>13</sup> "Buscar el amor, redefine las relaciones de género"

<sup>14</sup> "Es importante señalar, según otras fuentes, los problemas de violencia familiar con la pareja y de separación como factores de motivación a emigrar"

In some contexts, such as Mexican emigrants from Atlixco (Puebla) to the United States, men migrate mainly alone, without their families. However, their private life is not controlled:

"In the communities of origin, there is great tolerance towards migrants for their extramarital affairs in a foreign land; their wives think that this is the inevitable cost of migration and therefore they must pay for it<sup>15</sup>" (Marroni, 2009, p. 213).

However, Marroni points out that the danger would come from the possibility of a serious commitment or the formation of another family:

"The possibility that the migrant is back in the community with another partner is seen with anger and suspicion. Thus the figure of the blonde, *gringa* woman appears - in the imagination, more than in reality - as particularly threatening in these contexts and much more for the wives of certain migrants<sup>16</sup>" (Marroni, 2009: 213).

Studies also focus on married women's loneliness in their home communities, and their forced fidelity during their spouse's absence. Through gender prescriptions, the spouse's family control the women left alone; and rumors are spread in the community, casting doubt on the absent husband (or partner). As in the case of the Otomi people in Mexico City, Perraudin explains that women's decision to stop working shortly after their spouse emigrated to the United States is "the weight of the social control over single women by the community of origin, with regard to their morality<sup>17</sup>" (Perraudin, 2014, p. 347).

### **Gender norms, family, empowerment**

Family relationships are essential for migrant women. According to Pessar, in women's lives, their family role is a central factor, with or without migration (Pessar, 2000). Guimarães and Baeninger write that:

"Whatever the expectations built in the place of origin, migration trajectories are closely linked to the life cycle of migrant women. An important factor is nuptiality. But life-cycle planning, both individual and familial, is the central issue that defines migration trajectories. The use of spaces, according to this planning, guides the mobility of migrant women<sup>18</sup>" (Guimarães, Baeninger, 2014, p. 277).

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<sup>15</sup> "En las comunidades de origen existe bastante complacencia con los migrantes para este tipo de relaciones extramatrimoniales en tierra ajena; sus esposas asumen que es el costo inevitable de la migración y como tal deben pagarlo"

<sup>16</sup> "La posibilidad de que el migrante regrese con otra compañera en la comunidad es encarada con enojo y recelo. Entonces aparece —en el imaginario, más que en la realidad— la figura de la mujer güera, gringa, como especialmente amenazadora para estos contextos y mucho más para las esposas de algunos migrantes"

<sup>17</sup> "El peso del control social que ejerce la comunidad de origen sobre las mujeres solas, vigilando su moralidad"

<sup>18</sup> "Independientemente de las expectativas construidas en el lugar de origen, las trayectorias migratorias están fuertemente ligadas al ciclo de vida de las mujeres migrantes. Un factor importante es sin duda la nupcialidad. Mas, la planificación del ciclo

In the context of migration, gender domination inevitably evolves, given the new conditions of life and family organization. Sometimes women can gain some autonomy, but this is not always the case. Men take advantage of migration to re-establish their role as economic breadwinners, which "satisfy the demands of both [couple members] and not just men"<sup>19</sup> (Rosas, 2014, p. 324). Similarly, Perraudin shows that the migration of Otomi men from Mexico City to the United States has strengthened their traditional roles. These men report reacquiring their economic responsibilities with migration, whereas in Mexico City, women contributed significantly to family resources as successful traders (Perraudin, 2014), outside the normative women's roles within their communities.

Gender equality increases or decreases, depending on the social, political, economic and cultural contexts of migration. As Rosas writes:

"there is evidence in favor of some autonomy gained by South American women after their migration to Europe; [but] studies in Mexico show that men tend to reconstruct their masculinity through migration, and thus strengthen their role as providers and decision-making power within the household"<sup>20</sup> (Rosas, 2014, p. 300).

However, Chiara Pagnotta argues that:

"Women's autonomy is not only linked to a source of income outside the domestic unit. It seems [...] that the increase in income is not followed by gender equality, decision-making power and economic autonomy, nor by a recognition of the new social role obtained"<sup>21</sup> (Pagnotta, 2014, p. 371).

Cavagnoud discerns disruptions in family relations when mothers leave the city of El Alto (Bolivia). A double feminine figure appears: "the biological mother who emigrated to improve the social mobility of the family and the mother of the new daily life responsible for the studies and education of the children"<sup>22</sup> (Cavagnoud, 2014, p. 153). They are often the grandmothers.

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de vida, tanto individual cuanto familiar, es la cuestión central que define las trayectorias migratorias. Los usos de los espacios, conforme a esa planificación, orientan la movilidad de las mujeres migrantes"

<sup>19</sup> "satisface expectativas de ambos, y no sólo masculinas"

<sup>20</sup> "Hay evidencias a favor de cierta autonomía ganada por las mujeres sudamericanas luego de su migración a Europa; a partir de estudios realizados en México también se ha mostrado que los varones suelen reestructurar importantes ámbitos de su masculinidad a través de la migración y, de esa manera, refuerzan su rol de proveedor y su capacidad de decisión al interior del hogar"

<sup>21</sup> "La autonomía femenina no puede estar únicamente vinculada a la adquisición de una fuente de ingresos por fuera de los muros domésticos. Me parece [...] que de un aumento del ingreso, no se sigue un aumento lineal de la igualdad de género, de la autonomía decisional y económica, ni tampoco un reconocimiento del nuevo rol social conseguido"

<sup>22</sup> "La madre biológica que ha migrado para mejorar la movilidad social de la familia y la madre doméstica de la nueva vida cotidiana de los hijos, a cargo de la responsabilidad de sus estudios y de su educación"

Transnational migrant mothers are blamed, since their economic role, although very useful to the family, interferes with the image of the "bad mother" whose children are abandoned, disturbed, with a strong sense of shame (Cavagnoud, 2014).

The paradox is that cash transfers sent by migrant women are not well acknowledged, and that traditional male roles as economic breadwinners are reinforced. We can therefore conclude that gender norms limit the value of migrant women's responsibilities. Despite their new economic roles, they don't reach gender equality, autonomy and empowerment within their families.

### **Transnational labor markets**

Labor markets are generally segmented by migration and national origin. This is the case in Corumbà in Brazil, where Bolivian women traders experience good results, which give them a high status in their community, because trade in Bolivia is a woman's job (Guimarães, Baeninger, 2014, p. 264).

But domestic work done by migrant women does not get the same recognition. Acosta and Setién compared the social evaluation of care workers in Spain and Chile. They show that care and domestic work are necessary for the autonomy and well-being of the beneficiaries (children and old people), but they receive no gratitude; it is also a job done by migrant women, with no social value for both reasons (Acosta, Setién, 2014, p 194).

Jelin et al. (2011) point out two kinds of organizations struggling for migrants' labor rights. Some rely on formal labor market protocols or regulations, which clearly establish legally enforceable rights. However, work in the domestic sector limits access to these rights, and its weakness and instability are underlined by Vidal (2007) in a survey on domestic workers in Rio de Janeiro.

In addition, since the economic crisis of 2008, unemployment affects migrants, for example in Spain. Within families, gender discussions determine who will return to the country of origin, according to the sex, age, level of education, their children's school activities, and necessary domestic tasks for the family (Pedone et al., 2014):

"The new return strategies produce inequalities within domestic groups. While migrant women are in control of production and reproduction projects, they nevertheless remain the object of family and social discredit in the places of origin and destination, and they are accused of wanting to break up the family<sup>23</sup>" (Pedone *et al.*, 2014, p. 127).

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<sup>23</sup> "Se están produciendo desigualdades al interior de los grupos domésticos generadas en el marco de las nuevas estrategias de retorno. Las mujeres migrantes lideran los proyectos productivos y reproductivos, sin embargo, siguen siendo el blanco de la estigmatización y desprestigio familiar y social en origen y en destino, responsables de la des-agrupación familiar"

The 2008 economic crisis in Spain has trapped migrant families, high unemployment rates affect migrants more than nationals, and men more than women (Vidal and Vono, 2014, p. 175). Migrants are the main victims of economic crises, as they are extremely vulnerable, and often they have to rely on informal and underground labor to survive. They are also evicted from their homes, they have lost those they were buying, and they experienced once again family separations with the return movements (Pedone et al., 2014).

### **Variables to explain feminine migration**

On the basis of the above observations, with a gender perspective, we suggest a list of determinant variables in female international migration and family dynamics. Five main topics must be analyzed: marital status, matrimonial life, motherhood, family arrangements and the labor market. (Table 1 in the Appendix)

1) *Marital status*: it is essential to follow marital trajectories through migration steps. Did the spouses migrate individually or as a family unit? When and where did they meet? Where did the union take place: in the country of origin or destination, before, during or after migration? What is the country of origin? And nationality of each spouse? Where do they live, are they living together or not? Do they experiment separations, divorces, widowhood? Do they form a new union after a breakup? It is essential to study the segmentation of the transnational marriage market.<sup>24</sup> But each particular situation must be studied, as the empowerment of migrant women will depend on their marital course. The gender norms of couples separated by migration reveal the degree of autonomy, agency and rights of men and women, migrants and non-migrants, during their marital life.

2) *Matrimonial life during migration*: new gender norms during migration will reflect the consequences of new relationships in couples. In the example of migration to the United States, when men leave and women remain in their communities of origin<sup>25</sup>, a strong asymmetry is observed during the spouse's absence. There is no control over intimate lives of migrant men at their destination, but there is a strong social control of women by families of origin and communities (Marroni, 2009; Perraudin, 2014). Impacts on gender

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<sup>24</sup> As in the example presented above, Latin American women in Spain, who have an advantage in the marriage market, since Spanish men prefer them to Spanish women (Domingo et al. 2014; Roca Girona, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> This is especially the case in indigenous communities, such as the wives of migrants from Atlixco (Puebla, Mexico) studied by Marroni (2009) and the Otomi women left alone in Mexico City studied by Perraudin (2014).

inequalities, discrimination and situations of domestic and social violence must be considered.

3) *Motherhood of women during migration*: do they migrate alone or accompanied? Do they have children? Do they want to have children and start a family, before, during or after migration? Who takes care of the education of their children, when they remain in the country of origin, while others migrate with their father, or mother, or another member of their family? Depending on these situations, the place of birth and the age of children, their nutritional, medical and educational needs must be met at the place of origin, during the migration journey and at the destination, so it increases the burdens on migrant women. If they leave their children in their place of origin, who takes parental roles? What are the implications for migrant women's autonomy and agency? What are the consequences, which may be violent, of separations between partners, parents, brothers and sisters?

4) *Family arrangements*: migration trajectories are inseparable from family life cycles during the migration. Thus, "the life cycle, such as marriage and birth of children, is planned according to the migratory phases and the strategic uses of each of the spaces" (Guimarães & Baeninger, 2014, p. 210).<sup>26</sup> It is necessary to observe kinship relations in the different places during migration. Women's empowerment increases or decreases following families' trajectories (Cavagnoud, 2014; Guimarães and Baeninger, 2014; Roses, 2014; Perraudin, 2014; Pagnotta, 2014).

Another important question is the distribution of incomes between members of the family. On one hand, who is responsible for family's incomes: the household head? The spouse? Women in a single-parent situation? Other family members? On the other hand, who controls expenses? How is income used? Who makes the decisions? To whom are sent monetary remittances? Who uses them and for what? Women's autonomy and decision-making power give answers to these questions.

In addition, it is necessary to analyze the family environment: what is the degree of domination and inequalities according to age, sex, kinship and generations? Are family relationships egalitarian? violent?

5) *Transnational labor markets*: migrant women's new economic activities require personal sacrifices to ensure the well-being of their children during migration, as in the case of Bolivian women in Spain (Cavagnoud, 2014).

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<sup>26</sup> "El ciclo de vida, especialmente casamiento y nacimiento de los hijos, es planificado en función de las etapas migratorias transitadas y de los usos estratégicos de cada uno de los espacios"

During migration stages, family and social support networks are destroyed and reconstituted, implying great vulnerabilities of the incomes and services to which they have access. New roles and obligations are emerging as a reaction to transnational labor markets, such as the international care market. It is essential to analyze these interrelationships over time, using appropriate biographical methods (Cavagnoud et al. 2022).

## **By Way of Conclusion**

Gender perspective in the field of families' migration raises new research questions about the degree of autonomy, empowerment, freedom and women's rights, in relation to men, mothers, fathers, daughters, sons and other family members. However, despite major transformations caused by international migration in their lives and new social ties, the fieldwork examples show that migration is not sufficient to move from a patriarchal family model to a more egalitarian one. Conditions of migration do not give more power and autonomy to migrant women, whose control remains socially determined by their social origin; it is kept across borders, while new family burdens and responsibilities are added to them as a result of migration.

When migrating, the level of autonomy, power and inequality between men and women must be taken into account in the process of union formation and dissolution (separation, divorce, widowhood). During migrations, rules are modified according to the contexts of origin and destination. Gender norms in couples separated by migration reveal the degree of autonomy, empowerment, agency and rights of men and women, migrants and non-migrants, during unions' lives.

Public policies also need to be addressed. In the course of international migration, and especially during economic crises, migrants of both sexes need recognition and protection from governments and public, private and international organizations, in countries of origin and destination. Indeed, migrants have worked tirelessly to contribute to the well-being of the societies that have received them with mutual benefits. So they need respect for their rights, family protection and gender equality, instead of blaming them for the economic and political crises that are causing everyone to suffer, but some more than others, especially migrant women.

However, despite difficulties, migrant populations will stay. Migration networks are well established and they have their own inertia, so migration will not disappear. Some states of origin have protection policies for their emigrants, as Ecuador (Pedone et al., 2014), but very few states do have it.

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# ANNEX

## TABLE 1. DETERMINANT VARIABLES FOR FEMININE MIGRATION

