

Between Sierra and City: Rarámuri Artisan Women in Chihuahua City and Their Migratory Contexts**Entre la sierra y la ciudad: artesanas rarámuri en la ciudad de Chihuahua y sus contextos migratorios**

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ABSTRACT

This article shows another perspective on indigenous migration, which occurs not only for economic and subsistence purposes but as part of the expansion of the development and dissemination of native cultures. Based on the interpretative framework of gender studies in migration, the migratory contexts of 32 Rarámuri women are analyzed, as well as their residential, labor, and multicultural relations, where important achievements are present, but discrimination is also evidenced. According to their trajectories, they faced situations of poverty, discrimination, abuse, and inequality in the three aspects analyzed. Nonetheless, they also experienced changes related to their socio-economic and personal well-being because of their incorporation into formal artisan activities, which has allowed them to contribute to the strengthening and diffusion of their culture, value their knowledge and generate income.

Keywords: 1. Rarámuri women, 2. indigenous migration, 3. diffusion of native cultures, 4. migratory contexts, 5. Chihuahua.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta otra perspectiva de la migración indígena, que ocurre no sólo con fines económicos y de subsistencia, sino que es parte de la expansión del desarrollo y difusión de las culturas nativas. Para ello, con base en el marco interpretativo de los estudios de género en la migración, se analizan los contextos migratorios de 32 mujeres rarámuri, considerando aspectos residenciales, laborales y de relaciones multiculturales, en los que se hacen presentes logros importantes, pero también se evidencia la discriminación. Según sus trayectorias, ellas enfrentaron situaciones de pobreza, exclusión, abuso y desigualdad en las tres vertientes analizadas, pero también experimentaron cambios relacionados con su bienestar socioeconómico y personal, debido a que se incorporaron a actividades artesanales formales, lo que les ha permitido contribuir al fortalecimiento y difusión de su cultura, valorar sus saberes y generar ingresos.

Palabras clave: 1 mujeres rarámuri, 2 migración indígena, 3. difusión de culturas nativas, 4. contextos migratorios, 5. Chihuahua

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INTRODUCTION

In general, migration can be conceived as a sociodemographic and historical expression encompassing different and complex displacement dynamics in which social actors come into contact with multiple cultural manifestations. Depending on the geographical scope of the people involved, two types of migration are recognized: international and internal.

In Mexico, internal migration behavior shows that the presence of indigenous population in urban sites is due to reasons associated with their survival. Martínez and Hernández (2013) explain that this type of migration originates from the impoverishment and decapitalization of indigenous and rural communities in the country. Villagers migrate to other regions searching for an economic income that allows for their cultural reproduction as a consequence of the impossibility of maintaining an economic activity throughout the year in their places of origin, due to the precarious conditions of their production systems or the existence of political and agrarian conflicts, as well as climate-related aspects. Arias (2013) states that the destruction of the local and regional socioeconomic fabric and the need for regular and cash wages induce people to seek work and income far from their communities of origin during prolonged or indefinite periods. In rural societies, migration dynamics account for the decrease in rural populations and are responsible for transformations in social, cultural, and production activities.

Until a few decades ago, most migrants were men, but after incorporating the gender perspective as an analytic category to migration, nowadays, migrant women's important role as workers, as active protagonists, and not only as companions is recognized (Martínez & Hernández, 2012).

Based on methodological approaches and interpretative frameworks of feminism and gender studies on migration, the present study sought to highlight the migratory contexts of Rarámuri women, before and after being formally employed, in three areas: residential, labor, and social. The text was structured as follows: the first part presents the background to understand the migration of Rarámuri women. Subsequently, the context of the study and its methodological framework are addressed. Finally, we describe our findings and present conclusions.

RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION: EXPULSION FACTORS IN THE SIERRA TARAHUMARA

The predominant migration patterns of indigenous movements are rural-urban and rural-rural. In Latin America, migration was mostly rural-urban and feminine during the 1960-1980 period (Arizpe, 1980). However, in the 1980s, there was a change in rural-rural and international migration and the predominance of men decreased in both cases (Arizpe, 1990).

Singer (1998) extended Arizpe's vision and stated that the incidence of *expulsion factors* determines the areas of origin of the migratory movements and pointed out that *attraction factors* are responsible for setting the destination. In other words, migrants are mostly attracted by cities where there is a *demand for labor power*.

In the case of the Rarámuri population, from the long periods of evangelization, colonization, and then Independence and the Mexican Revolution to the present, members of this ethnic group, originally from the Sierra Tarahumara, in the state of Chihuahua, in northern Mexico, have been subjected to pressure from mestizo society over land tenure and other social matters.

Reminiscences of policies related to the 1982 neo-indigenism movement characterized by the creation of large companies and, consequently, the loss of resources due to the intensive exploitation of the forest by white and mestizo populations and ecotourism are still visible in the Sierra Tarahumara. Without indigenous participation, drug trafficking and the culture of violence became widespread (Sariego, 2002). In this regard, Ayala, Zapata, and Cortés (2017) reflect that capitalism, grounded in violence and the overexploitation of natural resources, uses human beings and their ways of life to achieve its expansion through extractivism and continuous accumulation, constituting themselves *as expulsion factors* that increase the displacement of ethnic groups to cities.

Droughts, soil degradation, and scarce arable land also contribute to poverty (Morales, 2013). Consequently, Saucedo, Gardea, Sánchez, Mojica, and Ramírez (2012, p. 83) explain that, in the Sierra Tarahumara, food insecurity is perceived as a result of insufficient access to food in terms of quantity, quality, and variety. The Rarámuri live day to day, they are concerned that the harvest will not be enough, and they often go to bed still hungry because they eat once a day so that there is enough for everybody; because of the lack of money or food, one out of two adults and one out of every three children often eats nothing for one day (Saucedo *et al.*, 2012, p. 84).

Fernández and Herrera (2010) estimate that 96% of the Rarámuri population who leave the Sierra do so in search of better living conditions in different municipalities in the state of Chihuahua and the remaining 4% migrate to other states in Mexico.

Temporality of the Rarámuri people displacements

According to data from Cordourier (2010), in an international comparison, some municipalities in the Sierra Tarahumara, such as Batopilas, Carichí, Morelos, Balleza, Urique, and Uruachi, are among the 20 municipalities of predominantly indigenous population whose rates of underdevelopment and inequality are comparable to underdeveloped parts of Africa. For example, Batopilas registered a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.3010 for the Sierra, when Niger, the African country with the worst living and human development conditions, had an HDI of 0.3300 (Cordourier, 2010).

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The marginalization experienced by the Rarámuri in the Sierra Tarahumara has forced men and women to migrate, mainly to other municipalities in the state such as Chihuahua, Juárez, Cuauhtémoc, and Delicias. Their first option is usually agricultural employment in cities' outskirts (Brouzés, 1998; Martínez & Hernández, 2012), followed by informal work in urban areas. As reported by Arizpe (1978), Martínez, Hernández (2014), and de Grammont (2015), rural-urban migrants in Latin America find no accommodation in the industrial occupational structure, and therefore tend to work in scarcely productive jobs with a low income, generally in the services sector, in street commerce, or producing crafts.

Their economic activities determine the duration and type of living arrangements chosen by migrants. In this regard, Rarámuri men and women migrate due to different reasons; concretely, Martínez and Hernández (2012) mention that temporary migration is associated with the agricultural activities carried out by day laborers at harvest time in the agri-food industry (rural-rural migration). On the other hand, migratory flows depend on the seasonality and the agricultural cycle of the crops at migrant destinations; when the temporary work is over, the Rarámuri return to their places of origin to take care of their homes and their lands, a type of movement known as 'pendulum' migration.

Day laborers who move through different territories following agricultural cycles and harvests are known as "swallows," and their movement is associated with the pursuit of labor continuity. Some of these displacements become permanent or semi-permanent due to the indefinite nature of these cycles. Finally, permanent and integrated migrations have been most notable in large cities in the state of Chihuahua (Servín & González, 2003).

These migratory flows represent strategies that complement each other in the same family structure; temporary and definitive displacements can be combined to favor the settlement and survival of the family; the different members of the family make these choices as required according to the benefits that each displacement might bring to their ethnic, labor, and social reproduction in the urban environment.

Indigenous migrant women

During the last decades of the twentieth century, women's participation in migratory movements shifted the paradigms and characteristics of displacement patterns. It was already mentioned that women have been predominantly present in rural-urban migration, whereas most men have followed a rural-rural flow. However, observations indicate that the active role of women in displacements outside their places of origin has been made invisible; they consider themselves as *passive subjects who receive remittances* or migrant women tied to men, who are seen as responsible for securing an income (Monzón, 2017).

The analysis of migratory flows from a gender perspective makes migrant women visible as main characters, with new roles, in new contexts, and undergoing subjective transformations. According to Cárdenas (2014), indigenous people, especially women, have

acquired a new nature and changed the appearance and manifestations of the migratory phenomenon.

Rural-rural or rural-urban migrant indigenous populations represent an important source of labor, especially for agricultural activities in northern Mexico. In a study on the Mixtec Sierra and indigenous migration, Méndez (2000) emphasizes that gender is a determining factor in the destinations chosen by migrant populations: women tend to migrate less toward the center of the country (9.5%), preferring the United States (19.3%), and mostly northwest Mexico (71.2%), whereas men tend to migrate mostly to the United States, followed by the Mexican northwest, and finally the center of the country. The author states that indigenous women who migrate under this pattern seek jobs in agricultural activities where demand is high and being hired is probable; such an arrangement reduces food and cleaning costs and allows women to maintain their family together, mostly when their male partner has abandoned them.

The migration process is far from easy for indigenous women. They are adversely affected by different forms of subordination, including social and workplace inequality, physical or psychological violence, and gender- and ethnic-related discrimination in education (Gámez, Wilson, & Boncheva, 2010; Martínez & Hernández, 2014).

One characteristic of indigenous migration is that transformations do not necessarily entail profound identity changes (Oehmichen, 2005). Certain individuals may acquire a community stance, such as the groups studied by Velasco (2002), which maintain close links with their ethnic communication dynamics due to frequent returns and the creation of organizations such as the Binational Oaxacan Indigenous Front.

Salles and Tuirán (2003) analyze different aspects of female poverty. First, they refer to the traditional confinement of women in domestic and care-taking work as part of a low-income sexual division of labor; this is why it is difficult for women to become formally employed outside their homes. Second, they identify inequality in access to resources, educational services, and paid work. Finally, they attribute women's poverty to inequality with respect to their male peers in the spheres of power. Suárez and Zapata (2004) underscore this analysis and point out that the roles assigned to women by society and the culture result in women dedicating much longer time than men to work because they need an income and also contribute to domestic reproduction: housework, feeding the family, child-rearing. These workloads reduce women's chances of being employed in paid activities outside their home, reducing their chances of accessing minimum well-being (Suárez & Zapata, 2004, p. 36).

Gracia and Horbath (2013) state that indigenous women who belong to religious minorities are more likely to become domestic workers due to their family education; as a result, they are excluded from access to education and the possibility of a higher income. To a large extent, these two factors determine the economic underestimation of production

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activities carried out by indigenous women, especially in the informal work sector, which represents a factor of high vulnerability in their migratory context.

A look at the Rarámuri people

Most of the inhabitants of the Sierra Tarahumara, in the state of Chihuahua, belong to the Rarámuri ethnic group and are popularly known as Tarahumara after the mountains where they live. However, their self-designation is Rarámuri, which also corresponds to their language. According to National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI, 2008), the Rarámuri language has five dialects. The word *rarámuri* means people, and mestizo men with beards are called *chabochi or yori* (Pintado, 2004). Other authors translate Rarámuri into Spanish as *pie corredor* or *corredor a pie*, (running foot or runner on foot) (Acuña, 2006; Bennett & Zingg, 2012) or *de los pies ligeros* (those who have light feet) due to their traditional and impressive resistance to walking, which has earned them international recognition as long-distance runners.

The Sierra Tarahumara is divided into 23 municipalities on a surface area of 75 910 km.², representing 30 percent of Chihuahua's surface. Topographically, it is divided into upper and lower Tarahumara. The Lower Tarahumara is characterized by its many ravines, and is formed by municipalities of lower elevation above sea level: Temósachi, Moris, Ocampo, Uruachi, Chínipas, Guazapares, Urique, Batopilas, Guadalupe and Calvo, Morelos, and Maguarichi. The Upper Tarahumara consists of the municipalities of Guerrero, Carichi, Nonoava, Bocoyna, and Guachochi. The Sierra Tarahumara is characterized by the vast expanse of its territory, extreme climate, and biodiversity (Sariego, 2002).

The many indigenous groups who live in Chihuahua are inherent to the state's history and account for its diversity. In 2016, there were approximately 110 indigenous groups, 90 percent of them Tarahumara, who shared territory with the Tepehuán (8%), the Guarojío (1%), and the Pima people (1%) (Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua, 2016).

Martínez and Hernández (2012) state that 85 percent of the indigenous population in the state is concentrated in the 23 mountain municipalities, among them Guachochi, Balleza, Bocoyna, Batopilas, Guadalupe y Calvo, Urique, Guazapares, and Morelos.

Bennett and Zingg (2012) describe that the subsistence activities of the Rarámuri are growing maize and, to a lesser extent, on bean. These grains are the basis of their daily diet, and they are exchanged or sold when they have a surplus. Pumpkin and some other vegetables and seeds are also part of their diet. Although livestock is an important activity, they do not usually eat meat, except when they have a typical village celebration. Animals are used mainly to plow the land.

As most human groups, the Rarámuri divide their labor according to gender. Women are assigned to domestic work, looking after children, preparing food, and making typical clothes

and handicrafts, and older mothers take care of animals (except for cattle). Men are responsible for heavier tasks, for example, supervising the cattle and cornfields, but women are also involved in agricultural activities. This does not mean that women do not do heavy work; they know how to use an ax to obtain firewood, and they walk for hours to bring edibles from the mountains and carry water. In addition to agriculture and animal herding, women migrate temporarily to work in commercial agricultural activities.

In touristic parts of the Sierra, women's work represents an important source of economic income for families, mostly around the elaboration, exchange, and sale of handicrafts. They learn many trades from their childhood, such as weaving garments and blankets and making baskets and cooking utensils such as pots, plates, and spoons. However, these activities have failed to help the Rarámuri out of extreme poverty, and the economic support that might directly benefit the Rarámuri community in their places of origin is scarce.

The state of Chihuahua is the largest in the country (Gutiérrez Casas, 2017). Chihuahua city is the capital; it is located in the center of the state, and it ranks fifth in the country in terms of per capita gross domestic product (GDP). The city has been classified as having very low social backwardness and marginalization indices (SEDESOL, 2013). It has a population of 876 062 inhabitants (INEGI, 2015). Economic activities are focused on the services and secondary sectors. As in other parts of the state, violence associated with organized crime has been commonplace in recent years.

According to Morales (2018), construction jobs and peonage options are available to Rarámuri men in ranches, while women work in domestic service, cleaning hotels or restaurants, and peddling handicrafts and sweets; many of them also resort to *kórima*⁷ to feed their children.

RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was carried out in 2018. It involved the participation of 32 Rarámuri migrant women from the upper Sierra Tarahumara who carry out handicraft-related activities with two cooperatives in the city of Chihuahua. In-depth interviews with bilingual women and observation were used as investigation techniques. Participants volunteered as informants in the study; their names were changed to protect their identities.

The age ranges of the participants were from 22 to 56; two were married and lived with their partners, four lived in common-law marriage, 23 were separated, and three were single.

⁷*Kórima* is a form of cooperation that guarantees that no individual or family suffers from hunger; it consists in redistributing resources and food and maintaining communication and relationships among individuals and families in towns and ranches, establishing a general joint responsibility and a clear awareness of mutual support for the survival and reproduction of the group (Urteaga, 1998, p. 521).

All of them but one were mothers, and of those who are mothers, one had one daughter, another had five; 16 informants had two, eight had three children, and the remaining five had four; 26 of them were mothers when they migrated and they did it without a couple; 28 of the interviewees were bilingual (Rarámuri and Spanish), and the rest spoke Rarámuri only; six had partial technical studies, 19 were in primary school, and seven had no studies.

The common feature of the 32 Rarámuri migrant women included in the study was their participation in two cooperatives dedicated to producing and selling textile handicrafts typical of the ethnic group's culture. The first cooperative consisted of 14 women, one of whom was mestizo; the second cooperative included 22 women, where three were mestizo women. The origin of both groups is similar: they were created in response to the interest of two groups of Rarámuri and mestizo women who were closely bound by friendship and set out to open a small homemade sewing workshop. Later, inspired by their knowledge and belonging to the Rarámuri culture, they began producing garments with Rarámuri decoration and created a space for all the members to create self-employment, improve themselves, and become self-sufficient if possible. Sales were initially made to friends, acquaintances, and social networks. Nowadays, they have a broader market, which allowed them to formalize their groups via this association.

Cooperatives are spaces where knowledge is exchanged during everyday coexistence; Rarámuri women share their traditions and culture, whereas mestizo women educate them on technology use. Although the main goal was to facilitate self-employment for the members, a support network was also created. The relationship among the members of each cooperative is based on respect; each member's opinion is considered for decision-making, which creates a pleasant atmosphere. It should be mentioned that there is no difference between mestizo and Rarámuri when assigning schedules and positions.

Grounded theory, analytic and interpretative frameworks on feminism (Carosio, 2017), and gender studies on migration (Monzón, 2017) were used as theoretical foundations for the present study. According to Monzón, studies on gender and migration have advanced at the theoretical-methodological level because interdisciplinary studies have complemented the sociodemographic approach with the analytic resources of sociology, anthropology, and the categories proposed by feminism. Women are regarded as social, economic, and political actors in migration processes, in connection with their places of origin, transit, destination, and sometimes return. As mentioned by Martínez (2003), these studies seek to diversify the analytical focuses that tend to highlight the heterogeneous nature of migratory processes rather than their generality. In other words, the experiences of each woman in migration process are different and, therefore, they require interdisciplinary approaches for analysis.

Migrant Rarámuri women are directly asked about their individual experiences, subsistence strategies, and how they merge with the city. For that purpose, we conducted semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, informal talks, and direct observation using a life story approach. The testimonies from the study to the 32 Rarámuri women presented

here reflect their self-perception trends in the context in which they operate and describe how individual experiences are intertwined with historical reality (Sautu, 2004). Theoretical sampling and data saturation were used to determine the size of the qualitative sample. Different techniques based on Glaser and Strauss's 1976 grounded theory were employed during the analysis (De la Cuesta, 2006).

Given the number of participants and cases observed in the present study, the theoretical sampling technique (Vivar, Arantzamendi, López-Dicastillo, and Gordo Luis, 2010) was used for the selection process as necessary to refine and adjust the categories derived from the analysis.

Therefore, in order to examine the data, considering the key moments of the migration circuit—departure from the place of origin, transit, first approaches to the destination, and finally, insertion into the city—the following categories were used: (1) expulsion factors from places of origin and patterns of displacement, 2) residence in places of destination, 3) working conditions and discrimination, 4) discrimination and exclusion in public spaces, and 5) from migrants to residents: the artisan rarámuri women in the city of Chihuahua.

RESULTS

This section describes the categories listed above and presents testimonies to highlight specific aspects of the migratory experience.

Factors of expulsion from places of origin and displacement patterns

Even though these regions are relatively close to Chihuahua city, there are still very remote and inaccessible territories in the Upper Tarahumara. One of the factors that have motivated women to travel is the extreme poverty that prevails in their places of origin; the lack of employment impacts food scarcity, disease, and high mortality rates among the Sierra's most vulnerable inhabitants.

We were always very poor [...] but very poor, we lived in a cave and ate only once a day, we had *pinole* and a little bit of *quelite* [...] we were many siblings and could not afford to eat (María, personal communication, June 9th, 2018).

In some cases, migration was generational. Both mother and father migrated to the city, followed by their children.

I decided to come to the city on my own [...], and it was painful because I didn't want to leave my daughters. When my parents left the Sierra, they also struggled, but they stayed here and pushed forward (Monica, personal communication, June 14th, 2018).

Suárez and Zapata (2004) indicate that the family is a structural element that encourages or discourages migration, such as in dynamic relationships involving the reunification of

married women with their husbands, or single women brought to the city by one of their parents at often unplanned moments.

These displacements are closely related to the migrant woman's life cycle. As described by Woo (2002), stages in this cycle include education, displacement, marriage, and employment; this cycle, the reproduction of poverty and migration depends on the position of women in their family environment: wives, sisters, daughters, or mothers. Therefore, at the time of migration, 26 of the 32 Rarámuri women were already mothers; moreover, most had migrated without a partner, in the company of their nuclear family members.

Rarámuri women who migrated at an early age state their reasons: in addition to the extreme poverty in which they lived, they indicated their rejection of certain practices and customs of their community that affected them personally. For example, the intense ingestion of alcoholic beverages for days and the consumption of psychoactive substances (peyote) in their traditional drinks (e.g., *teshuino*, a fermented corn drink), which favor physical and sexual violence against women by men from their community, or being forced to marry without their consent. Therefore, many decided to leave their communities when they were still young girls. When they migrated as adults, they expressed fear of physical violence as one of the reasons. However, they continued visiting relatives who stayed in their villages and brought money or food to help those who could not or did not want to migrate.

[...] I prefer working to support my children than suffering in the Sierra; honestly, I was abused very often, you wouldn't believe, and nobody helped me, only some mestizos. When I asked for *kórima*, they opened the door for me to sleep with four children here in the city, [...] now I help my people, I bring all I can for them to the Sierra, but I'm not coming back (Josefina, personal communication, June 22nd, 2018).

Oehmichen (2005) refers to migrants' tendency to maintain relationships with people who remain in their communities of origin. Some of them form communities that extend beyond the borders. Frequently, migration brings about a reinforcement of solidarity, which has already characterized migrant women, toward people who stay at the Sierra and the bonds that endure despite their migrating.

Equal conditions between women and men characterize the Rarámuri people's land and property tenure system, and property is individual. Each object or property has an owner (Bennett & Zingg, 2012). Some participants mentioned that the lands of the Sierra that they owned or were inherited to someone in the family were in poor conditions, mainly due to irresponsible use of the soil or unfavorable weather, and they had no choice but to migrate to the city in search for other forms of income.

Relatives or friends supervise the migrants' property when they are away, but they eventually return, especially during the sowing and harvesting seasons, to obtain the little food that their lands can provide. At the end of the season, they return to their jobs in the city,

where they are already settled, if their jobs allow them to do so, otherwise, they look for another job or resort to *kórima*.

Sometimes, the entire family decides to migrate to the city. The main factor is the lack of schools in their communities of origin, their remoteness, and the few opportunities for their children to remain in school after primary education. Therefore, they decide to migrate: they seek better living conditions through education and better chances to find a well-paid job. However, other women aspire to better education so that they can return to their communities of origin and contribute to the well-being of their people. This is the case of Amelia, who, with tears in her eyes, states:

I used to see people when they got sick and my mother would take them to Creel [...] and I wanted to study and do that, but that was not possible. That was what people needed... we are not for pleasure in the city, but due to necessity (Amelia, personal communication, July 5th, 2018).

Residence in destination places

Another important factor in the Rarámuri migration process is the presence of social networks in the destination. According to Fernández and Herrera (2010), Tarahumara people who come to the city of Chihuahua do so supported by family networks that make it easier for them to settle in three possible places: private homes, tenement houses, and other collective facilities. Different social actors promote the use of these communal facilities, such as government institutions, religious institutions, and civil associations. Raramuri families use leased spaces under pre-established conditions. There are 12 settlements distributed in different parts of Chihuahua, which account for a population of 2,700 (Morales, 2018).

All the interviewees lived in the city, mostly in houses leased by their sisters or aunts; six of the interviewees lived in the Rarámuri settlements, and a smaller number lived with their families in the ranches where they worked.

[...] I came to the city because my sisters studied nursing here, my parents supported me, but they were sad because I would not help them at home anymore. Together with my sisters, I rented a house that a friend left for us, and we all helped to pay for it (Luz, personal communication, July 13th, 2018).

However, not all the participants had contacts in their destinations. This group indicated that finding a place to stay was a challenge when they had no contacts in the city; some had to sleep in the street for a long time before finding a place to live, for example, a Rarámuri community. They were given temporary residency in some jobs, and otherwise, they lived in a rental house that they could share.

[...] When I was 12, I arrived alone with my young son and I wanted to return to the Sierra. The first day was awful, I had nowhere to sleep, and I had to ask for *kórima* [...] I didn't like at all to be in the city, [...] very hot and very bad,

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but I pushed forward to stop living in the street (Laura, personal communication, August 7th, 2018).

Initially, none of the women liked the city, but they have accepted whatever could bring positive change in their lives over time. They no longer dislike the city, although they prefer their places of origin: the noise, the heat, and the difference in their diet were the negative aspects of the city, according to the interviewees.

Participants stated that, before migrating, they were afraid of what they could face in the city. One of their main fears was that the city was unknown for them; it was difficult for them to use public transportation and walk in unfamiliar places.

The first time I came, I got lost. I left at 5 a.m. and my two colleagues took me to the bus stop, [they told me:] "watch out for the bus ", and I got distracted and got into the bus without reading it, and I got lost [...]. I was lost for about five hours [...] (Mónica, personal communication, June 14th, 2018).

It is also common for them to return to their villages with the sole purpose of participating in the festivities and traditions of the ethnic group, such as the yúmari dance⁸. (Bonfiglioli, 2008).

Working conditions and discrimination

At the beginning of their migration processes, when these women arrived in the city, they faced different obstacles, especially cultural shock, in a multicultural society dominated by mestizo population and Spanish language. For some, the language barrier was a significant problem, others already spoke Spanish and reported that communication was easier for them, but all of them had bad experiences in the process. Women face more difficulties than men from their ethnic group to enter a job and obtain access to resources, which means that the gender-based division of labor is reenacted in urban areas; this form of discrimination is reproduced by the mestizo population and employers, and reinforced by cultural patterns that further define their behaviors.

Morales (2013) observed that Raramuri men and women tend to be employed in different labor niches: men mainly in construction or as agricultural workers in ranches, and women in domestic service and, to a lesser extent, selling handicrafts. Rarámuri women are in a disadvantaged situation not only because of their important levels of poverty but also due to their limited formal work options.

⁸Traditional dance performed by the Rarámuri at any time of the year to pledge for rain, good health, and good harvests in their communities, and to thank for past gifts. The ritual is a reflection of the permanent debt owed by the Rarámuri people to the god Onorúame: the giver of life.

Seventeen of the interviewees migrated temporarily to other municipalities in the state before leaving for Chihuahua city, for example, two of them were teachers in Creel, 11 of them were day laborers in Delicias and other entities such as Ciudad Juárez, one of them worked as a maquiladora operator, two of them worked as maids in Jalisco and Sonora, and one of them even traveled to the United States to work as a babysitter. The remaining 15 migrated directly from the Sierra Tarahumara to Chihuahua.

[...] I went to the United States, to El Paso, Texas, with people who had employed me. They helped me to obtain my visa, I looked after their daughters and made food, but not only that, they also had me clean up. I liked it at first, but then not so much [...]. I left my daughters with my sisters, and I was unhappy about that. Although I sent them money, I came back for my daughters (Luz, personal communication, July 13th, 2018).

When they came to other places in the Sierra, such as Creel, Luz and Guadalupe worked as teachers for other Rarámuri.

[...] they paid me next to nothing when I was a teacher in the Sierra. But I worked there because I wanted to teach the children so that they could understand, because they didn't speak Spanish, so they could not understand. I used to walk for hours to teach these children, [...] every day (Guadalupe, personal communication, August 12th, 2018).

Estrella and María promoted health culture among women who gave birth in remote communities where they provided support during deliveries. They recalled that doctors were scarce and specialist nurses saw pregnant women, so the number of deaths among infants and mothers in the Sierra was increasing:

[...] doctors don't speak Tarahumara, they always need someone who understands and, for example, they felt bad that no one understood them. That's why I wanted to help, because I saw all the sick people and many children [...] (Estrella, personal communication, August 15th, 2018).

Eleven of the 32 artisan women used to work as day laborers: Mónica, who worked during harvests (of vegetables such as pepper, onion, and tomato, as well as cleaning peanuts), indicated that the work was burdensome; her day began at 4 a.m., and the first meal was until noon, consisting of what she had prepared a day before. She explained that even if she did the same work as men, she received less money, and that if she continued working, it was because she needed to support her children and to pay for health care services, since her children's father provided no support, as it is for most of the women. In some cases, the older children harvested with their mother to help with the family's finances.

[...] because my children's father doesn't help me at all, he never wanted to help me, he wouldn't give me any money for our children, and he told me "I'll help you with one child and you would keep the other", and then I kept one of them and he took the other [...] (Mónica, personal communication, June 14th, 2018).

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Gregorio (1998) states that one of the most important aspects to consider about domestic groups in studies on women's migration are the power relationships reflected in access to resources, autonomy in decision-making, and type of available decisions; these relationships are based on gender, age, and kinship.

According to Arias (2013), another element of the family group refers to the idea of solidarity challenged by the organization in response to a power structure of gender and generational relationships where solidarity and cooperation coexist with conflict and violence. In the particular case of Monica, the decision to separate and take each one a child was taken by her ex-partner and not by her, who would have preferred keeping both of her children despite her poverty.

In addition to the physical demand of vegetable harvesting, this income was not enough for these women to pay for their needs, and it was a source of concern and frustration because they had no other income.

I didn't make enough money. You had to work fast; if you don't, you cannot earn enough for food, so if you hurry up, you can bring home some food [...]
(Chabela, personal communication, September 2nd, 2018).

Women who worked in domestic jobs found themselves in environments of insecurity, humiliation, and exploitation. Access to housing was complicated, since they were required to present recommendation letters from previous work, and none of them complied with that requirement. Another factor was insecurity: they were unaware of the backgrounds of people who hired them. As a consequence of their power relationships with mestizo women, their employers, Rarámuri women working in household activities often suffered from different forms of discrimination, such as humiliation due to their clothing and exploitation by leaving them unpaid for weeks. Flor reported that her employer accused her of being a thief in order to avoid paying her and to let her go without a true justification:

[...] before working in the cooperative, I worked in a house and it was exhausting; they didn't pay me well, they always said that I did a bad job and they wouldn't pay me. Then one day, they accused me of stealing their things, but that was not true, they did it only to not pay me, and they fired me and yelled at me (Flor, personal communication, October 7th, 2018).

Rarámuri women with children cannot bring their children to the homes where are employed on the grounds that their presence would negatively affect their work, because they would waste time looking after their children.

[...] my son was born and I didn't know how to make it work. I was breastfeeding him. They fired me, [...] the lady fired me because I didn't go to work one day. My son was hungry and she didn't even pay me in full [...]
(Josefina, personal communication, June 22nd, 2018).

The five women stayed in the house where they worked. Some of them reported that they used to have a good relationship with their employers, although their working hours were long and their wages were meager, and they felt isolated, which is why they left those workplaces.

I didn't like to be alone inside the house [...], I finished my work and I wanted to leave, but the boss would always get mad if I asked for her [...] permission, she would never let me go to the Sierra and I had to go back to give money to my mother [...] (Juana, personal communication, October 16th, 2018).

In this regard, Calfio and Velasco (2006) identify differences and spaces of discrimination and exclusion associated with race, social class, ethnicity, and, especially, rural, black, and indigenous women. All of these groups suffer from discrimination from urban women: for instance, employers discriminating female employees or literate women discriminating illiterate women, a mechanism referred to as *cross inequality*, where discrimination is exercised not only from men to women but also from woman to woman.

Participants knew that abuse was present not only in the Sierra: in the city, they feared facing different forms of violence. However, they were not aware of the risks associated with the workplace, so they were not prepared to face them. Before migrating to the city and joining the cooperative, payment for their products was minimal, and commercializing them in communities in the Sierra was difficult; they traveled long distances, and their work was not valued, especially by tourists, who always haggled.

Discrimination and exclusion in public spaces

Indigenous women have always effaced discrimination, inequality, and the violation of their rights. According to Calfio and Velasco (2006), this group is the first victim of gender-related human rights violations: humiliation, forced sterilization, inadequate health care services, and disregard for their native language, which is perhaps why the United Nations has focused the attention in this emerging issue.

Even today, being part of an ethnic group is usually associated with exclusion and inequality. Participants experienced different forms of discrimination in public spaces, in some cases, without reflecting on it as such or tolerating discrimination because of their poverty.

When I went to buy fabric to make a skirt for my daughter, they refused to assist me. The girl took a long time. I got desperate and left [...]. What could I do? I went back another day and they wanted me out because they told me I could not come in and sell candies. I was able to buy the fabric when a girl helped me (Claudia, personal communication, September 6th, 2018).

Part of the disadvantaged environment threatening women and men of ethnic origin is the lack of access to health care programs and services, problems communicating with the

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mestizo population, who do not speak their language, and lack of information to carry out any kind of paperwork.

Not all the Rarámuri women were affiliated with health services, especially the elderly, such as Martha, a 54 year old woman, who stated that she had problems because she did not speak Spanish and did not know how to carry out the procedures to obtain the service, so she preferred to see people of their ethnic group who used medicinal plants.

From migrants to residents: Rarámuri artisan women in the city of Chihuahua

During the fieldwork, it was found that interviewees worked in two cooperatives, one formally legalized in 2013 and the other in 2017. All of them participated in the elaboration and commercialization of their handicrafts, which included souvenirs (keyrings, dolls, bracelets, earrings, purses, wooden utensils for the kitchen, and baskets made of palm leaves, pine, or sotol) and textiles (blouses, skirts, handbags, typical Rarámuri costumes, and other garments with bright colors and geometric shapes, especially the characteristic triangles of Rarámuri symbolism).

The purpose of artisanal activities in cooperatives is to contribute to the human and integral development of Rarámuri women by respecting and reinforcing their culture as a means of support in the mestizo context. To achieve this, it is essential to take advantage of the skills acquired in their ethnic environment, which are not only translated into the creation of typical products of their culture, but also promote the dissemination of original cultures and the strengthening of ties with their ancestors.

Rarámuri women stated that their life conditions changed after participating in such activities. With their artisanal work, they now have enough to cover their basic needs, and they also have the opportunity to keep part of their income for extra expenses such as entertainment and other personal goals. Free from the obligation to obey their husbands or their parents, they have gained a sense of independence.

[...] today I know that I can do things by myself and that my children can go to school [...]. Now I am alone, he left me, but I can do many things: working, even buying cloth to make my girls' skirts (Luz, personal communication, July 13th, 2018).

Monzón (2017) states that, for women, migration can become an emancipation factor due to an improved social status resulting from the access to work and social networks and interactions with social institutions, whereas for men, this process is sometimes accompanied by the loss of public and domestic status.

Rarámuri women also value participation and access to a formal job where they receive a wage and have a specific work schedule, legal benefits, vacations, and health service. In general, the experience has contributed to the personal development of these women, since they are immersed in a work system where they can exchange ideas, express opinions, feel

useful, and express their culture on a fabric that they like, which makes them feel important and part of a process of indigenous feminine construction that increases and expands their sense of emancipation.

I have always woven clothes. Since I was a child, my mom taught me and I've always liked this job because I weave part of what the Tarahumara people are. And the colors we use, if I don't like them, I don't use them, and if we have an argument, we vote so that the anger goes away. [...] I always express my opinion (Josefina, personal communication, June 22nd, 2018).

Being immersed in handicraft production and sales has opened various opportunities in their social and work relationships. Confidence, creativity, and freedom have made them the protagonists of their own stories, defying every obstacle to reach destinations that promised to provide food for their families and an opportunity to move forward, even though the initial working conditions were very difficult for them.

As in the case of the Mazahua studied by Oehmichen (2005), Rarámuri women are not fully assimilated to the culture of the places to which they migrate, and they maintain links with their community of origin; some manage to reconstruct and resignify their traditional identities in new spaces, where there are changes, but also cultural continuities.

CONCLUSIONS

The main issues emphasized by the interviewed women were poverty, insecurity, physical and sexual abuse, vulnerability derived from their indigenous identity, and economic disadvantage in their areas of origin. These problems are associated with global economic trends and environmental degradation, which represent the main reasons for moving to Chihuahua's urban area. Their goal is to protect their integrity and improve their quality of life and their children's.

Social support networks at the destination played an important role in the interviewees' residential accommodations. Most of them had friends or relatives in the city, which made their stay easier. Those who did not have any contact faced a more difficult situation when they arrived because they had to sleep in the streets, and some asked for *kórima* to survive.

Migrant women develop strategies to cope with change by taking advantage of their relationships with other women who speak Rarámuri and Spanish, who help them to find a job. However, it is more difficult for monolinguals to integrate into the new society. The greatest satisfaction for the Rarámuri artisan women is to work in a cooperative: their products are seen as vehicles for their culture and a means to rekindle their bonds with their ancestors, one of their major values. Additionally, a formal job frees them from having to bargain when selling their products. Artisanal activity allows them to access resources to live, engage in leisure activities, and be independent, that is, to achieve a certain degree of autonomy that has contributed to their socioeconomic and cultural well-being.

Their motivation to migrate to the city is not only due to economic issues, but also to the threat to personal safety because of the violence caused by the abuse of alcohol and other substances by men in their communities, which is seen as normal in their places of origin. Some interviewees migrated in search of educational opportunities to help their community, for example as health promoters and teachers.

Despite their accomplishments, Rarámuri migrant women are aware of the cross inequality that they must face, not only in comparison with men but also with mestizo women. Rarámuri women are discriminated against for their clothing, for being illiterate, monolingual, for their difficulty complying with bureaucratic demands, being poor, and accepting flexible working conditions and wages inferior to those of their male counterparts. They are also excluded from public spaces because they are indigenous, and they can even be falsely accused as an excuse not to pay them earned money.

The interviewed Rarámuri women are active protagonists in their own lives. Despite their initial lack of confidence in their capacity to live in the city by themselves, they have moved forward without a male partner. This mindset has changed, and these women have learned how to confront it. They have experienced changes that improved their socioeconomic well-being. Together, these women expressed their resilience to overcome the challenges of their migration processes and join the cooperatives, where they can obtain an income and feel useful and transcendent. They can also apply their knowledge and cultural values into artisanal work, and their increasing levels of emancipation become ingrained in their gender subjectivity.

For these Rarámuri women, the bonds of cooperation and solidarity created through *kórima* and shared housing and providing information to those who come from the community who need it to face the city are essential. They are also always there to share with those who have stayed in the Sierra.

The state of Chihuahua needs to increase its efforts concerning respect for cultural differences and recognition of indigenous migrants' human rights to contribute to their social, occupational, and residential well-being. Public policies in favor of indigenous peoples (as migrants and in their communities of origin) need to be promoted, as well as government programs focused on gender and ethnic equality that consider women as actors based on intercultural dialogue.

Translation: Miguel Ángel Ríos Zapata

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