Invisibility and Resistance: Bolivian Migrant Women in Argentina and Gendered Labor Trajectories

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Invisibility and Resistance: Bolivian Migrant Women in Argentina and Gendered Labor Trajectories

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Honors Requirements for the Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies Department
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ABSTRACT

The growing share of women migrating for reasons of work—a trend conceptualized as the feminization of labor migration—has increasingly become a matter of interest in migration studies. This paper seeks to visibilize Bolivian migrant women as social and political actors by shedding light on their labor migration experiences in Argentina. Through content analyses of Argentine labor and immigration legislation; newspaper articles; and Facebook posts from prominent migrant organizations in Argentina, I investigate Bolivian migrant women’s invisibility, their resistance to this invisibility, and whether their resistance empowers them as women. Specifically, I address both the principal macro-level—exclusionary laws and labor market segmentation on the basis of myths—and micro-level factors—the unique nature of their work and gendered family dynamics—that contribute to Bolivian migrant women’s invisibility. However, on both levels, invisibility is resisted. In addition to quotidian strategies of survival, migrant women resist, negotiate and endure invisibilization through collective action. Applying three fundamental collective action processes identified in movement literature—political opportunity, mobilization resources, and framing structures—I analyze the resistance of five migrant feminist organizations based in Buenos Aires. I find that at the individual level, many Bolivian migrant women feel empowered as a result of their collective resistance to the invisibility they face as migrant women in Argentina.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lists of Figures ............................................................................................................................. iv  
Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................................... v  
Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 1  
Chapter 1: Context and Concepts  
   Bolivian Migration to Argentina: The Female Experience ......................................................... 6  
   Literature Review ....................................................................................................................... 15  
   Concepts and Methodology ....................................................................................................... 20  
Chapter 2: Macrolevel Invisibilization Factors ............................................................................. 25  
   Immigration Laws ...................................................................................................................... 26  
   Labor Laws ............................................................................................................................... 36  
   Stereotypes and Racism ............................................................................................................. 44  
   Labor Myths and Market Segmentation ..................................................................................... 49  
Chapter 3: Micro-Level Invisibilization Factors ........................................................................... 54  
   The Nature of Agricultural and Domestic Work ........................................................................ 54  
   Strained Relationships with Family and Home Community ...................................................... 59  
Chapter 4: Resistance and Empowerment .................................................................................... 63  
   Everyday Forms of Migrant Women Resistance ...................................................................... 65  
   Migrant Feminist Collective Action ............................................................................................ 69  
   Resistant and Empowered: The Impact of Migration on Gender ............................................... 89  
Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 92  
Endnotes .......................................................................................................................................... 95  
Bibliography ................................................................................................................................. 106
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Foreign Born Population by Country of Origin, 2001 and 2010.

Figure 2: Occupation of Bolivian Migrant Women in Argentina Ages 7+

Figure 3: Image from Facebook Post Informing of Decree 70/2017 Repeal-Published by Secretaría de Trabajadores migrantes y Refugiados/as

Figure 4: Facebook Flier Calling for the Annulment of Decreto de Necesidad y Urgencia 70/2017.

Figure 5: Facebook Post Calling for Annulment of Decreto de Necesidad y Urgencia 70/2017

Figure 6: Ni Una Migrante Menos International Women’s Day Strike Call to Protest

Figure 7: Yanapacuna Invitation for Meeting of Bolivian Migrant Women in Argentina

Figure 8: Ni Una Migrante Menos Post for Information about Elizabeth Andrade Villca

Figure 9: Ni Una Migrante Menos Protest on March 8th

Figure 10: Ni Una Migrante Menos Facebook Post About Protest on March 8th

Figure 11: Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados/as #24M Post

Figure 12: Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados/as Migramos con Memoria

Figure 13: Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados/as Migramos con Memoria Flyer
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INTRODUCTION

With candles flickering in their hands and Bolivian flags draped across their chests, over a hundred Bolivian migrants protested on the gray steps of Estación Constitución—a large railway station in the neighborhood of Constitución in central Buenos Aires—on January 6th, 2002. Together the group chanted, “Murderous fascists! Murderous fascists!”, denouncing Trenes Metropolitanos (TMR), the train company accused of covering-up the murder of Marcelina Meneses and her 10-month-old son Josua Torres.¹ On January 10th, 2001—almost a year prior to this protest—Marcelina and Josua were thrown from a moving train headed from the town of Ezpeleta to Avellaneda, in the large metropolitan area south of the capital.² Since their tragic deaths, the TMR company maintained that Meneses died because she was walking on the tracks, rather than thrown off.³ For months, Marcelina’s family—in particular, her sister-in-law, Reina Torres—tirelessly searched for eyewitnesses. Eventually, after seeing a flyer with Marcelina’s photo and a phone number that Reina had posted, an eyewitness named Julio César Giménez came forward to tell the story of Marcelina’s murder.

According to Giménez, Marcelina boarded the train carrying several bags in her arms and Josua on her back. As the train approached Avellaneda station, Marcelina began heading towards the exit and accidentally brushed the shoulder of a passenger with one of her bags, triggering the man’s xenophobic outburst: "Bolivian shit, don’t you look when you walk?" Marcelina stayed silent. Attempting to defend her, Giménez, replied: “Che, be more careful, she’s a lady with a baby,” which only encouraged the other passengers to join in on the attack: “What do you defend? These Bolivians are the ones who come to take away work from us. Just like the Paraguayans and Peruvians.” Said one passenger. “What are you? An antipatria? Yelled another. “Go back to your country!” The attacks continued as people began moving towards the
exit. A guard appeared at the bottom, about to defuse the situation until he heard the insults and decided to join in: “These Bolivians causing trouble (‘haciendo quilombo’) again! They make me sick!” Suddenly, in the chaos, Giménez heard someone say “Oops...you pushed her!” When the train stopped, Giménez got off and walked towards the lifeless bodies of Marcelina and Josua lying next to the train tracks. According to Giménez, two days after he made a complaint about the murder to the Avellaneda police station, two men from the TMR visited his house and bribed him to change his statement. Additionally, Reina Torres received multiple threats via phone for seeking out the truth about her sister-in-law’s death. Today, due to lack of eye-witness testimonies, the case has been closed.

As a reaction to this impunity, the Bolivian community—led by Reina Torres—protested for the first time at Estación Constitución (the terminus of the rail line in which Marcelina and her baby had died) in 2002. Some people carried small signs with statements such as “No to xenophobic fascists” and “Victims of racial hatred!” while others vocally denounced this injustice they saw as a racist attack on the Bolivian community, and more specifically, Bolivian women: “The guard of that train said that he did not get in [to help] because he was tired of thequilombos of the Bolivians. Yes, we are going to do quilombos, quilombo for the demand for justice and for the fight for our rights!”, said one man. “Ama sua. Mistress llullu. Ama kella”, shouted a boy (translated from Quechua as, “Don’t be a liar”). Guido Torres, representative for Bolivian Movement for Human Rights also spoke at this protest: “We must also say here that we are also workers, that there is exploitation and reduction to servitude of our compatriots and that we demand that our women and children can go out on the streets without being violated and attacked.” A man from another community association tried to continue what had become a man-led forum denouncing xenophobic violence against the Bolivian community, only to be
interrupted by a woman in the crowd shouting “Let us women speak, we are the most discriminated against!” Although this case impacted the entire community, women felt most vulnerable to these attacks.

Marcelina’s story is emblematic of Bolivian migrant women’s experiences of political and social invisibility in Argentina. Marcelina was killed simply for being an indigenous Bolivian migrant woman, and even two decades after her death, this crime remains unpunished. Her story represents the hardships of an entire community of migrant women whose confrontations with racism, sexism and xenophobia are normalized and made invisible. Not only are these attacks rarely brought to legal justice, but they are rarely heard of beyond those who are directly impacted.

However, the story of Marcelina Meneses not only illustrates Bolivian migrant women’s invisibility in Argentina, but also their capacity and drive to resist. If Reina Torres had not made and posted flyers seeking eyewitnesses of Marcelina’s death, Giménez may have never came forward and there would not have been enough evidence to spark such large protests demanding justice. Like many other migrant women, Marcelina’s story would have been quickly forgotten, never even given a chance to become part of a collective Argentine memory. However, because of Reina’s efforts, the challenges Bolivian migrant women face was given space on the political agenda of the Bolivian community and the migrant community at large, facilitating protests that continued for years. Despite the impunity of the crime, this case was the source of so much collective action that, in 2012, the City of Buenos Aires passed Law 4409 making January 10th Día de la Mujer Migrante in Buenos Aires, in honor of Marcelina and all migrant women. Recently, as a new wave of feminist struggles sweep Latin America, January 10th has been used as an opportunity for migrant women’s mobilization and discussion of their collective struggle
against sexism, racism and invisibility. In many ways, Marcelina has become the image of a growing migrant feminist movement in Argentina by including the plight of migrant women, her memory serving as a spark for Bolivian migrant women to collectively resist invisibility.

In order to address Bolivian migrant women’s resistance to invisibility, we must understand the factors that make them invisible in the first place. In general, migrant women have long been neglected in migration scholarship and society at large. Ignorance towards the lived-experiences of migrant women has been facilitated by the image of them as dependents of bread-winning men—rather than agents worth considering independently. However, the growing share of women in labor migration trends—conceptualized as the “feminization” of labor migration—has increasingly become a matter of academic interest. This thesis aims to contribute to a growing literature that helps visibilize Bolivian migrant women in Argentina and their labor migration experiences by identifying the principal factors that contribute to their multi-layered marginalization and political and social absence—or invisibilization—and how this has been resisted, negotiated and endured by these women.

In a larger sense, I use the case of Bolivian migrant women workers in Argentina with the goal of better understanding how international migration is conditioned by gender as well as how it may shape gender. By focusing on Bolivian women’s intraregional labor migrations—a phenomenon that has not received much attention thus far, especially in the English-speaking scholarly world—I aim to contribute to the decentering of migration scholarship away from ethnocentric views of feminized migration as only a South to North movement. Existing research has found that the invisibility that Bolivian migrant women experience is the result of a multileveled and complex relationship between migration and gender. Building upon this knowledge, in this thesis I address both key macro-level and micro-level factors that contribute
to Bolivian migrant women’s invisibility. Macro-level factors refer to the overarching, large-scale social structures and institutions of oppression (racism, sexism, xenophobia) and how their expression in law and society renders Bolivian migrant women invisible. This thesis engages in this level of analysis by discussing exclusionary laws and normalized labor market segmentation. Micro-level factors refer to migrant women’s quotidian interactions and relationships (that may also be heavily shaped by macro-level factors like sexism and racism) that make them invisible on the more individual level. The analysis at this level included in this thesis examines the gendered nature of migration and the unique nature of migrant women’s work.

However, in both macro-level and micro-level spheres, invisibility is also resisted. Migrant women—like everyone else—do not just accept the injustice they face. In addition to quotidian strategies of survival, migrant women resist, negotiate and endure invisibilization through collective action. By following the collective action of five migrant feminist organizations based in Argentina, I seek to understand if Bolivian migrant women’s resistance to their invisibility brings them some degree of comfort, peace and even power. In order to investigate how gender conditions—and may also be conditioned by—Bolivian women’s experiences in Argentina, I focus on two distinct categories of labor: (1) domestic and care work and (2) agricultural work. Looking at these two sectors, I propose the following guiding questions: What factors contribute to the invisibility of Bolivian migrant women and their labor experiences in Argentina? How do migrant women resist this invisibility? Does this resistance transform how migrant women perceive, act-out, or experience gender? Does the feminization of labor migration (overall) have the potential to significantly impact gender?

Chapter 1 will briefly contextualize Bolivian migration to Argentina, address the state of scholarship on this topic, and outline the methodology and guiding concepts used in this study.
The analysis is then divided into three chapters. Chapter 2 analyzes the most significant macro-level factors that contribute to the invisibility of migrant women in Argentina analyzed in the literature. In Chapter 3, I focus my analysis of invisibility on micro-level factors that contribute to the invisibilization of Bolivian migrant women workers in Argentina. Chapter 4 looks at how invisibility is resisted by Bolivian migrant women not only through quotidian strategies of survival but also through collective action that relies on political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing structures for success. In the conclusion, I reflect on how Bolivian migrant women’s response to invisibility results in their empowerment and increased autonomy and whether this has any long-term impacts.

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT AND CONCEPTS

Bolivian Migration to Argentina: The Female Experience

There are many South-North migrations that may first come to mind when thinking about the feminization of labor migration, such as Central American women in the United States or Filipina women in places like Italy, Singapore and many Arab states. Although these studies have been central to our knowledge on the global feminization of labor migration, it is crucial that attention is also given to South-South migrations to understand the diversity of migrant women’s experiences. South-South intraregional migrations differ from South-North migrations in many ways: migratory circuits may be historical and date back to before the creation of nation-states; regional cooperation and multilateral agreements may mean migrants face less issues with legal entry; and assimilation might be smoother as a result of shared culture and language. When we introduce more studies of intra-regional South-South migrations, we avoid homogenizing a complicated phenomenon and ensure theories on the feminization of labor migration avoid an ethnocentric gaze that views international migration as solely South-North.
Bolivian migration to Argentina presents a fascinating South-South, regional case for the study of the feminization of labor migration and the transformative potential it may have on gender. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), intraregional migration in Latin America and the Caribbean is increasingly the dominant migration trend in South America.\textsuperscript{11} Meanwhile, Argentina continues to be the main destination for intraregional migrants.\textsuperscript{12} Since the mid-19th century, Argentina has received immigrants from neighboring countries who enter secondary labor markets and work in unstable, precarious and often informal jobs. Many of these regional migrations to Argentina have increasingly feminized over the past few decades as more women seek employment in Argentina in sectors such as domestic work and agriculture. These feminized regional migrations have become some of the most active and constant migratory flows in Argentina in recent history.\textsuperscript{13}

Argentina’s unique history of immigration is another reason the contemporary labor experience of Bolivian migrant women in Argentina also deserves special attention. During the nation-building period in late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, Argentina encouraged the migration of millions of Europeans, resulting in its self-perception as a nation of immigrants. However, this identity has excluded non-European migrants from neighboring countries such as Bolivia, Paraguay, and Chile, and non-neighboring Latin America countries such as Peru which, together, at the time of the 2010 census, constituted 81.5\% of Argentina’s migrant population.\textsuperscript{14} Within the region, Argentina is the country with the largest population of Latin American immigrations in relation to its total population.\textsuperscript{15} Nonetheless, as will be expanded upon in this thesis, Bolivians and other Latin Americans still face the stigma of “being undesirable immigrants” in Argentina.\textsuperscript{16} The way Argentina has shaped itself as an ethnically-European nation following the
immigration of the nation-building era plays a significant role in the present-day invisibilization of Bolivian migrant women.

Bolivia-Argentina migration flows are largely economic in nature and both Bolivian women and men often cite a desire to improve their standard of living as a reason to make the move to Argentina. As of 2019, Bolivia has one of the highest poverty rates in Latin America, with a gross domestic product (GDP) of around US$3500 per capita. The 2019-2021 global pandemic has contributed to worsening economic conditions. As a result of this economic hardship, almost a fifth (1.6 million) of its 10 million citizens live abroad. According to the National Population and Housing Census conducted in 2012—the first census to introduce questions on emigration—out of 1.6 million Bolivian emigrants, 38.2% went to Argentina, 23.9% to Spain, 13.2% to Brazil, 6% to Chile and 4.2% to the United States. A case that has received significant academic attention in recent years, Bolivian migration to Spain reached its most significant moment in the period 2002-2007. This, at least in part, can be attributed to the 2001 Argentine economic crisis and the consequential floating of the peso that made it a less attractive destination. However, Argentina maintains the largest Bolivian immigrant population, making it an important case when analyzing Bolivian women’s labor migration experiences.

Migration from Bolivia to Argentina has changed considerably over the past few decades. In line with global trends in international migration, Bolivia-Argentina migration has moved from peripheral to urban areas, increasingly feminized, and has an increased tendency towards irregularity. For the majority of the 20th century Bolivian migration to Argentina was mostly cross-border in nature, from the south of Bolivia to northern Argentine provinces including Salta, Jujuy and La Rioja. Bolivians primarily migrated to rural areas to fill the high demand for seasonal workers on sugar and tobacco plantations as well as for the harvest of various fruits,
like grapes in the province of Mendoza. Although many Bolivians continue to follow this labor migration pattern, as agriculture became more mechanized many began migrating further south to work in urban areas such as Buenos Aires.

**Figure 1:** Foreign Born Population by Country of Origin, 2001 and 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Increase 2001-2010 (% difference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>1,805,957</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<td>68.0</td>
<td>1,471,399</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>41.3</td>
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<td>15.2</td>
<td>345,272</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>34,712</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>41,330</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13.9</td>
<td>191,147</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>-10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>325,046</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>550,713</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>116,892</td>
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<td>157,514</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>78.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Latin America</td>
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<td>68,831</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>132.2</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Respondent</td>
<td>26,172</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Integrating themselves into urban economies, many continued to work in agricultural production in the form of horticulture for urban consumption while others shifted towards the service sector, working in industries such as construction, domestic work, and textile production. Many also began to seek work in agriculture in areas such as Mendoza and northern Patagonia. Today, Bolivians make up the second largest foreign-born population in Argentina—following Paraguayans—and represent a growing immigration trend. In 2001, Bolivians accounted for 15% of the immigrant population. Today, according to the 2010 Argentine census, almost 20% of immigrants in Argentina are from Bolivia (Figure 1). As will
be discussed in more detail, despite subtle changes over time, Bolivian migration to Argentina has long been marked by informality, exploitation and discrimination—experiences that are multiplied for Bolivian women.

The changes that brought about the geographic shift in Bolivian migration have also contributed to its feminization. Although women have long been involved in Bolivian migration to Argentina, over the last few decades Bolivian female migration has intensified.\textsuperscript{26} As the economy globalizes and the tertiary sector grows, so does the demand for what is often considered to be “female labor”.\textsuperscript{27} The Bolivian migration trends almost reached gender parity during the 1990s; however, when compared to Paraguayan and Peruvian female migration, Bolivian migration has feminized at a slow rate, resulting in Bolivian women to be an under analyzed case in studies of female migration to Argentina.\textsuperscript{28} Unlike their Paraguayan and Peruvian counterparts who mainly work in domestic and care, Bolivian women are split between a handful of activities, mostly as a result of the familial nature of Bolivian migration and the role Bolivian social networks play in the accumulation of capital for ethnic enterprises.\textsuperscript{29} Depending on the location in Argentina, migrant men primarily work in construction, agriculture and garment manufacturing while women usually work in agriculture, domestic work, garment manufacturing and trading in clothes and vegetables (Figure 2).

In this study, I will be limiting my analysis to the experiences of on Bolivian women who work in (1) domestic and care work and (2) agriculture, both those who work in horticulture and those who work for larger agro-industry companies. The differences between domestic and agricultural work speaks to the diversity of Bolivian women’s labor migration experiences but also shows how oppressive structures such xenophobia and sexism invisibilize Bolivian women in similar ways in many types of work.
When employed as domestic workers and caregivers in the homes of Argentine families, Bolivian migrant women work in a space perceived as naturally feminine, resulting in their labor being undervalued and their role as employees being invisibilized. Domestic and care work has traditionally been the main form of women’s labor in Latin America, presently representing the work of 15.3% of employed women in the region. In general, domestic and care work is characterized by low pay, long hours, restricted freedom and personalistic working relations that include harassment and the enforcement of hierarchical employer-employee relations. However, this activity is still attractive to many Bolivian migrant women, especially first-time migrants who arrive in Argentina alone. In the case of “live-in” work arrangements, accommodation and even meals are provided by the family to the employee. This lets the woman maximize her savings, avoid commuting costs, and send much of her salary back to her family in Bolivia.
However, it has also been observed that Bolivian migrant women often view domestic work as degrading and the least attractive form of employment available to them in Argentina. This is largely due to a negative perception of domestic work in Bolivia, a view which Bolivian migrants bring with them to Argentina. In Bolivia, domestic work is carried out by young, single and uneducated woman from poor, rural areas. There is also a strong association between domestic work, indigenous identity and rural-urban internal migration. According to the National Federation of Bolivian Paid Household Workers (Fenatrahob)—a Bolivian domestic workers union founded in 1993—80% of domestic workers in Bolivia are of rural and indigenous origin. For Bolivian migrant women who have a relatively high level of education and see themselves as part of a “urban mestizo nation-building project”, pursuing domestic work in Argentina is perceived as scaling down their social status and, therefore, less desirable than working in other sectors such as the garment industry. For this reason, when discussing Bolivian domestic workers in Argentina, I am referring to a specific demographic of Bolivian women, specifically those from a rural-indigenous backgrounds with little formal education.

The second labor trajectory is agricultural and horticultural work. In Argentina, horticulture has historically been a labor niche dominated by Bolivian migrants. The majority of Bolivian families working in Argentine horticulture come from rural areas in Bolivia where they worked as subsistence farmers. Like horticulture in Argentina, this previous experience with subsistence farming is heavily segmented by gender, with the women responsible for all of the tasks within the home and the men the tasks outside. As will be expanded upon, like the negative view of domestic workers established before migration, this gendered view of horticultural work also contributes to labor decisions made within Argentina, decisions that often result on Bolivian women bearing the heaviest load of labor.
Bolivian migration became important to regional agricultural economies in Argentina around the 1930s, when the demand for harvesting labor began to increase in many provinces.\textsuperscript{36} This could be first be seen in the sugar agro-industry in the North Eastern provinces of Salta and Jujuy as well as the Cuyo region of Mendoza, where there was a need for seasonal grape harvesters.\textsuperscript{37} As previously mentioned, overtime, the geographic location of Bolivian migrants shifted south and towards more urban areas where they consolidated their predominance over the production, tillage and commercialization of fresh produce in the many other green belts throughout the country.\textsuperscript{38} Some other important horticultural belts largely made up of Bolivian migrant workers include: the Buenos Aires Horticultural Area (AHB) in which 40\% of producers are of Bolivian origin; the horticultural belt of the Metropolitan Area of Córdoba where 50\% of producers are Bolivian; the green belt in the cities of Villa María and Villa Nueva where 40\% of the workers are from Bolivia (mostly Potosí and Tarija) and in Lules, Tucumán where 65\% of the horticulture workers are Bolivian.\textsuperscript{39} It is also important to note that many of these horticultural zones are characterized by a so-called “Bolivian ladder”, which refers to the process of upward social mobility of Bolivians—especially those in the AHB—involved in horticulture. Although a family may begin in Argentina as farm laborers, overtime, they move up in this so called “ladder” and go from being farm laborers to sharecroppers, from sharecroppers to renting a hectare or two of land and, eventually, to owning land and running their own enterprise.\textsuperscript{40}

Although attention has been given mostly to male Bolivian horticultural workers, Bolivian women also participate in this activity. However, as part of a horticultural family unit, Bolivian women who work alongside their husbands in horticulture are often considered mere helpers to the male-head of household. Even though women carry out the same amount of work as men, they rarely receive pay (which goes to the man) or are excluded from the family’s
financial decision making in the scenario that they run their own horticulture business. Despite these inequalities, agriculture still seems to be the preferred type of work amongst Bolivian migrant women in Argentina, making up 40% of their employment (Figure 2). This is due to a number of factors including the hope of the social mobility in the “Bolivian ladder” and the stigmatization of other forms of work such as domestic work. In her study on horticultural Bolivian families in La Plata, María Eugenia Ambort finds that migrant women prefer to work in horticulture because of their rural background and experiences in subsistence agriculture with their families in Bolivia. This activity also allows women more time to spend with their children and care for their home. Unfortunately, this leads them to experience a *doble jornada*, or a double-workload, involving a full-time responsibility to complete horticultural tasks in addition to fulfilling all reproductive tasks in the home. In addition to working on the farm alongside the men, women are also responsible for caring for children and completing house tasks—resulting in many working between 16-18 hours daily, without weekly breaks. As will be discussed in more detail, the productive tasks of agricultural work are also highly segregated by gender. Migrant women are either assigned the most undervalued tasks that require “feminine” qualities (patience, tactical abilities) or they are assigned the task of selling products produced by men at *ferias*, street markets, or small vegetable stores. Unlike domestic work, agricultural work occurs in a productive space which is perceived as masculine. Although women work alongside men for practically all tasks involved, they face overexploitation because they are seen as only helping and primarily responsible for the domestic sphere.

Although these two forms of work make up half of Bolivian migrant women’s labor experiences in Argentina, Bolivian women also have a few other common occupational experiences in Argentina. Some work in small-scale industries such as garment factories while
other pursue further education. In her study of ex-miner Bolivian families, Tanja Bastia finds many Bolivian men and women are able to become “upwardly mobile” in Argentina and find more stable and better paid employment as bus drivers and nurses. Although there is a variety of Bolivian immigrant experiences in Argentina, the majority of those working in either agricultural work or domestic work are from indigenous-peasant communities. When I speak of Bolivian migrant women throughout this thesis, I will be referring to this specific demographic. Their indigenous phenotypes and cultural differences become points of distinction that allow them to be more often marginalized and “othered” in both Argentina and Bolivia. Although many middle and upper-class white Bolivian women also migrant to Argentina to participate in other forms of higher skilled work or pursue an education, they likely do not have the same experiences of discrimination that those of indigenous-rural background do. It is important to keep this distinction in mind when analyzing the invisibility that many Bolivian migrant women face in both domestic and agricultural work.

**Literature Review**

Previously overlooked in migration studies, gender has gained scholarly attention over the past few decades due to the feminization of labor migration globally. Although fragmented by its inter-disciplinary nature, most of the literature on gender and migration seeks to answer two central questions: how does gender shape migration? and how does migration shape gender? Most scholars agree that gender conditions migration in many ways: deciding to migrate, organizing the trip, arriving at the destination, finding employment. Since women experience labor migration differently than men, they face different and additional challenges. Although not always conceptualized as “invisibility”, the exclusion of migrant women stemming from overlapping oppressions is a central issue scholars address, especially those offering a Latin
American perspective. Scholars have identified a variety of factors that contribute to the invisibilization of migrant women, the most commonly cited being laws and State discourse; the nature of the work they perform; and the justification of exploitation through stereotypes.

In the case of immigration in Argentina, many argue that the invisibility of Bolivian migrant women is written into law and legitimized by the State. Corina Courtis and María Inés Pacecca point out that even as Argentine immigration laws allow people from neighboring countries to freely enter and work in Argentina, this requires registered employment and a formal work contract, which is uncommon in many of the labor sectors Bolivian women work in. Some argue that the specific nature of migrant women’s work is another factor that contributes to their invisibility. Borgeaud-Garcianía shows how the private nature of the domestic space and work tasks being undefined, taboo or ambiguous shape care work and contribute to the invisibility of migrant care workers in Argentina. Elena Mingo argues that agricultural work is interpreted as a masculine space where men can move up in their career while for women, it is a space in which they are seen as marginal, temporary and there “out of necessity.” Other studies have looked at different factors that contribute to the invisibility of Bolivian migrant women, such as the naturalization of exploitative work due to stereotypes of ethnicity and gender. Bolivian migrant women are deemed as most apt for certain tasks and responsibilities regardless of the perceived gendered nature of the of work space, that is whether they are conceived of as feminine (such as domestic work) or masculine (such as agriculture). Some studies have demonstrated how women who work in agricultural settings are assigned to the worst paid positions, which is justified by the belief that they are needed for their “feminine skills” or “natural” qualities: submissiveness, hard work, self-discipline, patience, etc. Despite this rich conversation of the ways Bolivian migrant women are made invisible, these factors are rarely
compared. This study aims to understand how migrant women are made invisible by comparing these central factors.

Despite the relative agreement about how gender conditions migration, scholars disagree about whether labor migration reproduces gender structures or transforms them. Many early studies are optimistic and are confident that migration creates space for greater gender equality. Besides being simplistic, this view underestimates how pervasive the patriarchy is in all corners of the world and the fact that migrant women and their families do not simply shed their previous gender ideologies once they arrive in a new place, especially when they do not assimilate into the destination society. One example of this optimism is Sarah J. Mahler’s article, “Engendering Transnational Migration: A Case Study of Salvadorans”, published in 1999. Although establishing the need for a “baseline” when making any analysis of transformation, Mahler concludes that it is unlikely that the evolution of mass migration into a transnational community left a key component of social organization—gender—unchanged. A decade later, Luz María Gordillo made a similar argument by showing how Mexican migration to the U.S. created a new and complex transnational social space in which dominant patriarchal values were renegotiated and readjusted by women’s increased agency, as seen in the way in which transnational women originally from San Ignacio, Mexico successfully negotiate the implementation of different contraceptive methods. Gordillo’s use of the concept “transnational sexualities”—defined as “the oppositional and confrontational experiences that transnational subjects accumulate while constructing sexual identities through their participation in transnational circuits”—suggests that through migration, women found ways to empower themselves that they may not have been able to do before.

Others argue that patriarchal structures are simply reproduced through migration. Many scholars see the potential for migration to result in greater autonomy and independence for
women is more of a desire than a reality. For example, Carmen Gregorio Gil warns of an ethnocentrism or liberal feminism that often seems to underline arguments made that migration leads to greater gender equality.\textsuperscript{56} Scholars like Gregorio Gil believe that this ignores the complexity of gender, the transnational nature of migration and the fact that more “developed” destination societies often project the same patriarchal structures. Another major contribution to this more cautious argument is provided by the work of Cynthia Pizarro. In the collection, \textit{Bolivian Labor Immigrants’ Experiences in Argentina}, Pizarro argues that although migration can be seen as a process that can challenge traditional gender models in transnational social spaces, the intersection of other unequal social relations generates new ways of dependence.\textsuperscript{57} Thus, migration itself does not automatically empower women.

However, most studies express an ambivalent response to the question “how does migration impact gender?” A main contributor to this ambivalent stance is Tanja Bastia, whose work has explored the changes that labor migration can entail in gender roles as women go from being housewives to being family breadwinners.\textsuperscript{58} This may lead to changes in the sexual division of labor within families and in a greater awareness of the socially constructed nature of gender inequalities which can potentially contribute to feminist social transformations.\textsuperscript{59} However, Bastia is skeptical of this “utopic hope that transnationalism may offer opportunities to realign and equalize gender relations” because patriarchal relations can “return in different guises” in different contexts.\textsuperscript{60} Bastia’s greatest contribution to this ambivalent stance is the idea that while opportunities for gender gains open up through migration, women often trade these gains for upward social mobility once they return home, contributing to the reproduction of patriarchal social relations.\textsuperscript{61} Scholars that propose a more ambivalent answer often indicate that there are too many gaps in research to make a definite answer either way.\textsuperscript{62}
Despite these significant contributions, one significant gap in the literature is an explanation of how migrant women respond to the challenges they face. How do migrant women endure and resist being a highly invisible sector? Although given little thought in the literature of the feminization of labor migration—specifically in the case of Bolivian women in Argentina—this question deserves attention since it can provide insight into the other two central questions that guide this thesis. To understand the potential for migration to transform gender, we must also investigate how women respond to their gendered migration challenges.

Although the struggles migrant women face are well observed, their individual and organized resistance is not. Some studies have discussed traditional forms of resistance of Bolivian migrants in Argentina, but the majority lack analysis of women’s resistance specifically. As a result, one is left to wonder if women’s resistance to the challenges of migration lead to feelings of empowerment on the basis of gender? If Bolivian women overcome the challenges of labor migration, does this open up an opportunity in which they may see their abilities and roles as women—in relation to men—differently? Do moments of resistance—alongside other women with shared experiences—lead to changes in gender ideologies and eventually empower migrant women? The ways migrant women respond to labor and migration laws that make them invisible; how they negotiate against unjust labor conditions; and how they resist the omnipresent and deeply embedded gender and ethnic stereotypes that naturalize them in precarious work can reveal how migration may transform gender and how feelings of empowerment and increased agency could impact gender. By looking at the specific challenges Bolivian migrant women face and how they resist them, I argue that although resistance to the challenges of labor migration can empower individual women and change their views on gender
roles, there needs to be more longitudinal research that looks into the long-term effects of migration on migration’s impact on gender equality in the long-term.

**Methodology and Guiding Concepts**

To demonstrate how Bolivian migrant women are made invisible as well as show their resistance to this invisibility, I employ a variety of sources. First, I analyzed the content of Argentine labor and immigration laws to demonstrate the way in which legislation plays a central role in the invisibilization of Bolivian migrant women workers in Argentina. After reviewing the history of both Argentine immigration and labor legislation, I choose to analyze the legislative documents that were most significant and signaled a shift in views of migration and labor rights. These documents provided evidence of legislative invisibilization. I also analyze newspaper articles from four Argentine sources: La Nación, El País, Clarín, and Página 12. I limited my search to articles published between March 2020-2021 and under the following search terms: *migrantes, bolivianas, DNU 70/2017, migración, inmigrantes*. These newspaper sources provided me with evidence of anti-immigrant sentiment from political leaders and the general public. Many articles also provided interviews with Bolivian migrant women that demonstrated their resistance and feelings of empowerment that resulted from collective action.

Finally, I analyzed posts from the Facebook pages of four Argentina-based migrant feminist organizations. These posts were the main source where I found evidence of Bolivian migrant women’s resistance and empowerment. I limited my collection to posts from March 2019-March 2021 from the public Facebook pages of the following organizations: Ni Una Migrante Menos, Bloque de Trabajadorxs Migrantes, Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados/as and Yanapacuna. Although I found that at the core of all four of these
organizations is the desire to defend the rights of migrant women, they approach this goal from different standpoints. For example, while Ni Una Migrante Menos is an expansive organization that takes a clear feminist stance while Yanapacuna is a smaller collective whose work often reference’s migrant’s nationality or indigeneity. It is also important to note that these four organizations are connected to each other and oftentimes share each other’s Facebook posts. I only collected and coded original posts, written and posted by the organizations, rather than posts shared from another organizations page.

Among the key concepts that guide this exploration of Bolivian migrant women experiences in Argentina, their marginalization and their resistance, the concepts of invisibility and intersectionality stand at the center of the analysis. Inherently connected, the idea of invisibility and intersectionality help us understand the many structures at play that work against Bolivian migrant women.

Invisibility

When thinking of the challenge’s migrant women face, invisibility isn’t necessarily the first to come to mind. As seen in the case of Marcelina Meneses, Bolivian migrant women face many serious, often life-threatening challenges, most of which are less abstract than “invisibility”: poverty, separation from their families, exploitation at work, violence, limited access to reproductive health care. However, any relief from these challenges is prevented because they are made invisible. What is most threatening about invisibility is that it permits injustice and oppression to go unnoticed, unaddressed and eventually forgotten. As seen in the case of Marcelina, anything resembling justice was only possible because of the efforts of another migrant woman to visibilize Marcelina’s story.
In my analysis, I use the word *invisibilization* as an all-encompassing term for the marginalization that characterizes the lives of Bolivian migrant women in Argentina. Although not articulated with this specific language nor operationalized in the scholarship, invisibility has been a concept used by many to discuss the experiences of migrant women of color.\(^6\) One study that centers a discussion of invisibility is Jennifer L. Shoaff’s book, *Borders of Visibility: Haitian Migrant Women and the Dominican Nation-State*. In this multisited, feminist ethnographical piece, Shoaff argues how, paradoxically, Haitian migrant women in the Dominican Republic are rendered both *hypervisible*—due to being Black female bodies existing in public spaces—and *invisible* actors whose actual experiences and practices are ignored by history, the State, international actors and scholarship. Shoaff demonstrates that the (in)visibility migrant women face is the result of intersecting inequalities at the state, local, and individual level. Like in the case of Haitian women in the Dominican Republic, many agents like the State, the media, individuals, and sexist and racist ideologies invisibilize Bolivian migrant women in Argentina. This invisibility prevents any steps towards justice or even towards a collective memory of migrant women’s struggles that can fuel future acts of resistance. Invisibility denies migrant women an outlet to voice their experiences and be heard by those beyond their community. Invisibility hinders any steps towards profound change that could better the lives of these women by allowing society to ignore the need for this change. Invisibilization facilitates oppression of migrant women workers—allowing it to go unchallenged and permitting an endless cycle of suffering. First and foremost, Bolivian migrant women and their struggles in Argentina must be visible in order to be effectively addressed.
Intersectionality

Bolivian migrant women are not the only people who experience invisibility. In most countries, immigrants are an overlooked sector, including in Argentina. Additionally, global patriarchy still functions to subordinate women of all different backgrounds, in a spectrum of ways. However, we must go beyond a single axis of analysis when looking at the reasons Bolivian migrant women are invisible in Argentina. Bolivian migrant women experience invisibility not because of sexism or racism or xenophobia or classism. Instead, they experience hyperinvisibility because all of these oppressions intersect and affect them simultaneously. In order to understand Bolivian migrant women’s experiences of invisibility, this thesis also adopts the concept of intersectionality, coined by Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. When beginning to research the experiences of Bolivian migrant women through a lens that privileges gender analysis, it quickly became obvious that trying to focus on gender alone would result in an incomplete study and contribute to the invisibilization of Bolivian migrant women’s lived experiences by mistakenly assuming that there is no difference between migrant women of indigenous descent and those of mixed or European descent, for example. Crenshaw’s conceptualization of intersectionality is most well-known; however, Black feminists around the world have long documented their experiences with overlapping oppressions. Deborah K King’s used the terminology “multiple jeopardy” to explain the “multiplicative relationship” rather than additive relationship between the oppressions of sexism, racism and classism on Black women’s life. Rather than racism simply being an additional oppression to sexism (or vice versa) racism and sexism interact in ways that result in a multiplication oppression. Multiple jeopardy is especially useful in understanding Bolivian migrant women’s labor migration struggles.
Pulling from Crenshaw’s description of the unique marginalization experiences by Black women in the U.S, it is useful to imagine the process of invisibilization of Bolivian migrant women as functioning in two ways: absorption and marginalization. Absorption refers to how Bolivian migrant women workers are regarded as either too much like women, too much like Bolivian migrants or too much like the working classes that “the compounded nature of their experience is absorbed into the collective experiences” of the any of the groups without acknowledgement of the unique experiences and challenges Bolivian migrant women face as members of all three (plus) groups.\textsuperscript{68} Marginalization occurs when Bolivian migrant women are considered “too different” from the image of women (privileged, white, Argentine women), from the image of Bolivian migrants (Bolivian migrant men) or from the image of the working class (white Argentine men).\textsuperscript{69} As a result, their bolivianidad (Bolivianness), their womanhood and their condition as part of the working class is pushed to the margins of all of those group’s narratives. When analyzing the factors that contribute to Bolivian migrant women’s invisibility, I will indicate when these two central sub-processes of invisibility (amongst others) are at play.

Although migration scholars have used the concept of intersectionality to discuss the unique experiences of migrant women, most focus on the intersection of migration and gender.\textsuperscript{70} Following the tradition of intersectionality in Black feminist scholarship and beyond, this study will prioritize experiences of oppression related to gender and migration; however, also pay substantial attention to the way Bolivian migrant women’s experiences with sexism cannot be pulled apart from their experiences of racism, xenophobia and classism. Adopting a frame of intersectionality helps better explain why Bolivian migrant women’s invisibility is unique. King argues that as a result of experiencing “multiple jeopardy”, Black women are made invisible within other groups and left out of the political agenda in the fight against oppressions that are
narrowly addressed: the Black power movement, the feminist movement, and workers movements. With an understanding of the obvious contextual differences between Black women in the United States and Bolivian migrant women in Argentina, this understanding of hyperinvisibility as a result of overlapping oppressions will be cautiously applied to the case of Bolivian migrant women. Although intersectionality cannot explain the full story, it is a useful framework to understand the complex challenges Bolivian migrant women face, as well as strategies of resistance that emerge from their experience as migrant women of indigenous or mixed ethno-racial origin, as well as by their class experience. Since the women at the center of this study are of an indigenous-rural origin and situated within a working-class context in Argentina, either as domestic workers or agricultural workers, it is important to go beyond the intersection of just gender and migration status.

CHAPTER 2: MACROLEVEL INVISIBILIZATION FACTORS

There are many actors who benefit from the continued invisibility of migrant women and therefore seek to maintain it, whether it be employers who underpay their domestic workers or the State that would prefer not to use resources on reviewing and auditing the conditions of agricultural companies. However, all members of society are complicit in the silencing of migrant women. Using evidence gathered from legal documents and newspaper articles, I will first provide analysis of the ways macro-level factors—immigration laws, labor laws, and stereotypes of Bolivian women—contribute to invisibility in this specific case before looking at two micro-level factors in Chapter 3. Only an understanding of who/what contributes to the invisibility of Bolivian migrant women reveals where visibilization efforts are needed most.
Immigration Laws

One of the factors that contribute to the invisibilization of Bolivian migrant women is legislation, more specifically immigration laws and labor laws. Not only have Argentine immigration and labor laws contributed to the systemic discrimination of Bolivian migrant women individually, but these two types of legislation also intersect and contradict each other which allows Bolivian migrant women to fall through the cracks and miss out on fundamental rights enjoyed by other migrants and other workers in Argentina. Although large scale Bolivian immigration was not recorded until the second half of the 19th century, there has been constant movement between both countries since colonial times. Despite this history of human mobility ingrained in the becoming of both nations, Bolivian migrants have historically been marginalized from Argentine society not necessarily because they are immigrants but because they are Bolivian migrants, a group that does not fit the accepted image of immigrants in Argentina.

The tradition of writing invisibility of Bolivian migrants through the law began with Law 817 of Immigration and Colonization of the Republic of Argentina in 1876, the first national law intended to regulate immigration in Argentina. Argentina adopted this law with the goal of encouraging European migration during a time in which Argentina was focused on consolidating its own identity as a nation. Argentine governing elites argued that European immigration was a critical step in becoming a nation of progress and civilization. This process of Europeanization was motivated by the works of the Generation of 37, an intellectual movement that believed that in order for Argentina to achieve modernity it must choose “civilization” over “barbarism”. In this dichotomy, non-white and non-European populations (such as indigenous peoples in Argentina and non-white migrants) were seen as “barbarous” and impediments to Argentina’s progress, while an influx of European immigrants, perceived as “civilized”, would help
Argentina modernize. One of the most influential contributors to this idea was Juan Bautista Alberdi. In his constitutional proposal, *Bases and Points of Departure for the Political Organization of the Argentine Republic*, Alberdi argued that European immigration was needed to bring civilization and progress to Argentina. In order to argue for European immigration, Alberdi rhetorically asks “We want to plant and acclimatize in American freedom, the French culture, the industriousness of the man from Europe and the United States? Bring living pieces of them [countries] in the customs of their inhabitants and move them here.” Alberdi argued that if Argentina wanted to modernize, industrialize and progress as a nation it must import the culture, ideas and overall progressive qualities of Europe and the United States via immigration. Alberdi and the rest of the Generation of 37 had an image of what the Argentine nation was to look like, an image that they attempted to manifest through European immigration.

While welcoming to European migrants, Law 817 completely neglected the existence of any non-European migrant. For in this law, immigrants are those arriving in Argentina “by boat”, implying that those who traveled to Argentina by land, were not considered migrants in the same sense as European migrants. This exclusion of non-European immigrants is best exemplified by Article 12 and 13 in Chapter 5, which define who was considered an immigrant.

**Art. 12.** For the purposes of this law, any foreigner, laborer, artisan, industrialist, farmer, or teacher, who, being under sixty years of age, and proving his morality and aptitudes, should come to the Republic to establish himself in it, on steam ships or by sailing, paying second- or third-class passage, or having the trip paid on behalf of the Nation, the Provinces, or the private companies that protect immigration and colonization.

**Art. 13.** The persons who meet these conditions and do not wish to avail themselves of the advantages of the immigration title, shall make it present at the time of their embarkation to the captain of the ship, who will write it down in the logbook, or to the maritime authorities of the port of disembarkation, in these cases they should be considered as simple travelers. This provision is not extended to immigrants who were hired as such for the colonies or other parts of the Republic.
As stated in these articles, the status of an “immigrant” within this legislation was, in a way, a title of privilege reserved for Europeans who could afford to travel across the Atlantic Ocean to live in Argentina. Rather than a law that regulated ongoing migration, Law 817 was part of a blueprint to make Argentina a European nation. Commenting on this act exclusion, María José Magliano argues that, rather than being seen as this legitimate image of an immigrant in Argentine society or a different social category on their own, Bolivian migrants were simply incorporated into the rest of Argentina’s “internal others” and were not differentiated from the rest of the non-European Argentine population. In this way, Law 817 contributes to the absorption of migrants from neighboring countries, like Bolivia, into a general working class despite significant differences in their struggles and experiences. Ignoring the existence of non-European migrants within Law 817 means they had to confront day-to-day challenges—discrimination, labor exploitation, and violence,—without help from their countries of origin nor the Argentine state.

Although exclusionary, in contrast to many other immigration countries like the United States, Argentina’s Law 817 was a pro-immigration policy. Largely as a result of this policy, Argentina received an estimated seven million immigrants, predominantly from Spain and Italy, between 1870 and 1930. However, at the turn of the century, views of immigration gradually became more restrictive. There was a slow retreat from the open immigration policy largely due to reasons such as economic crises and rising inequality that led to growing social conflict and increased nationalism, especially in urban areas like Buenos Aires. This new social reality translated into other laws that impacted immigration—including the Law of Residence (1902), the Social Security Law (1910) and a long list of decrees spanning from 1913 to 1938. With restrictions, immigration was not subjected to special quotas as was the case in other immigration counties during this period. This shift from an inviting immigration policy to a more restrictive
one escalated in the 1960s when European immigration rates began declining and regional migrants began making up a larger percentage of immigration when people from neighboring countries sought employment and higher wages. Due to intense urbanization from rural-urban internal migration flows, many of these Southern Cone migrants filled the rural labor demand in Argentina. As intra-regional migration surpassed European migration in the mid-20th century, Bolivian migrants went from being neglected in immigration law to being directly excluded, culminating in the infamous Ley Videla.

Passed in 1981 during the Argentine military dictatorship, the General Law of Migrations and Promotion of Immigration—known as the Videla Law—not only violated migrants’ fundamental rights granted in the Argentine constitution but its exclusion of South American migrants made it a “device that generated illegality” and left a large part of the migrant population in a situation of extreme vulnerability.\textsuperscript{82} This law resulted in increases in undocumented immigration as a result of providing few avenues for legal immigration from neighboring countries by granting unrestrained discretion to immigration officials to deny legal migration to anyone whose “cultural characteristics” wouldn’t allow their “adequate integration into Argentina society” (Article 2 of the Videla Law). During the ordinance of the Videla Law, the undocumented population was an estimated 750,000 to one million people, all of whom would face serve sociopolitical consequences.\textsuperscript{83}

This group of mostly regional migrants not only suffered from the informality that usually comes from an irregular migration status, but their irregular status was intensely criminalized in all aspects of their lives. The Videla Law denied undocumented migrants’ access to services including education and medical treatment, property, legal employment and the ability to marry in Argentina. Within the Videla Law many articles directly state which rights are
withheld from undocumented immigrants. For example, Article 30 states that “Foreigners without legal residence in the Republic could not work or participated in any remunerated activity, either independently or for another person, with or without a relationship of dependency.”

Not only were undocumented migrants—which by 1981 included many Bolivian women—excluded from basic rights and services, but anyone who assisted them in obtaining them or even witnessed undocumented immigrants using these services was legally required to report it or pay a fine. For example, undocumented immigrants could receive emergency health care, but hospitals were then obligated to report them:

**Art. 31.** No person of visible or ideal existence, public or private, may provide work or remunerated occupation, with or without a dependency relationship, to foreigners who reside illegally or who, legally residing, are not authorized to do so, or hire them, agree to or obtain its services.84

**Art. 48.** Those who violate the provisions established in Articles 31 and 32, will be sanctioned upon the sole verification of the infraction, by the National Migration Directorate with the fines that are detailed below: a) In the case of those responsible mentioned in Article 31 the fines will amount to the sum of Five Thousand Pesos ($ 5,000) for each verified violation. In the case of givers of domestic work, the fine to be applied will be Two Hundred Pesos ($ 200) for each infraction, prior to thirty (30) days.85

Despite the reestablishment of democracy in Argentina in 1983 and the promulgation of a new constitution that incorporated human rights in 1994, the Videla Law remained intact and governed immigration policy for twenty more years after the illegitimate military regime.86 In fact, the executive branch expanded the law’s discriminatory features and promoted the autonomy of the National Migration Office to establish criteria for admission and expulsion from the country without any legal oversight. It was not until January 2004 that the Videla Law was repealed and replaced by the Nueva Ley de Migraciones (Law 25781), representing a significant step towards recognizing and integrating South American migrant populations in Argentina. This
new policy allowed migrants from MERCOSUR countries—including Paraguay, Bolivia and Peru—to remain in Argentina, obtain residency and work. It also recognized migrants’ rights to education, health, family and participation in public life.\(^{87}\)

The general principles under Article 3 of the new immigration law demonstrate its pro-immigration approach. The objectives of the law include: to develop immigration policies and strategies in order to comply with international obligations relating to human rights and the integration and mobility of immigrants; to contribute to the achievement of the government's demographic policies relating to population and geographic growth; to contribute to the enrichment and strengthening of the social and cultural fabric of the country; to guarantee the right to family reunification; to promote permanent residents' integration into Argentine society; amongst many others. What really sets the Nueva Ley apart, not only from the Videla Law but also immigrant laws of any other large immigrant receiving country in the world, is its establishment of migration as a human right.\(^{88}\) Chapter 1 of the law, titled “On the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners,” lists the rights all migrants have regardless of their legal status:

**Art. 4.** The right to migration is essential and inalienable of the person and the Argentine Republic guarantees it on the basis of the principles of equality and universality.

**Art 7.** In no case will the migratory irregularity of a foreigner prevent his admission as a student in an educational establishment, be it public or private; national, provincial or municipal; primary, secondary, tertiary or university. The authorities of the educational establishments must provide guidance and advice regarding the corresponding procedures for the purposes of correcting the migratory irregularity.

This overturned the criminalization of undocumented migrants expressed in the Videla Law. Additionally, the 2004 Law directly challenges the view of who is considered an immigrant expressed in the earlier Law 817 as those who arrive “by boat.” In Article 2, the 2004 Law states that an immigrant “is understood as any foreigner who wishes to enter, transit, reside or settle permanently, temporarily or temporarily in the country in accordance with current legislation”
Overall, the 2004 Nueva Ley de Migraciones represents a major step forward for the rights of immigrants, specifically regional immigrants from countries such as Bolivia, not only in Argentina, but throughout the world. This law includes many important policy changes: giving migrants universal access to education and health care, free legal representation, the right to a fair trial prior to expulsion, and the right to family reunification. These measures were prompted by the desire to create a comprehensive immigration system based on democratic values instead of the previous military-defined framework, and they were influenced by the growing human rights movement in the region. Although Law 25871 symbolizes the progress being made in Argentina in including all migrants, when looking at the intersectional nature of Bolivian migrant women’s oppression, there is still many reasons to be concerned about the way in which migration laws contribute to their invisibility.

The inclusivity and respect for immigrants expressed in the Nueva Ley de Migraciones was threatened in 2017 by an executive decree passed by the Mauricio Macri presidency. On January 27th, Macri signed the Decreto de Necesidad y Urgencia (DNU) 70/2017 for the deportation of illegal immigrants and of immigrants with criminal records. This executive decree also made it difficult for new immigrants to enter Argentina, legally and illegally. The DNU 70/2017 established stricter conditions for the entry and stay of foreigners in the country and was aimed mainly at preventing the entry of migrants and facilitating the deportation mechanisms of those who have criminal records, expanding the possibility of doing so without taking into account the reality of the migrants, their ties with their country and their roots in Argentina. The decree also expanded the concept of criminal records, criminalizing the irregular status of undocumented migrants.
Not only did Macri’s decree modification of Law 25871 present a legal threat to undocumented migrants but also a social one, heightening and justifying xenophobic and racist attitudes towards groups such as Bolivians. This executive action was justified by the argument that immigrants take away jobs and bring crime. According to the Argentine prison authority, at that time, 22.6% of prisoners were foreigners. However, the government reports that only 6% of Argentina’s foreigners are criminals. Additionally, many argue that foreigners are committing drug trafficking crimes. Since the majority of immigrants currently come from Paraguay, Bolivia and Peru, many are concerned that immigrants from these less economically stable countries bring drugs with them. Although the Macri administration claimed that 33% of drug traffickers are immigrants, only 3% come from one of these three countries. Therefore, what can be seen is exaggerated statistics presented by supporters of immigration restriction that then in turn convince the public that immigrants threaten the security of Argentina. This exaggeration has fed into existing xenophobic perceptions of Bolivian immigrants as criminals, kidnappers and threat to the overall well-being of Argentine society, often justifying an increase in attacks such as what Marcelina Meneses experienced in 2001. For these reasons, Decree 70/2017 has been the main legal antagonist to the present-day migrant feminist movement in Argentina.

The cause for much political controversy and objection from international and regional human rights bodies—Decree 70/2017 was finally abrogated in March 2021 by the administration of Peronist President Alberto Fernández. Although it can be argued that this legislative change is simply the result of a transition from a conservative to center-left President, it took over two years for the Fernández administration to repeal Macri’s decree and restore the full validity of the 2004 Nueva Ley de Migraciones. Immigrant organizations—like those that
will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 4—credit their mobilization over the past four years as being the real reason for the repeal of Decree 70/2017 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Image from Facebook Post Informing of Decree 70/2017 Repeal-Published by Secretaría de Trabajadores migrantes y Refugiados/as

No matter the primary cause, the repeal of decree 70/2017 and the restoration of the original Nueva Ley de Migraciones is a significant legislative change, at least in spirit. However, even before Macri signed decree 70/2017, Migration Law 25.827 often functioned differently in theory than in practice, an issue that we can expect to continue with the recent reversal. Although relatively inclusive, Law 25.827 still does not take into account the reality that many immigrants—like Bolivian migrant women—face “tricky bureaucratic proceedings that demand time, money and knowhow” which creates several obstacles for their access to those rights.
guaranteed in the law. In her study on the impact of migration policies on Bolivian migrant women in Argentina, Cynthia Pizzaro shares the testimony of Elena—a Bolivian woman who faced many obstacles in regularizing her status—to demonstrate how Law 25.827 formally grants rights while ignoring obstacles to accessing them.

Elena was born in the Potosí District of Bolivia and began to travel back and forth between Bolivia and Argentina with her husband in 1996. After the passing of Law 25.827, she started the proceedings to regularize her migratory status without success because she was accused of holding a false Argentine ID. Elena first obtained this false ID a few years prior when officers from the Registro Nacional de las Personas (National Register of People) went to her workplace and offered all migrant laborers the possibility of quickly processing Argentine IDs. Elena decided to apply for both herself and her daughter who was never registered as born in Argentina. Elena decided not to have a hospital assisted birth because of her fear of deportation at the time, given her illegal status. Elena did not discover the IDs were false until she faced issues regularizing her status in 2004. Additionally, Elena was accused of giving a false testimony when claiming her daughter was born in Argentina because she was registered as a Bolivian citizen. As a result, neither could regularize their migratory status, despite fulfilling all the required proceedings. To make matters worse, Elena also struggled to communicate in Spanish throughout this process since Quechua was her first language.

The lack of IDs prevented Elena and her daughter from accessing the social services guaranteed to immigrants in Law 25.827. Elena’s story is just one example of the hurdles Bolivian migrant women must jump over in order to take advantage of the rights and services supposedly guaranteed to them in Law 25.827. Her story also shows how within families, the burden of running migratory proceedings often falls to the women, who are perceived as
responsible for guaranteeing rights and social services for their children in order to fulfill the
gendered image of “good mothers”. Although the return to the full validity of Law 25.827 with
the repeal of decree 70/2017 should be celebrated as a win for migrant rights, it is important to
remain critical of how a theoretically inclusive and humane immigration law can actually operate
in exclusionary ways. Argentine immigration policy that seriously considers the diversity of
lived-experiences of the most vulnerable immigrant groups— including Bolivian migrant
women—is still needed.

**Labor Laws**

Labor laws and their implementation also contribute to the invisibility of Bolivian
migrant women. Absorbed into a mass of workers in Argentina, regional migrants are often not
considered in the creation and implementation of labor laws. Although the governing
immigration law should be celebrated as one that opens up opportunities and grants many
fundamental rights to migrants, we must consider how Bolivian migrant women’s specific labor
experiences pose additional barriers and make them more invisible than other migrant groups.
The way their migration status may contradict any rights and benefits guaranteed in labor laws is
overlooked. As a result, Bolivian migrant women are left without any of the guarantees granted
in migration and labor laws. I will consider both general and industry-specific laws to
demonstrate how labor laws also contribute to the invisibility of Bolivian migrant women
workers in two distinct sectors: agricultural work and domestic work.

Issued in the early decades of the 20th century, Argentina’s first labor laws regulated
issues including weekly rest and work by women and minors (Law No.11317, in 1924);
industrial accidents and occupational diseases (Law No.9688, in 1915); and hours of work (Law
No. 11544, in 1929). However, over time, collective agreements and judicial labor decisions signaled the need for a consolidated labor law. This consolidation took the form of the Ley de Contrato de Trabajo (LTC), or Law No. 20.744, issued in 1974. Although meant to be a single document that regulated all work in Argentina, the LTC marginalizes a large number of workers by excluding agricultural and domestic work from the regulations and protections guaranteed in this law. Article 2 states that the “provisions of this law will not be applicable to” the following cases:

b) To the staff of private houses, without prejudice to the fact that the provisions of this law will be applicable in everything that is compatible and does not oppose the nature and modalities of the specific regime or when it is expressly provided for. (Subsection replaced by art. 72 subsection a) of Law No. 26.844. Validity: applicable to all labor relations reached by this regime at the time of its entry into force).

c) To agricultural workers, without prejudice that the provisions of this law will be of supplementary application in everything that is compatible and does not oppose the nature and modalities of the Agrarian Labor Regime. (Subsection replaced by art. 104 of Law No. 26,727 B.O. 12/28/2011) (Article replaced by art. 3 of Law No. 22,248 B.O. 7/18/1980).

As clearly stated above, the LTC does not address domestic workers, caregivers or agricultural workers. Therefore, the LTC does not regulate or protect the labor of half of Bolivian migrant women in Argentina. Instead, these two sectors are intended to be regulated by specific laws that must be analyzed individually. Going beyond the exclusion of Bolivian migrant women in the LTC, we find that even legislation that is meant to addresses the needs and experiences of a specific sector of labor excludes, invisibilizes and denies rights to migrant groups in Argentina, including Bolivian women.

Subsection b states that although excluded from the LTC, domestic work is to be governed by a “specific regime” as long as it does not contradict with any part of the LTC. As seen above, updated versions of the LTC that include recent amendments identify this “specific regime” as Law No. 26.844, passed in 2013. Until this law was passed, domestic work was regulated by
Decreto Ley N 326/56 (1956), an executive decree that granted domestic workers fewer rights than other workers. For 57 years, Decree 326/56 contributed to the invisibility of migrant domestic workers in Argentina due to many shortcomings and holes in this law. For example, in her study of the exclusion of migrant elderly caregivers in Argentina, Natacha Borgeaud-Garcíandía points out “the absence of a positive definition of domestic employment”.

Art. 1. This decree law shall govern, throughout the territory of the Nation, the labor relations that employees of both sexes provided within domestic life and that do not matter for the employer profit or economic benefit, not being applicable to those who provide their service for less than a month, work less than four hours a day or work less than four days a week for the same employer.

This absence can be seen in Article 1, which defines domestic work with a description of the location it takes place rather than the tasks, responsibilities or positions that are included in this work, leaving the understanding of what domestic work is up to the interpretation of employers-employees. This ambiguous definition of domestic work is then followed by a list of restrictions related to the duration of work and longevity of employment which also contributes to the marginalization of migrant domestic workers.

According to recent estimates, 13% of domestic workers in Argentina are foreign born. As mentioned, compared to the 69% of Paraguayans and 58% Peruvian migrant women employed as domestic workers in Argentina, Bolivian women are less active in this sector (making up only 10% of their employment). Nevertheless, it is the second largest type of female Bolivian immigrant employment after agriculture and deserves significant consideration when looking at the feminization of labor migration. Many migrant women who work in domestic work—especially when first arriving in Argentina—move from employer to employer over a short time span, even as short as a month. Considering that many migrant domestic workers work part time, for multiple employers, and for a few hours each day, it becomes clear that a large proportion of
migrant domestic worker end up excluded from this regulation that is meant to define the conditions of their employment.106 According to the Ministry of Labor, in 2004, this requirement excluded 52.8% of the total number of domestic workers.107 Migrant domestic workers may be excluded from this law not only as a result of the duration of their work but also the specific type of domestic work they are performing. For example, Article 2 of Decree 326/56 directly excludes workers who “are exclusively hired to care for the sick or drive vehicles”.108 As argued by Borgeaud-Garcianía, the language of Article 2 has allowed, in many cases, for migrant women who work as elderly caregivers to be considered caregivers for the sick, and therefore not acknowledged or protected in this law.109

On top of its vague definition of domestic work and direct exclusion of large portions of domestic workers, Decree 326/56 also imposes a hierarchy between employer and employee by obligating employees to treat their employers with loyalty and respect (although not the other way around) or risk being fired:

Art. 5. *It will be the duty of domestic employees to keep loyalty and respect to the employer, their family and partners, respect the people who come to the house, comply with the service instructions given to them, take care of things entrusted to their vigilance and diligence, observe disregard and reserve in the affairs of the house of those who have knowledge in the exercise of their functions, keep the inviolability of family secrecy and political, moral and religious matters and perform their functions with zeal and honesty, accounting for any impediment to perform them, being responsible for the damage caused by fraud, fault or negligence.*110

Art. 6. *In addition to the breach of the obligations indicated in the previous article, insults against the safety, honor, interests of the employer or his family, honest life of the employee, personal uncleanliness, or serious or repeated transgressions of the contracted benefits, empower the employer to dissolve the employment relationship without obligation to compensate for notice and seniority.*111

Decree 326/56 is a clear example of the way labor laws—even those specifically made to regulate a single sector—can contribute to the vulnerability and extreme invisibility of groups working within that sector. Globally, domestic work lacks regulation resulting in a high degree of
informality, instability, and overall invisibilization. In the case of Argentina, informality in domestic work is double the average level of labor informality, while domestic workers represent 22.7 per cent of the total number of unregistered workers in the country. This is why the replacement of Decree 326/56 in 2013 with the new Special Regime for Employment Contracts of Workers of Particular Houses (Law 26.844) has been celebrated as a law that updates and expands the labor rights of domestic workers.

Law 26.844 represents an important legislative advancement because, for one, this new law incorporates all domestic workers into the regulatory framework, no matter the specific job, the number of hours worked, or number of employers. Many of the exclusions based on type of domestic work in Decree 326/56 are fixed in Law 26.844, such as clarifying that caregivers for the elderly are considered domestic workers. This law also incorporates many rights granted to workers in other sectors that were not included for many domestic workers in decree that it replaced: maternity leave, paid holidays, family and personal leave, yearly bonus, and compensation in case of layoffs or firing. While recognizing the positive impact of this new regulatory framework, it is also important to critique how it still keeps domestic workers, and especially migrant domestic workers, at the bottom of the labor hierarchy in Argentina. For example, domestic workers are still denied access to social rights that are common for other sectors in Argentina, such as pregnancy and maternity allowance. Additionally, although many agree that Law 26.844 is at least on paper an improvement in terms of including rights, how this new law affects international migrant domestic workers such as Bolivian women is less clear.

We must also consider how these laws are enforced and implemented. The issue of monitoring whether employers are actually adhering to their obligations under Law 26.844 remains a significant challenge for Argentina. Enforcement of regulations is difficult because the
work takes place in the private sphere which, compared to public spaces like factories or even farms, is often seen as off limits to state regulation. Despite the fact that it is now compulsory to employ domestic workers on a formal basis, the lack of supervision or audits makes the implementation of the law up to the willingness of “good” employers to fulfill their obligations, meaning that informality in domestic work is still the norm, especially for women with irregular migration statuses. Hence, even under progressive migration laws like the Nueva Ley de Migraciones, migrant domestic workers suffer double discrimination in the labor sphere: explicit legal exclusion and a lack of proactive implementation even when progressive laws are in place.

When considering the simultaneous impact of labor laws and migration laws on Bolivian migrant women, there is still reason to be concerned about how the labor of migrant domestic workers is regulated. For example, the requirements needed to regularize one’s migration status are extremely difficult to fulfill for Bolivian women employed as domestic workers. One requirement is presenting a work contract “signed by the worker and employer before an agent of the National Directorate of Migration”. Additionally, migrants must also present “the property title, lease agreement, or other proof of place of work” to the National Directorate of Migration and “prove sufficient economic solvency of the employer to guarantee compliance with the contractual clauses that protect the foreign worker.” For migrant domestic workers—especially for live-in workers—gathering these documents requires complicated negotiation with employers and organization of time, which are obstacles migrants in other sectors might not face. The obstacles for regularization of one’s migration status continue to persist for many migrant domestic workers in Argentina. Despite the hopeful policy change, the needs and experiences of migrant domestic workers are still invisible in migration policy making.
restricted from even the most liberal migration policies we have seen in Argentina to date, showing the importance of considering labor and migration policies simultaneously.

Although many do work in Argentina as domestic workers or caregivers, the more common labor trajectory for Bolivian migrant women is in agriculture or horticulture, often as part of a family unit (cuadrilla or squad) in which their husband or male relative is the head who gets paid, and the women and children help with various tasks. Like domestic workers, agricultural workers in Argentina have traditionally suffered lack of legal protection and recognition. It wasn’t until 1944, under Decree 28.169, that the first regulation of rural work was implemented. Known as the “Estatuto del Peón Rural”, this decree originally did not include non-permanent workers, which excluded internal migrants and many Bolivian families who migrated back and forth within the regional migratory circuit of northwest Argentina to work during harvesting seasons. Again, this is another situation when migration experiences hindered Bolivian migrant’s ability to formalize their work and receive protections. This exclusion of non-permanent workers who were essential to harvesting season of many crops was resolved when the “Estatuto del Peón Rural” was repealed and replaced the new Régimen Nacional del Trabajo Agrario (RNTA), or National Agrarian Labor Regime, (Law 22.248) in 1980. This law not only tried to include many of those excluded in the previous law, but it also attempted to put urban workers on an equal playing field with urban workers.

The next significant change in agricultural labor law that impacted Bolivian migrant workers was Ley 26727 de Régimen de Trabajo Agrario or Agrarian Labor Regime, passed in 2011. Although, as expected, this new law was more progressive in providing many rights to agricultural workers that were excluded in previous laws, it still had its flaws that especially affected migrant women. According to Law 26767, agricultural activities that had their own
specific laws prior to the passing National Agrarian Labor Regime in 1980, could continue under those laws.\textsuperscript{123} For example, in the case of viniculture in Mendoza, employers of various companies claim the existence of collective agreements from the 1970s that exempt them from complying with the new rules set by Law 26727 in 2011 that are clearly much more favorable towards the rights of workers. In this case, the many Bolivian men and women who work for viniculture companies that produce wine are not protected. However, it is important to keep in mind that this legal hole in Law 26767 affects different communities of Bolivian migrants differently according to their specific agricultural labor trajectory and their place in agricultural production. This continuation of outdated labor policies is more of an issue in regions like Mendoza or the Alto Valle of the Río Negro where Bolivians work for larger farms and industries.\textsuperscript{124} Meanwhile, the situation is different for Bolivian families working in horticultural belts—like the Buenos Aires Horticultural Area—who experience more of a transformation over time or the so-called “Bolivian ladder”.\textsuperscript{125}

In her study comparing the labor experiences of men and women employed in agricultural work in Mendoza, María Florencia Linardelli finds other holes in this law that allow Bolivian migrant agricultural workers to be excluded from protections and made invisible. Law 2627 identifies three forms of agricultural employment: temporary worker, discontinuous permanent worker and permanent worker, with each category progressively correlated to more labor rights. From speaking with Bolivian migrant workers, Linardelli finds that it is common practice for employers—of both those who work on the farms and in the processing factories for the produce—to hire them as temporary workers rather than discontinuous permanent workers, even when they work every year for the same employer.\textsuperscript{126} This results in less rights and social protections granted to the worker that they would receive if they were registered as a discontinuous permanent worker.
This especially impacts Bolivian women because many of the rights denied to temporary workers are related to maternity leave and health.

As seen in this brief analysis of agricultural labor laws, with respect to protection and regulation, agricultural work in Argentina stands out for its lack of social security coverage and low levels of registration, which is even worse for women. In her study, Linardelli also finds that women experience higher levels of informality and are more likely to be paid below legal minimum wages in agriculture compared to men. Although laws—both labor and migration—have been main factors that have created additional barriers for Bolivian migrant women, they are insufficient in explaining the invisibility of Bolivian migrant women. Addressing the way Bolivian migrant women are impacted by laws is important; however, behind these seemingly straightforward laws are complicated processes of social and historical construction. Laws reflect socially shared perceptions of Bolivian migrant women and can only change as society transforms. It is important to understand these shared social perceptions held about Bolivian migrant women that are the backbone to the migration and labor laws analyzed above.

**Stereotypes and Racism**

The final, but most deeply engrained, macro-level factor that contributes to the invisibility of Bolivian migrant women is how they are perceived in Argentine society. The exclusionary and flawed laws analyzed above only exist because they are justified by deeply embedded perceptions of immigrants, specifically Latin American immigrants. No matter the legislative progress made to ensure immigrants are guaranteed their rights—as long as discriminatory views are held, a future in which Bolivian migrant women are fully protected, visible and respected as equals in Argentine society is unlikely. In this section, I investigate how
two widely held—and contradictory—social perceptions of Bolivian migrant women contribute to their invisibility. First, I look at anti-immigrant sentiments, recently encouraged by the exclusionary laws and state discourse of the Marci administration and governments globally, that justify discrimination towards Bolivian migrant women living in Argentina in their daily life. Secondly, I look at the unquestioned and naturalized myths of gender and ethnicity that normalize the marginalized position of Bolivian women’s labor experiences, resulting in the challenges they face in both domestic work and agricultural to be ignored.

Coinciding with other immigrant receiving nations around the world, xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes and practices have risen in visibility in Argentina, especially amid economic crises. As seen in the section on migration laws, while Argentina made efforts to attract European immigrants, immigration from neighboring and nearby countries was either ignored or viewed as invasive, undesirable and burdensome. Even today, many are proud to say they are descendants of Italian or Spanish immigrants that have shaped Argentina into what it is today. However, this celebration of immigration does not extend to Latin American immigrants who are seen as originating from poor countries and bringing undesirable cultural and ethno-racial elements to Argentina. Therefore, when speaking of the xenophobia that Bolivian migrant women face, it is more appropriate to say that these discriminatory attitudes and practices originate not solely from xenophobia but also from deeply held prejudices and nationalism rooted in racism.129

Although this exclusion of Bolivian migrants in Argentina’s proud immigration narrative is not new, anti-immigrant sentiments become directly exclusionary during periods of economic downturn. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the global economy, Argentina had become accustomed to cycles of bankruptcy and economic crises and recovery. Although
Argentina’s economic woes are the result of many complicated political economic factors that date back to the early 1900s, in recent decades, immigrants from neighboring countries have been often made into scapegoats, blamed for taking jobs away from Argentine nationals and free-riding off government funded social services. This scapegoating is only exacerbating when public officials, the media and unions directly blame immigrants for increasing crime and unemployment rates—contributing to growing attitudes and acts of discrimination against Bolivian migrant women as experienced by Marcelina Meneses.

In fact, according to a report by the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), 41% of the population believes that immigrants take jobs away while 65% of immigrant’s nation-wide report experiencing discrimination. President Mauricio Macri’s Decree 70/2017 is a clear example of this relationship between anti-immigrant sentiment written into law, expressed in state discourse and acted upon in society. Justified by the belief that immigrants from neighboring countries bring crime to Argentina, this decree led to increasing discrimination against Bolivian migrant women and immigrants from neighboring countries in general. However, Decree 70/2017 is not the first instance of criminalization of immigrants in Argentina. In the late 1990s, President Carlos Menem’s administration cracked down on immigration by associating immigrants with street crime. In 2014, President Kirchner also threatened to expel immigrants who commitment crimes even after regularizing the status of many immigrants. When society becomes convinced that immigrants—specifically non-white immigrants—are criminals that threaten their safety, attacks on them become more justified. When the leader of a nation is confirming to their people that immigrants are bringing crime to their country, citizens feel more motivated to express their racism and xenophobia that they may have chosen to bottle up during administrations prior. When Macri implemented Decree
70/2017, opinion polls in Argentina showed widespread support for limiting immigration, many calling for even tighter restrictions. For example, Claudio Suárez, a 65-year-old man working at a bakery in Buenos Aires stated that the decree was “fantastic” and expressed the following anti-immigrant sentiment in an interview with *New York Times* reporters: “Nobody wants scum to come in from other countries...many foreigners come here because health services and education are free. The law should be even stronger.” Clearly, Decree 70/2017 represents widespread anti-immigrant sentiment.

What is most concerning is when these discrimination goes beyond attitudes into harmful attacks against Bolivian migrants. In her study on anti-Bolivian discrimination in Buenos Aires, Natalia Gavazzo argues that discrimination—ranging from verbal to violent and physical attacks—often occur in public spaces. This could be physical attacks on public transport as seen in the case of Marcelina Meneses, xenophobic chants at soccer games, denying Bolivians entrance at clubs due to their indigenous phenotype and clothing, or tension between Argentines and Bolivians at markets and stores. One example of this is a recent attack on a Bolivian migrant woman working at a vegetable stand in the city of Mar del Plata. On November 25th, 2020, the Bolivian newspaper, *Correo del Sur* reported that Gabriela Lizett Balanza Garzón—a young women from Tarija, Bolivia—was physically and verbally attacked by a *marplatense* couple who returned to her shop demanding their 300 pesos back after not being satisfied with the vegetables they purchased earlier that day. Although the entire incident was recorded on security cameras, the man accused Gabriela of hitting his wife when she approached the register to forcefully take her money back, leading him to hit Gabriela numerous times. Gabriela states that what impacted her the most from this traumatizing incident was not the physical attacks, but the xenophobic and racist remarks made by the couple regarding her nationality and status as a
migrant: “She and he told me that I am ‘a shitty Bolivian’ and to ‘go back to my country’ and that is what hurt me the most.”\textsuperscript{134} Considering the language and actions of the couple, this was clearly a hate crime based in xenophobia and racism recently set free by the past administration’s outspoken anti-immigrant sentiment, especially against Bolivian women. As stated by Jesús Oriona, a 45-year-old Bolivian man who moved to Argentina as a teenager, also interviewed by the New York Times, the Macri administration’s policies and rhetoric throws “the blame at immigrants” and makes them targets for xenophobic attacks.\textsuperscript{135}

However, it is also important to recognize how Bolivian migrant women are most vulnerable to these attacks. In an interview with the Comisión Argentina para Refugiados y Migrantes celebrating International Women’s Day in 2018, Zulema Montero—founder of migrant organization Yanapacuna—states that migrant women “carry the heaviest load” of this discrimination. She explains this is because of the spaces that migrant women occupy in society: “Because women are the ones who go to public institutions, go to hospitals with their children, accompany children to school. So, in these instances, they are discriminated against, they are mistreated.”\textsuperscript{136} Zulema finds that because migrant women are responsible for ensuring their family’s care and access to social services, they are in more often contact with official institutions, the health system and the education system. Paradoxically, this points to the visibility of Bolivian migrant women beyond their community. But rather than improve their conditions, their heightened visibility in public spaces—usually due to their indigenous phenotype and observable cultural differences—makes Bolivian migrant women vulnerable and potential targets of discrimination. Because many services—education, healthcare— are free to everyone residing in Argentina, those who are convinced that immigrants are criminals find
further justification to discriminate when they perceive immigrants “taking advantage” or stealing publicly funded services at places like hospitals or schools.

**Labor Myths and Market Segmentation**

Looking at the treatment of Bolivian migrant women in the workplace, we find a similar situation of overlapping discriminations. Rather than being the result of outwardly exclusionary anti-immigrant attitudes, Bolivian migrant women’s experiences of invisibility in the workplace are based upon myths of ethnicity and gender. When using the term “myths” I am referring to stereotypes that have been so normalized and accepted for so long —often even by migrant women themselves—that they are used to justify precarious, unstable and even exploitative labor conditions. In labor trajectories that encompass both perceived feminine (domestic and care work) and masculine (agriculture) spaces, Bolivian migrant women are deemed as most apt for certain forms of employment or specific tasks. This belief is not based on factors such as training, credentials or experience but rather on perceptions of skills inherent to certain gender or ethnic identities. In Argentina, Bolivian migrant women are perceived to be most apt for certain types of work because of myths of gender and ethnicity that assign them traits such as submissiveness, discipline, patience, a self-sacrificing nature, tactile abilities, etc.\(^ {137}\) Because it is assumed that Bolivian migrant women naturally have these abilities, they are designated to tasks and positions that require these abilities. However, because their participation in these positions is considered natural, it becomes unnecessary to regulate or give attention to them. Myths contribute to the invisibility of Bolivian migrant women by naturalizing their incorporation into labor markets segmented by gender and ethnicity.
Myths of gender and ethnicity work to justify the exploitation of Latin American migrant women’s labor in both domestic work and agricultural work. In the case of domestic work, many have found that because domestic and care work is based in the reproductive sphere that is traditionally seen as the natural space of women and the work considered something other than legitimate employment. For example, in her book *Doméstica*, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo finds that in the case of the U.S, many migrant domestic workers consider their paid domestic work to be only a “hobby”. Those who have researched the case of migrant domestic workers in Argentina have also found that the tasks that migrant domestic workers and caregivers are responsible for are seen as the “natural work” of women and not “real work”, whether paid work for an employer or domestic work in their own home. This perception of domestic and care work as illegitimate employment contributes to the invisibility of Latin American migrant women—specifically those from Paraguay, Peru and Bolivia. Additionally, domestic service is also segregated by ethno-racial factors because women of certain backgrounds (namely indigenous) are often seen as “naturally” more maternal, helpful or orderly, and therefore most apt for certain domestic and care jobs. Because domestic work is “natural” it is overlooked in both laws and society. If domestic work is not perceived as real work, the possibility of exploitation and discrimination in the workplace is not considered an issue.

Those working in agriculture also experience invisibility due to myths of gender and ethnicity that divide labor. In general, Bolivian migrants and their descendants have gained a reputation in Argentina for being “good workers” and the most apt to occupy the most precarious labor niches in the country, including agriculture. In the Argentine context, Bolivians are seen as “submissive” and “docile”, not only by employers but by Bolivian migrants themselves. Pulled from interviews in María José Magliano’s study on Bolivian migrant women in Córdoba,
the following quotes from Bolivian migrants demonstrate how deeply embedded this myth of the Bolivian worker is in Argentina society and how Bolivians have also internalized it:

“We do not take away anyone’s jobs, we take the jobs that Argentines don’t want, like cutting bricks, construction jobs, on the farms, we have a work practice, a culture of work.” (Testimony from Enrique, Bolivian migrant, 52 years).141

“Men and women work on these farms, even kids, whole families live here, generally in bad conditions and everyone works. They mostly hire Bolivians because they are more docile and hardworking (...) Once an Argentine worked on the farms and sued the farm for an accident on the job, this doesn’t happen with Bolivians (Testimony from Omar, Bolivian migrant who has lived in Córdoba since 1986)142

These testimonies demonstrate the belief that Bolivians are naturally hardworking and can withstand exploitation. Because they are assumed to not challenge the precarious nature of their job, as an Argentine would, they are more attractive employees to companies that seek to reduce cost margins. This reflects the naturalization of labor market segmentation on the basis of ethnicity and nationality. However, the assignment of agricultural tasks to Bolivian migrants is also based on myths of gender. Bolivian migrant women who work in agriculture are often assigned to the worst paid positions with the least possibility of advancement. This segmentation is entirely justified by the idea that certain positions require “feminine skills”, or qualities assumed natural to Bolivian women: submissiveness, hardworking nature, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, patience, delicacy, care.143 Meanwhile, Bolivian men are assigned to tasks that require physical strength and use of machinery. Unlike the feminized agricultural jobs, these positions can provide migrant men a set of skills that facilitate their promotion into better paid and more permanent positions.144 In an interview with a Bolivian man employed in vitiviniculture in Mendoza, Elena Mingo finds that the exclusion of women from certain positions is based on perceived inabilities of women and a sense of manliness than comes with certain tasks:

“I would see it as a more macho part. I don't see the reasoning for not putting women there. I would put them there. But the Clarkistas yes, they are one hundred percent men (...) In
the case of the clarckista, he is a permanent employee because they come with years of experience, it is very rare that a clarckista is hired for [just] the season.”

Women are excluded from this task simply due to the myth that they are incapable of operating heavy machinery, which is perceived as a masculine job. At the same time, it is important to note that this observation points to the fact that masculinized positions like operating a forklift also respond to better payment and access to more permanent positions. As seen in the previous section discussing labor laws, under the National Agrarian Labor Regime (Law 26767) being employed as a permanent worker rather than a temporary worker means more labor rights. While men are assigned to the positions that have more opportunity, feminized tasks are generally monotonous and require a “patient disposition” and “slow and precise movements”.146 Because of the belief that women naturally have these qualities—and lack others—they are assigned to positions such as fruit selection and packaging. Mingo finds that in the vitiviniculture agricultural chain, women are assigned to three main positions that reflect perceptions of women’s natural capabilities: seleccionadoras (those who select the fruit), punteras (those who oversee the work of fruit sorters) and romaneadoras (those who count and organize boxes before shipment). In an interview with administrative staff of one of the agroindustry companies she researched, Mingo discovers that these tasks are feminized because they are seen as requiring capabilities natural to women, as observed by one of the workers: “The romaneadoras, there you have a task that is purely and exclusively for women, because they are more meticulous, and can better carry it out.”147 The same employee also commented on this issue of career advancement for women assigned to feminized tasks:

“The seleccionadoras earn less because it is not a job in which the person can grow. A general worker can start with stowage, but he is perfect for the mechanical part, for the forklift, perhaps he can grow. In the selection task, you cannot grow, it is a monotonous task. So, there is no way to grow”148
As seen in this description, because this work is considered “monotonous”, seleccionadoras do not have the possibility to have their salary increased or move up to a better position, no matter how important their work is to the overall processing and packaging of grape. The issue here is that although both Bolivian men and women experience the naturalization of their labor due to their ethnicity and nationality, Bolivian women are further segmented into the least stable positions because of their gender.

It is also important to note that in the case of agriculture, many migrant families work as units, in which decisions are made mainly by the male head of household although other members of the family may also be working full time. This means that any type of labor contract is made between men, despite the fact that women within the family are working full-time as well.149 This is related to the idea that women do not exist in the productive spheres and when they are working, they are simply “helping” their male relatives/partners. In this way, the many Bolivian women who work within family units are trapped in masculine hierarchies and more vulnerable to exploitation. In the workplace, not only are they in a subordinate position to their employers but to the men within their family until.

Much of this invisibilization of Bolivian migrant women in their workspace is due to the fact that they play a role in both reproductive and productive spheres. The productive work of migrant women is considered marginal and delegitimized as real work (no matter how significant the income it generates may be to a family’s well-being) at the same time that their reproductive work in their homes is also overlooked. This doble presencia, as described by Magliano, has led scholars like Linardelli to warn of the health risks of the “overexploitation” of migrant women who overexert themselves in both productive and reproductive work (“in the field, the factory and the home”) as a result of labor segmentation that is justified largely by traditional gender
This overexploitation has both mental and physical health impacts on migrant women that migrant men usually do not face. The view of agricultural work as men’s productive work can contribute to the invisibility of Bolivian women in agriculture and deny attention from their specific needs and challenges.

The overall naturalization of Bolivian migrant women’s labor in both domestic work and inferior agricultural positions is based upon myths of gender and ethnicity that allow their labor experiences that are often exploitative to be seen as normal, if acknowledged at all. However, the invisibility goes beyond these overarching structures of discrimination that influence laws and society as a whole. There are also many micro-level factors, individual interactions, that also contribute to Bolivian migrant women’s overall invisibility.

CHAPTER 3: MICROLEVEL INVISIBILIZATION FACTORS

The Nature of Agricultural and Domestic Work

The first set of micro-level factors that contribute to Bolivian migrant women’s invisibilization is the unique character of their employment, both in the domestic work and agricultural work. As demonstrated in the way most migrant workers were both left out of the Ley de Contrato de Trabajo because of their irregular and seasonal employment, both domestic work and agricultural work have traditionally been differentiated from other forms of work in Argentina. The way this differentiation invisibilized Bolivian migrant women goes beyond the law and into Bolivian migrant women’s day-to-day experiences and interactions on the job. We can distinguish three ways in which both domestic work and agricultural work are unique forms of employment for Bolivian migrant women and contribute to their invisibility.

In both domestic work and agricultural work, Bolivian migrant women are part of unequal relationships. For those working in agriculture, the recruitment and contracting of
workers is usually the mediated by *cuadrilleros* (foremen) who act as intermediaries between employees and employers. Generally, the *cuadrilleros* are also migrants who may have even known the migrants through neighborhood ties in Bolivia. The use of *cuadrilleros* as intermediaries for agroindustry companies not only makes the actual employer unknown to the workers, but it also limits the possibilities of legal claims against the company due to irregular hiring practices. A Bolivian migrant woman interviewed in Linardelli’s study points out how *cuadrilleros* avoid addressing complaints from employees:

“Look, now it is no longer with the employers but rather *cuadrilleros*. A single person is in charge of talking to the boss, I don’t know what type of relationship they have, we ask for work from the *cuadrillero*. The *cuadrillero* does not pay us or pay for our retirement, he doesn’t pay us anything. I want to ask if they are even paying me. I don’t know...I am embarrassed...what do I know? We are foreigners and...How can I tell him?” (Alba, 52 years old).

Not only are Bolivian migrant women unable to access their full rights as agricultural workers due to this dynamic with *cuadrilleros*, but in many studies they cite experiencing sexism from men on the job whether it be from other workers or the *cuadrilleros*. This can take the form of harassment, unequal pay, sexual assault and even practices of reproductive control in the form of sterility tests or threat of layoffs due to pregnancy.

Unlike the distant employee-employer relationship in agricultural work, in domestic work migrant women experience a rather personalistic employee-employer relationship as a result of being hired by a household rather than a company or organization. However, this close proximity to employers also worsens migrant women’s condition of invisibility. Oftentimes domestic workers—especially live-in workers—are even considered to be “part of the family”. If domestic workers are considered part of the family, the State may not be as inclined to intervene as it would in other employment relationships. Even when comprehensive regulatory frameworks exist—like Law 26844—employees and employers are often both unaware due to domestic work
being seen as nontraditional labor. This employee-employer relationship is also unique in that it is usually between two women: the migrant worker and la patrona—the female head of household. Although this can allow for solidarity along gender lines, employers often erase this common denominator and exercise their class power. These women hire, recommend, pay and fire migrant domestic workers while “overseeing their performance and imposing labor and family regimes on them”. In fact, the ability for upper-middle class women to enter into wage-employment and professional careers is often only possible on the backs of cheap domestic workers to take over the domestic responsibilities. Another way la patrona exercises her class power is by prohibiting domestic workers from renegotiating the terms of their employment but allowing herself to change the agreement when beneficial, whether that be by not paying on time or suddenly dismissing the employee without prior notice. These situations occur because patrona–employee agreements occur outside a regulatory framework. Yet, migrant domestic worker’s relationships on the job go beyond employers. Caregivers work with the children and/or the elderly who are also invisible social actors and people absent from the active and productive spheres of Argentine society. Although caregivers’ labor is visible to the public when they take a child to the park or accompany an elderly person walking, they spend most of their time caring for others indoors. Because these migrant women care for other invisible social sectors, their labor goes unnoticed.

The specific tasks that makeup the work that Bolivian migrant women engage in also contribute to their invisibility. As discussed in detail in the previous section on labor market segmentation, there is a separation of tasks in agriculture with those that are considered masculine—assigned to men—and feminine—that are assigned to women. The more technical and organizational tasks assigned to men are viewed as most important while the work of women
(especially those working as part of a family unit) is considered to just be additional “help”.

However, in case of horticultural work, women often times escape this invisibility when assigned the task of selling horticultural produce at local ferias or street markets. In multiple studies, Bolivian migrant women from indigenous-rural origins have expressed preference for selling produce at ferias due to a variety of reasons including having a prior experience in vending in Bolivia, to have more time for their children, and a feeling of being a part of a larger community of (mainly) Bolivian women vendors. Although Bolivian women are much more visible and gain a certain degree of autonomy compared to other agricultural work when assigned the task of selling produce at ferias, some argue that they are entirely absent from the discussion, organization and decision-making process connected to these events that generally involves meetings between men (horticulture producers and municipal coordinators).

The tasks of domestic work also contribute to the invisibility of migrant women who work in this sector. Although there are specific tasks that are decided upon between the employer and employee—cleaning dishes, washing and ironing clothing, cooking, feeding children, etc.—there are many responsibilities expected of domestic workers that are ill-defined. For example, care-work involves not only caring for the physical health and safety of a person but also the emotional well-being. This means caregiving may requires “attachment, affiliation, intimate knowledge, patience and even favoritism”.

Vague responsibilities such as “care” and “look-after” that are used to describe domestic work result in an endless list of job responsibilities. Care workers must be vigilant at all times—especially if they are live-in workers—and anticipate any possible issues with the person they are responsible for. Anticipation is arduous but invisible. This “excess of tasks invisibilizes the work” and the ill-defined responsibilities make it difficult for those who are not domestic workers to understand the labor, skills and attention required.
Because of these tasks, migrant women in domestic work often face both physical and emotional exhaustion, especially those who are transferring the emotional care they would provide to their own children to the children in the household in which they work. Since most work is defined by physical outputs and not demonstrations of affection or care, the labor performed by migrant domestic workers isn’t considered legitimate work. A final way the nature of the tasks contribute to the invisibilization of migrant domestic workers is the fact that some of the responsibilities—such as the intimate hygiene of elderly folk—are social taboos that are not to be discussed. This silencing of the reality of domestic work further invisibilizes migrant domestic workers.

The last characteristic of both domestic work and agricultural work that further invisibilized Bolivian migrant women is the space in which they take place. Because it is part of the productive sphere, the space of agricultural work is interpreted as a masculine space where men can learn skills and potentially move up in their career. As a woman working in this space, Bolivian migrant women are seen as marginal, temporary and present only out of necessity. Because the space is gendered in this way, migrant women are overlooked as real workers. Because they are not even seen as full employees the way men are, Bolivian migrant women working in agriculture are made invisible.

Although it also contributes to the invisibility of migrant women, the space of domestic work is quite different from that of agricultural work. It exists in a complicated space-floating between the public and private spheres but belonging to neither. The living space of the employer and the workspace of the employee blend together and compete—resulting in a battle in which the domestic worker who is trying to gain legitimacy as a worker almost always loses. As stated earlier, this space is also off limits to external intervention and the States monitoring, creating a major barrier to working towards the formalization and professionalization of this
sector.\textsuperscript{165} As a result of the private nature of the space of domestic work along with the personalized relationships and ambiguous and emotion-based job tasks, migrant domestic workers in Argentina face additional barriers to visibilization that migrants in other labor sectors—such as agriculture or bricklaying—do not. However, migrant domestic workers are not only marginalized in by Argentine society, but they are also excluded and invisibilized by their families and communities at home as a result of a migration dynamics straining traditional gender roles.

**Strained Relationships with Family and Home Community**

Because Bolivian migrant women in agricultural work in family units, work and family life are brought into close proximity and strains women’s autonomy in both work and home life. Often, working in family units means that women never directly receive renumeration because pay is given to the man of the family, as seen in this interview quote from Linardelli’s study:

“When I arrived [in Mendoza] I worked in garlic with my father and my brothers, the whole family together. But only he got paid, I don’t even know how much he got, he had everything, and he didn’t give it to me. I didn’t see the money. When I started working on my own, he took the money I had to buy something for my daughter.” (Sandra, 29 years old).\textsuperscript{166}

In addition to being denied direct pay for their labor, a Bolivian migrant woman’s autonomy is further strained when considering the fact that in most cases she experiences double work: productive in agriculture and reproductive at home. This double workload that is often passed down from mother to daughter can be extremely limited to one’s liberty and overall health, yet still occurs for many women because their responsibilities in the reproductive sphere are expected of them while their participation in the productive sphere alongside their husbands is also needed for the economic well-being for the economic well-being of their families. This
situation is captured in a 2019 interview by Soraya Ataide with a Bolivian migrant from Tarija who works in horticulture in Salta:

“One has to go back and keep doing work in the house. Oh! How burdensome it was before! A nightmare! Now for example, I have my older girls, one goes to school in the morning and the other goes to the afternoon. She, the one who stays in the morning and cooks, is a big help.” (Juana)¹⁶⁷

Often, women feel helpless in situations like this. Since their husband is the one that receives the payment for both of their labor, she is left with nothing and therefore has little liberty to change her situation and separate from her husband. In this way, the gender roles and hierarchies that exist between Bolivian migrant couples and perpetuated by many male partners is transferred into the workplace—straining women’s autonomy.

In the case of domestic workers, relationships with families and communities are more varied. Because many Bolivian women who migrate with their families work in agriculture, many of those who work in domestic work are younger and tend to migrate alone, especially if they are live-in workers. As a result of their absence within their families and communities, women who migrant to Argentina autonomously also experience the difficulty of becoming invisible members of their home community. Despite their contribution to the financial well-being of their families and communities through remittances, migrant women experience stigmatization, rejection and overall invisibilization from their place of origin, whether it be virtually or upon their return. Their physical absence from home can be seen as an inability for that woman to fulfill her reproductive labor duties.

A central topic in the literature that helps explain this invisibilization is “global care chains.”¹⁶⁸ The idea of global care chains is that women from poor countries migrate into the households of upper- and middle-class families from wealthier countries to care for their children, while leaving their own behind, usually in the care of another female relative. These
care chains are characterized by both care drain as women migrate away from their families and care gain on the part of families in receiving countries who are receiving an extremely flexible and low-cost group of employees. However, this threat of being invisible mothers can be combatted through acts of “transnational motherhood”.169 Women who have migrated to Argentina without their children still play key caregiving roles by spending time comforting their children over the phone while also giving detailed instructions to the female relatives that may be taking care of their children in person.170 In this way, migrant women try to meet their motherly duties imposed by gendered roles and limited by the migratory projects. However, despite these efforts, it is common for those at home to judge migrant women as bad mothers and for children to feel resentment for their mother’s absence.

In addition to strained familial relationships as a result of unfulfilled gender roles, Bolivian migrant women can also face exclusion and questioning of their bolivianidad from their home country after living in Argentina for some time. In an interview with Maria Galindo, radio host for Radio Deseo 103.3 in Bolivia, Delia Colque, a Bolivian woman who returned from Argentina after 15 years describes her feelings of guilt and rejection from her community after not being present in Bolivia during the past few years of political changes:

“I am a migrant and will continue to be a migrant because in Bolivia I feel as if I have not left [Argentina] (...) When we migrate, we not only leave our land, the place where we were born, but we also leave our family and friends and an entire social sphere(...)when we go to the other side we lose all of this...we end up more vulnerable, they always make us feel like we are strangers, that we aren’t Argentine but strangers that do not have anything, that do not have a right to claim (...) And then we return, and the same thing happens, no? Every time we come back; we are told “you don’t know what is happening here because you are no longer from here...how could you know what is going on if you aren’t living through what we have been living through [in Bolivia]. Obviously, it hurts us too, obviously we try to figure out some way to give our opinion about what is happening (...) but there has been an enormous amount of aggressiveness and horrible messages, not only from friends but also family members.” Delia Colque, Bolivian migrant woman and representative for Ni Una Migrante Menos Argentina 2/3/2020)171
This rejection of a Bolivian migrant’s loyalty to Bolivia and knowledge of the developments in their home country (in the case of Delia, the political upheavals after the 2019 presidential elections) is another way Bolivian migrant become invisible and illegitimate actors within their families and origin communities. Delia’s feeling of a sense of otherness in both Argentina and Bolivia speak to a larger issue of excluding those who do not fit into an imagined conception of a citizen. As a result of migrating, Delia is rejected in both Argentina and Bolivia. Overall, the perception of Bolivian migrant women as “bad” mothers and absent members of their origin communities prevents them from any sense of acceptance, belonging and visibility, anywhere. No matter if they work in domestic work, agricultural work or another sector, the micro-level interactions that Bolivian migrant women have with people in their work life and their personal life are key factors that contribute to their overall invisibility.

To conclude, a variety of actors contribute to the invisibilization of Bolivian migrant women in Argentina: the State, employers, co-workers, family members, their home communities and even migrant women themselves when they internalize harmful stereotypes. Although we can observe significant changes in labor and migration laws overtime, this change has been slow and still insufficient. As a result of their intersectional identities, migrant women face oppression at almost every step of their migration experience. When considering the ways in which they are oppressed, and their experiences are made invisible, Bolivian migrant women workers are seen as tragic. Although the obstacles, oppressions and overall invisibilization that they face is undeniable and extremely unsettling, I argue that it is equally important to recognize the ways in which migrant women resist these circumstances, a point that has received much less scholarly attention. Although their fate is influenced by structural forces and individuals who have power over them, Bolivian migrant women are also individuals with agency. Migrant
women can experience these tragic realities and simultaneously desire—and actively push for—improvements, no matter how small. Much of the oppression and invisibilization that migrant domestic workers face is at least partially a result in them continuously being represented as docile, vulnerable and subjugated women that can easily be exploited. This makes it imperative to show how migrant women resist.

CHAPTER 4: RESISTENCE AND EMPOWERMENT

The invisibility, vulnerability and exclusion of Bolivian migrant women in Argentina is undeniable. Bolivian migrant women experience oppression stemming from a variety of sources and actors, often resulting from their intersectional identities as women, migrants, and workers of indigenous descent. Whether it be exclusionary legislation, normalized labor exploitation or everyday forms of xenophobic and sexist violence, the hardships Bolivian migrant women face in Argentina have been well observed. Studies that document and denounce the specific laws, institutions, individuals and societal mindsets that invisibilize Bolivian migrant women are central to the visibilization of their experiences and their acknowledgement in the larger Argentine society. However, analysis of Bolivian migrant women’s experiences rarely goes beyond tales of suffering, leaving readers with an image of Bolivian migrant women as purely victims. Due to macro-structures of oppression and the micro-level, power-imbalanced interactions they have on a daily basis, Bolivian migrant women are depicted as a vulnerable group. Although it could be argued that being seen as a victimized population is preferable to being entirely ignored, this image of Bolivian migrant women as helpless and vulnerable also builds upon the myths that normalize their exploitation and discrimination.

Through data collected primarily from the Facebook pages of four prominent migrant feminist organization based in Argentina, in this section I analyze Bolivian migrant women’s
collective action in Argentina with two central goals in mind. The first goal is to challenge simplistic representations of Bolivian migrant women as victims by showing how they are also actors capable of resisting their invisibility and even transforming their circumstances. The second goal relates back to the scholarly disagreement and overall ambivalence about whether or not migration can result in a chain reaction that leads to greater gender equality. Many studies of Bolivian migrant women seek to answer the question “how does migration shape gender?” but limit their scope to just the analysis of their invisibility and their experiences of suffering. This leads to conceptualization of migration (and all the experiences wrapped up within it) as a difficult process that happens to a passive actor, rather than a process that is, at least partially, molded by a migrant with the agency. By ignoring the way migrant women resist external factors—laws, xenophobia, violence, stereotypes—that shape their difficult and often traumatic migration experiences, it is impossible to fully understand if and how migration impacts gender. After briefly discussing Bolivian migrant women’s use of quotidian forms of resistance, I will analyze the collective action of four prominent migrant organizations in Buenos Aires to argue that Bolivian migrant women directly and collectively resist invisibility. I will describe how their resistance is actualized by applying the three fundamental collective action processes identified in social movement literature: political opportunity, mobilization resources, and framing structures. By analyzing how Bolivian migrant women resist exclusive labor and immigration laws, unjust conditions of work and the omnipresent myths of gender and ethnicity, the following section demonstrates that, although an experience of migration from Bolivia to Argentina (and back) does not directly facilitate long-term or profound gender changes, a migration experience characterized by resistance leads Bolivian migrant women to feel empowered. I find that the
feeling of gender empowerment co-exists with and is even dependent upon Bolivian migrant women’s participation in migrant organizations and resistance as migrants.

**Everyday Forms of Migrant Women Resistance**

When thinking about resistance, we often first think of a street filled by social movements activists passionately and loudly chanting, carrying signs and even clashing with police officers. However, it is important to recognize that organized and direct forms of resistance are rare, especially for Bolivian migrant women and migrants in general. In addition to general collective action problems faced by many different groups in a variety of contexts, Bolivian migrant women are faced with their own set of barriers. As a group, Bolivian migrant women struggle to organize for a number of reasons: isolation and marginalization in both domestic and agricultural workplaces, lack of time due to responsibilities in both productive and reproductive spheres, lack of information about their rights, lack of time and fear of legal repercussions for those with undocumented status, which has only been heightened since the strict and criminalizing migration policies of the Macri administration. This does not mean that Bolivian migrant women are left helpless and simply suffer through the injustice they face as migrants and as workers. In fact, these migrant women employ many forms of what James Scott calls “everyday forms of peasant resistance.”

In his book, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Scott argues that “the peasantry” still resists injustice in individual and secretive ways even when not publicly protesting. Over-time, these everyday forms of resistance can be substantial and even effective at improving the situations of the oppressed. Everyday forms of resistance constitute a “prosaic but constant struggle” between marginalized groups and the power that doesn’t require dramatic
confrontation, are often forms of “individual self-help” and may not even require coordination between individuals. Scott’s concept of everyday forms of peasant resistance is useful when trying to understand how Bolivian migrant women are resisting the majority of the time. In the case of Bolivian migrant women, everyday forms of resistance can best be understood as quotidian resistance to micro-level factors of invisibility. As individuals facing immense collective action barriers, Bolivian migrant women rarely have the chance to collectively and publicly resist macro-level factors of exclusion based on migration laws or marginalization based on widespread xenophobia. However, through everyday forms of resistance they can resist the micro-level factors— which are in reality are the day-to-day expression of these larger legal and social structures of oppression—that contribute to their invisibility.

There are many studies in migration scholarship that have found examples of everyday forms of migrant resistance in the context of migrant women workers. For example, Hondagneu-Sotelo finds that in the case of migrant women working as both nanny/housecleaners, emotion is often used to leverage priorities and avoid labor exploitation. By providing superior childcare, migrant domestic workers can win lighter cleaning responsibilities—or at least disincentivize employers from increasing cleaning tasks without increasing salary. Because parents are more concerned with their children’s well-being than the cleanliness of their home, they may fear losing a domestic worker that they can trust to take good care of their children if that employee is unhappy with the amount of and/or ambiguity of cleaning tasks, especially when they are not being paid fairly. In this way nanny/housekeepers resist falling further into positions of servitude by using their emotional connection with children of a household to retain some degree of control over work conditions.
Although usually forms of “individual self-help”, everyday forms of migrant resistance are also collective. In fact, these individual practices of resistance can hardly come to fruition “without tactic or acknowledged coordination and communication within the subordinate group” or some form of interaction between migrant workers.\(^{177}\) There needs to be some form of communication to confirm that even the quiet, seemingly harmless individual acts of resistance that migrant domestic workers use—such as emotional leverage—are justified. Without this communication, an individual only has her personal experiences to compare to and may struggle to decide how to react when facing difficulties. Roberto Benencia has identified collective everyday forms of resistance in the case of Bolivian men working in horticulture areas in Salta, Argentina. Benencia shows how through irony and sarcasm, these men demonstrate how they are outwardly questioning imposed identities and social positions from their employers and Argentines in general.\(^{178}\) Although seemingly irrelevant, these moments in which migrants collectively contest their unjust conditions are important building blocks to their own individual acts of resistance as well as collective action.

This communication that facilitates everyday forms of resistance also occurs for migrants who work as domestic workers in Argentina. Although the majority of domestic work takes place within the employers’ homes, there are a series of activities that spill out into public spaces and allow domestic workers to come together and begin to construct a collective understanding of their experiences as migrants, domestic workers and women. Parks, squares, hallways, lobbies, school gates, playgrounds, sandpits, and shops are some of the many spaces where workers are able to socialize with each other and exchange information while still performing their work tasks.\(^{179}\) These spaces present the opportunity for dialogue and sharing information. This socialization and sharing of daily work experiences within these spaces can help individual
women situate themselves in a larger collective of migrant domestic workers and put their own experiences into context. Often these conversations between workers revolve around topics such as salary, working conditions, relationships with employers and existing labor and migration laws that may lead to the sharing of tips, alternatives and solutions to common problems and even criticisms, observations and humor that demonstrates a rejection of the unjust conditions they experience as migrant workers. In this way, the communication—albeit limited—between migrant domestic workers provides them with the information they may need to decide upon individual forms of everyday resistance—such as providing superior childcare in order to prevent exploitation. It is important to note that although studies like these provide insight that can help us imagine Bolivian migrant women’s everyday forms of resistance, there has yet to be investigations that document the quotidian resistance of Bolivian women specially. Because everyday forms of resistance are so discreet and individual, studying it requires in-depth fieldwork that is beyond the scope of this study. Due to this gap, it will be important for future studies to collect data on this specific case to better understand if Bolivian women find other forms of everyday resistance.

As important as these everyday acts of resistance are, we must not romanticize them, as they are not likely to “do more than marginally affect the various forms of exploitation” migrant domestic workers confront on an individual level. Although individual migrant women may make significant gains, the larger political and social structures that subjugate migrant domestic workers as an entire group are hardly impacted. In order to understand how structural change can be made and macro-level factors can be resisted, we must also look at Bolivian migrant women’s collective action.
Migrant Feminist Collective Action

Despite the collective action barriers, there exists many migrant feminist organizations in Argentina that have gained prominence in recent years and have been central vessels for Bolivian migrant women’s collective action. In general, Bolivian migrants in Argentina have a history of collective action and strong cultural organizations, often building upon previous organizational experiences in Bolivia. Emerging in 1959, *La Asociación Boliviana de Buenos Aires* (the Bolivian Association of Buenos Aires), constituted one of the earliest Bolivian organizations in Argentina, becoming an important institution for the Bolivian community until the early 1970s. With the return to democracy in 1983, Bolivian organizations quickly began to strengthen to the extent that, by 1989, there were over 40 Bolivian civil associations within Argentina. In 1995, *la Federación de Asociaciones Civiles Bolivianas* (Federation of Bolivian Civil Associations) was founded in order to coordinate events and create a network among the many dispersed collectives.

Although some organizations were founded by leaders with political backgrounds, most focused on social and cultural issues such as promoting Bolivian holidays and maintaining cultural traditions within the community, such as dance. Other organizations emerged related to economic and market activities given the large number of Bolivians working in ferias. One example of this type of organization is *the Colectividad Boliviana de Escobar* (The Escobar Bolivian Collectivity), founded in 1990. This collective unites over 500 members into two large fruit and vegetable markets. As documented by Roberto Benencia in his study of Bolivians’ success at ferias in the Greater Buenos Aires, much of this success can be attributed to components of Andean—specifically Aimara—culture. For example, through organizations like *the Colectividad Boliviana de Escobar*, members may employ the strategy of pasanaku which is
a collective form of financing based upon group compromise that allows members to access certain amounts of merchandise that they otherwise would not be able to obtain. Many members businesses have benefited greatly from this communal support and have reinvested in the Colectividad Boliviana de Escobar, making it a very powerful organization overtime. Because of its size and dominance over the important horticulture trade in areas such as Buenos Aires, the Colectividad Boliviana de Escobar has even gone beyond its original commercial purpose to become a significant voice to fight against injustice against the Bolivian community.

Clearly, Bolivian migrants have brought themselves a certain degree of visibility—at least at local levels—through organization and community reliance. However, it is important to question what role women play in these organizations considering few make gender-related issues their priority, choosing to focus on issues with a gender-blind perception of the Bolivian community. Many investigations of Bolivian collective action and organization fail to mention the influence of women in these organizations. However, some studies that look at migrant women in other contexts find that even when strong cultural organizations exist, women are not allowed or are discouraged from participating as full members and rarely hold leadership roles. These practices resemble those studied by Jennifer L. Shoaff who discusses how Haitian migrant women have been denied voting rights in a prominent Haitian migrant organization in the Dominican Republic. As a result, Haitian migrant women desired to create an organization that represented the specific ideas and needs of women. The lack of analysis of Bolivian women’s roles in studies of Bolivian organizations, in addition to findings about migrant women’s need to form their own organizations, make it necessary to look directly at how Bolivian migrant women collectively resist.
To illustrate Bolivian migrant women’s organizational resistance, I focus on the collective action occurring through four feminist migrant organizations: Ni Una Migrante Menos; Bloque de Trabajadorxs Migrantes; Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados and Yanpacuna. Although these organizations differ in terms of when they were established, their central location, and the degree of their impact, they all have played a role in providing a space for Bolivian migrant women to organize and resist the macro-level factors that contribute to their invisibility: exclusionary laws and xenophobic, sexist and racist stereotypes that permeate through Argentine society. It is also important to note that none of these organizations are Bolivian specific; however, Bolivian migrant women are at the center of all of their efforts and makeup much of their active membership. Focusing on these four organizations, I will analyze the actualization of Bolivian migrant women’s collective by applying the three fundamental collective action processes identified in movement literature: political opportunity, mobilization resources, and framing structures. These three factors that have been widely cited to explain collective action and social movements in a variety of contexts and prove useful when investigating the emergence of Bolivian migrant women’s collective action.

Political opportunities are contextual opportunities and constraints that collective action engages with to create new, or exploit already existing, opportunities. Political opportunities are the interactions between collective action and institutionalized politics. An analysis of political opportunities can help explain the emergence of collective action on the basis of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system. In the introduction to their book *Comparative perspectives on social movements: Political opportunities, mobilizing structures and cultural framings*, McAdam et al., describe many possible political opportunities for collective action, one of which being “the relative
openness or closure of the institutional political system”.

We often see these shifts in opening and closure in institutional political systems when there are elections. We can expect transfers of power and legislative reforms to either encourage or reactive social movement organizations who either interpret the transfer of power as granting them new elite allies or the closing of opportunity that must be taken advantage of quickly.

This is certainly the case for Bolivian migrant women’s collective action in Argentina. The openness of the government to immigration is a significant factor that facilitates Bolivian migrant women’s collective action. As discussed in the section on migration laws, the Macri administration’s Decree 70/2017 was a significant source of the migrant communities’ grievances to the point that it became a political opportunity for migrant feminist organizations. The sanction of this decree functioned as a political opportunity for Bolivian migrant women because it was a clear departure from the relatively open and welcoming 2004 Migration Law, although technically only a modification. In fact, many feminist migrant organizations were born out of the political opportunity that was the closing of the institutional political system due to the sanction of Decree 70/2017.

This is the case for Ni Una Migrante Menos (NUMM)—Not One Migrant Woman Less—an organization made up of migrant women from many other smaller organizations, not only across Argentina but across the entire region. NUMM has locations in many countries such as Bolivia, Chile and Peru but its birth location is Buenos Aires. NUMM’s goal is to present migrant women as agents with the power to speak directly to the State, reduce gender inequality in various spheres of Argentine society and build alliances with the growing local and transnational women’s movement. The founders of NUMM first met in 2017 to discuss two common issues: the regressive change in Argentine migration policy that materialized with the
Decree 70 sanctioned on January 27th, 2017 and sexist violence in Argentina, exacerbated by their condition as migrants. Bolivian migrant women’s collective action that took place through the organization of NUMM was in direct reaction to the Decree 70/2017 and its threat to the safety and rights of not only Bolivian migrant women, but the migrant community as a whole.

We can see this evidenced in speeches made by NUMM leaders at their first protest on March 8th, 2017. Less than two months after the sanction of the restrictive decree, more than one hundred migrant women organized to march together for the first time under the name “Ni Una Migrante Menos.” On this day of protest, NUMM leaders expressed their most pressing claim—the repeal of Decree 70/2017—onto agenda of the migrant feminist movement:

“We repudiate the reform, by decree, of the migration law that not only violates rights and stigmatizes, but also seeks to divide us by violating our historical ties of brotherhood. We demand the annulment of the Decree of Necessity and Urgency 70/2017.”

During this speech, NUMM leaders read other parts of the decree, describing how the legislation threatened migrants and, more specifically, migrant women. This direct response to a restrictive government action was seen as a first collective victory of the organization and the migrant feminist movement as a whole. Delia Colque, a woman who returned back home to Bolivia after working as a member of NUUM since its beginnings also described on a Bolivian radio show how the sanction of Decree 70/2107 served as a political opportunity NUMM and a moment of political closing that migrant women felt needed to be taken advantage of before it was too late.

“We were able to connect with colleagues from other migrant groups in 2017 as a result of a decree of necessity and urgency that was created in Argentina on January 27, 2017, when Mauricio Macri somehow used this decree as to remove our rights as migrants and because of the panic this caused we made the decision to organize ourselves with compañeras that we knew from different groups...from Chile, from Paraguay, from Peru, from Bolivia ... and then, luckily, compañeras were added of other migrant groups as well.” Delia Colque, Ni Una Migrante Menos de Argentina
The Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados (Secretary of Migrant and Refugee Workers) is another migrant feminist organization founded as a response to the Macri administrations modification of the 2004 migration law (Figure 4). Located in the City of Buenos Aires, Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados is a social, political and union organization that works to protect the rights of migrants and refugees who work and live in Argentina. In addition to fighting against discrimination and xenophobia, this organization also describes its central function as demanding the government to annul Decree 70/2017 because it “compares migration with criminality.”

In a video describing the organization’s purpose and founding principles provided on the organization’s public Facebook Page, a member describes how the Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados was the direct result of Decree 70/2017. The video begins by marking the decree as a turning point for migrants in Argentina: “In 2017, our situation as migrants in Argentina changes. The anti-immigration policies developed by the government of Mauricio Macri exacerbated xenophobia and racism.”

The member narrating the video then states how in response to this anti-migrant legislation, the Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados was born and the annulation of 2017 decree remains the main goal of the organization:

“But as migrants, we weren’t going to sit around. Thus, the Secretariat for Migrant and Refugee Workers was born (...) We work on three main goals. First, the annulment of DNU 70/2017 that modified the Migration Law 25,871, which was a world example for providing equal rights to migrants, making them feel part of Argentine society. With the application of the nefarious DNU, the word migrant became synonymous with criminality, stigmatizing the poor and working migrant.”
Although the sanction of Decree 70/2017 occurred over four years ago, it functioned as a political opportunity for Bolivian migrant women’s collective action for its entire life, up until the point that it was repealed in early March 2021, by Alberto Fernández, who became president after defeating Mauricio Macri in 2019. We can see the expression of Decree 70/2017 as the central antagonist the migrant feminist movement even years after it was sanctioned on the Facebook pages of all four migrant feminist organization. For example, Figure 5 shows a single Facebook post from the Bloque de Trabajadorxs Migrantes (BTM)—Migrant Worker’s Block—on January 27th, 2021 denouncing Decree 70/2017 and calling for its repeal:
As seen in this post, the BTM, alongside many other migrant organizations, continued to focus their attention on the repeal of the 2017 decree even after Macri left office. In this second image that makes up this post, BTM directly calls out Alberto Fernández as continuing Marci’s
policies that “criminalize migrant families” even after being in office for a while. In the final paragraph of the post, BTM directly calls President Fernández to action to “keep his promise so that in today’s Argentina, all can be present” as promised in his electoral campaign. This is because the transfer of power from the more conservative and anti-migrant Macri administration to the more open Fernandez administration was a hopeful opening that served as the political opportunity to give their efforts to repeal Decree 70/2017 a strong, final push. Although political opportunities are important in understanding Bolivian migrant women’s collective action, their resistance requires more than external openings and closings of the institutional political system.

In order for resistance to be collective, rather than just individual everyday forms of resistance, it must involve mobilization resources. In social movement theory, mobilization resources are those spaces, tools, and structures that are critical for mobilizing people for collective action. It is easiest to understand mobilization resources as both informal and formal vehicles through which people mobilize and engage in collective action. They can be social movement organizations, such as the four migrant feminist organizations being examined in this, or specific methods and tools of mobilization. In the case of Bolivian migrant women’s collective action, in addition to the migrant feminist organizations being analyzed we can observe multiple types of resource mobilization: family units, friendship networks, work units in the case of agricultural work, etc. Within these spaces, mobilization occurs. Although there are many forms of resource mobilization, I focus on social media and how it functions as an important platform for Bolivian migrant women’s mobilization.

Within movement scholarship there is a growing field of study that examines the relationship between collective action and social media. There have been many studies that demonstrate how social media provides new opportunities for supporting the dynamics of
collective action, allowing for the mobilization of people into debates and involving them in new forms of collective decision making. Many argue that social media even plays a significant role in a movement’s success. Studies specifically looking at a Latin American context—such as Summer Harlow’s study case of a movement in Guatemala in 2009—have made similar arguments. Using interviews and content analysis of Facebook comments from the most active pages that surfaced, Harlow found that Facebook was used to mobilize an “online movement that moved offline”. By looking into the specific functions used on Facebook to organize this movement, Harlow concludes that not only does social media have the capacity to enhance social movements, but it also can create them. Although there is not enough information about the history of migrant women’s organization to say that their collective action began on social media, platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have played a central role in the continuation of their movement, especially amid the pandemic in which in-person organization is even more difficult.

Whether or not social media makes collective action successful, it has clearly been a central mobilization structure for Bolivian migrant women’s resistance to invisibility in Argentina. This is because social media is a virtual space that serves many functions for the migrant feminist movement. First, social media’s information sharing capacity helps coordinate in-person organization. For all four organizations, Facebook has been used to spread the word for upcoming protests, marches, workshops and community discussions that help their efforts. Through social media, information about organization and events reaches far more people through functions such as “resharing” which “enable otherwise disengaged users to join political and social causes”. This rapid diffusion of information can be observed in many of the invitation posts from migrant organizations, such as the following post from Ni Una Migrante
Menos inviting the migrant community to participate in a strike in protest of xenophobia and racism to coincide with the activities for March 8, the international day for women’s rights:

**Figure 6:** Ni Una Migrante Menos International Women’s Day Strike Call to Protest

> **SE VIE EN EL MIGRANTÉ**

> **CONVOCAMOS**

> **A MUJERES, LESBIANAS, TRAVESTIS, TRANS, MARICAS, NO BINARIES MIGRANTXES**

**A UNA INTERVENCIÓN ARTÍSTICA CONTRA LA XENOFOBIA Y EL RACISMO**

> PARA SABER DE QUE SE TRATA ESCRIBIDOS POR MENSAJE PRIVADO

> REALIZAREMOS UNA REUNIÓN VIRTUAL CERRADA ESTE SÁBADO PARA ORGANIZARNOS DE CARA AL BM

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**Ni Una Migrante Menos**

February 23 -

(EXTRACTION 

**LAS MIGRANTAS NOS ESTAMOS ORGANIZANDO PARA EL PARO INTERNACIONAL DEL #8Migrante! 😊 😊

- Abrimos la #CONVOCATORIA para que puedan sumarse mujeres, lesbianas, travestis, trans, maricas, no binaries migrantes para realizar una INTERVENCIÓN ARTÍSTICA el LUNES 8 DE MARZO CONTRA LAS POLÍTICAS DE XENOFOBIA Y RACISMO.

- Si te interesas sumarte puedes escribirnos a niunamigrantenomenos@gmail.com o por mensaje privado a nuestras redes sociales, estaremos respondiendo por la noche.

FB: www.facebook.com/niunamigrantenomenos/
IG: www.instagram.com/niunamigrantenomenos/

- El SABADO 27 de febrero por la tarde haremos una reunión cerrada con les interesadas por google.meet para preparar la intervención. El horario lo estaremos confirmando en estos días por nuestras redes sociales.

- ¡LA ÚNICA LUCHA QUE SE PIERDE ES LA QUE SE ABANDONA!
- ¡MIGRAR NO ES DELITO! ¡MIGRAR ES ANCESTRAL!
- ¡CONTRA EL DECRETO 70/2017 QUE SEPARA FAMILIAS MIGRANTES!
- ¡EL PATRIARCADO NO SE VA A CAER, LO VAMOS A TUMBAR!

#migrantes #feminismo/transfronterizo #internacionalistas
#derechossociales #derechoshumanos #libremovimiento
#libreremdidad #migramosyresistimos #patragnarledempiro #8M
#8MIGRANTE #rompiendofronteras
As can be seen in Figure 6, this NUMM post provides information about an upcoming strike for International Women’s Day, with the hashtag “#8Migrante” centering migrant women on this day of resistance. The main function of this post is to provide information for how to join a closed meeting to organize the #8Migrante strike for migrant women and queer migrants in Argentina. It provides an email address, date, and description of purpose. It is also important to note how these informational posts almost always (no matter the organization) are concluded with what can be understood as virtual chants, considering the use of exclamation points and capitalization: “¡LA UNICA LUCHA QUE SE PIERDE ES LA QUE SE ABANDONA! ¡MIGRAR NO ES DELITO! ¡CONTRAT EL DECRETO 70/2017 QUE SEPARA FAMILIAS MIGRANTES! ¡EL PATRIARCADO NO SE VA A CAER, LO VAMOS A TUMBAR”!207 By including these virtual protest chants in their Facebook posts, organizations like NUMM use social media as a space of protest which is limited due to normal collective action barriers toppled by pandemic restrictions. Because social media can function as both an informational and motivational tool for collective action, it is a useful mobilization resource for migrant feminist organizations. Like many of the posts that invite migrant women to mobilize in various ways, this post was well received, being shared and liked many times. This means that likely many more than just followers of NUMM’s Facebook page saw the post and had access to the information to join the two events described.

NUMM is not the only migrant feminist organization to take advantage of Facebook to spread information and build their organization. Yanapacuna—a migrant organization that existed for over a decade—has long used Facebook as a central mobilizing structure, not only for its own events but for the migrant feminist movement as a whole. Because Yanapacuna existed before Facebook became a significant mobilization tool, its social media presence is not as
strong as the other organizations. It still uses its platform to share the posts from other migrant feminist organizations, such as NUMM. In addition, Yanapacuna has used Facebook to share information about its own events, especially those related to Bolivian immigrant women specifically (Figure 7). An example of this is the poster below that Yanapacuna shared on Facebook to advertise a meeting of Bolivian migrant women in Argentina:

**Figure 7: Yanapacuna Invitation for Meeting of Bolivian Migrant Women in Argentina**

![](image)

In addition to being a useful tool for spreading information about collective action events, social media is also an important mobilization resource for Bolivian migrant women’s collective action because it helps spread emotional messages related to the movement. For example, anytime there is an act of violence against migrant women, Ni Una Migrante creates and shares a poster denouncing those responsible for the crime. This can be observed in the post shown in
Figure 8. The post is meant to spread the word of a missing person who was found dead.

Elizabeth Andrade Villca, a Bolivian migrant woman living in Buenos Aires, wanted to travel to Córdoba. However, she was found dead in Buenos Aires. Although NUMM is an organization based in Buenos Aires, its use of social media functions as a mobilizing structure for the entire country. By spreading this information through Facebook, not only does this help Elizabeth’s family find her but it also serves as a way to demonstrate the work being done by NUMM to other parts of the country, therefore expanding the movement through social media networks.

**Figure 8: Ni Una Migrante Menos Post for Information about Elizabeth Andrade Villca**

The final, and perhaps most significant, factor of collective action analysis I will use to discuss the resistance of Bolivian migrant women is framing. Framing is collective process of interpretation, attribution and social construction “that mediate between opportunity and
action”. It is the conscious and strategic effort by groups to create a shared understanding of the role of their movement in the world in a way that motivates and justifies collective action. Framing is best understood as the construction of a collection understanding of the purposes, phenomena, context, goals, and significance of collective action. In the case of Bolivian migrant women’s collective action, framing is mainly the result of linkages to other, preexisting and historical social movements in Argentina and Latin America at large. Scholars have identified this method of linking a narrow, smaller movement to other larger, preexisting movements in other contexts in Latin America. For example, Merike Blofield finds that domestic workers movements in Latin America have linked themselves to other prevalent social movements in each country. In Bolivia, domestic workers framed their movement as one fighting the oppression of indigenous people—indigenous women in particular—repeatedly referring to their oppression in the workplace as a “colonial” relation. This was successful in a majority indigenous country with a history of stark exclusion combined with a rising indigenous movement. Meanwhile, in Costa Rica, domestic worker advocates appealed to the country’s reputation as a leader in human rights and its responsibility to provide an example with regard to the treatment of one of the most vulnerable groups in society. We can see a similar dynamic at play with the migrant feminist movement in Argentina; however, because of the intersectional nature of the movement (women, migrants, working class, etc.) it has attempted to frame itself in multiple ways.

The first and most successful frame has been that of the Ni Una Menos movement in Argentina. Ni Una Menos is a grassroots feminist movement that begin in Argentina and spread throughout Latin America. Started by a collective of Argentine women journalists, artists and academics seeking to end gender-based violence, Ni Una Menos has grown into a continental feminist movement going beyond its original purpose of protesting femicide to including demands.
such as change in gender roles, sexual harassment, gender pay gap, legality of abortion and sex workers rights. After becoming nationally recognized under the hashtag #NiUnaMenos, the movement began with massive demonstrations on June 3, 2015. Today, the movement remains significant throughout the region and in Argentina. For example, in December 2020, first trimester elective abortion was legalized in Argentina, and the half a decade of Ni Una Menos mobilizations were credited as pivotal to this win for the feminist movement in Argentina. Given the success of Ni Una Menos and the centrality of gender-related issues to the migrant feminist movement, it is no surprise that many migrant organizations latched onto this historical movement that has already laid the foundations for mobilization for them.

This linkage to Ni Una Menos is most obvious in the framing of collective action from Ni Una Migrante Menos. Since their founding in 2017 after the sanction of Decree 70/2017, NUMM has been participating as “migrant women” and “feminists” in the annual mobilization of #NiUnaMenos every June 3. Many of NUMM’s goals are the same as the larger feminist movement and has been supported by leaders from NUM: legal abortion, rights to sexual diversity, ending femicides. NUMM has been a central organization for following disappearance cases of migrant women and girls and provided space for open dialogue in private assemblies and public activities for families of the disappeared. In a way, NUMM has functioned as a way to bring the Ni Una Menos Movement to migrant communities. By providing general support for migrant communities while focusing on gender-issues, NUMM has taken the tenets of NUM to ensure migrant women do not slip through the cracks as they often do. Below is an example of the way in which NUMM links its collective action to Ni Una Menos using social media, resulting in a strong frame for the migrant feminist movement:
In this post (Figure 10) and the photo (Figure 9) from the protest above it, the mobilization taking place on March 8th, International Women’s Day, is described by NUMM as “migrant” and “feminist”, two intersecting parts of their collective action that cannot be separated. The posts call migrant women to protest, and “go out to the streets” alongside millions of women around the world. In the photo from the protest in front of the Casa Rosada (the
Presidential Palace) on the Plaza de Mayo, we see a member of NUMM holding a poster saying, “MIGRANT FEMINIST RESISTANCE” and a green handkerchief—the main symbol to the movement for legal abortion—wrapped around her wrist. Through the language and imagery used in the collective action of Ni Una Migrante Menos, both online and in-person, the organization links the migrant feminist movement to a larger, overarching feminist movement in Argentina, framing the movement for migrant women’s rights—and migrant rights in general—as inherently feminist.

Another preexisting movement the migrant feminist movement in Argentina links itself to in order to effectively frame its purpose and overall meaning is Argentina’s human rights movement and the country’s ongoing efforts for memory, truth and justice. One example of this is many migrant feminist organizations’ activities on March 24, the annual Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice in Argentina, which commemorates and honors the memory of everyone whose lives were transformed by the murders, tortures and disappearances during the dictatorship. The date, March 24, coincides with the initiation of the coup d’etat in 1976, which installed the military junta that would be responsible for state terrorism in the form of forced disappearance of people. To commemorate this day, many organizations and individuals, led by the Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo), gather in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires (and throughout the country) to demonstrate. Many display photographs of friends or family members who were disappeared and killed during the dictatorship. By linking migrants to efforts of truth and justice and displaying their solidarity with all of those lost during the dictatorship, migrant feminist organizations frame their movement as a part of a larger human rights movement in Argentina. For example, the follow selection of photos is from a campaign on March 24th, 2021 called “MIGRAMOS CON
MEMORIA” organized by the Secretaría de Trabajadores y Refugiados/as that demonstrates how migrant organizations frame their movement as a human rights movement using this preexisting structure:

**Figure 11:** Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados/as #24M Post

![Image](image)

¡Nunca más Plan Cóndor en Nuestramérica!

Nosotras/os desde la Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados/as - UTEP queremos recordar a las y los migrantes que fueron víctimas de la represión dictatorial, en la última dictadura cívico-militar-eclesiástica donde lucharon por un país con justicia social junto a nuestros hermanos/as de Argentina. Seguimos adelante con la campaña #migramosconmemoria en la cual tratamos de visibilizar los más de 600 migrantes detenidos/as desaparecidos/as durante el terrorismo de Estado en Argentina.

Muchas/os migrantes fueron víctimas de un complejo aparato policial y parapolicial de inteligencia coordinado entre naciones dictatoriales, llamado Operación Cóndor, bajo el amparo de los Estados Unidos, para seguir, vigilar, detener, torturar, desaparecer y asesinar a opositores ideológicos. Un ejemplo de ello, entre otros, fue el secuestro y asesinato de los ex legisladores uruguayos Zelmar Michelini y Héctor Gutiérrez Ruiz, o el del dirigente político paraguayo del Movimiento Popular Colorado, Agustín Goiburu, quien fue secuestrado y sigue desaparecido, estos casos fueron en suelo argentino.

One important point to pull out from this post is how it emphasizes both the loss of “Argentine brothers and sisters” and “600 migrants” during the dictatorship. In this way, the Secretaría shows solidarity with those who were affected by this dark history while also demonstrating how migrants themselves were also affected by both the migration law at the time—the so-called Videla Law—and being disappeared alongside Argentines. What is most fascinating about the linkage of this campaign, is the way imagery is used to frame the migrant feminist movement as active participants and political actors in Argentine society, not only fighting for their migrant rights and women’s rights, but for human rights in general.
In these images, we observe migrant women using imagery related to the human rights movement that responded to the terror of the dictatorship. For example, in the image of the migrant women, they are holding white handkerchiefs, representative of the collective action of las Madres y las Abuelas (Figure 12). Additionally, the post used to advertise this campaign shows pictures of the disappeared as a background for the message “migramos con memoria” –
“we migrant with memory” (Figure 13). The use of pictures was central to public demonstrations to ask for the whereabouts of the disappeared and have been central in the demonstrations for human rights ever since.\textsuperscript{214} When migrant feminist organizations use this imagery, they make an important visual connection with a preexisting human rights movement. In this way, the migrant feminist movement links itself to an overarching human rights movement and frames itself as connected to a cause that has deeply shaped Argentine society.

Besides being described simply as “migrant feminist resistance”, Bolivian migrant women’s collective action is framed through linkages with preexisting, overarching and relatively successful social movements in Argentina. Alongside taking advantage of political opportunities—such as the implementation of Decree 70/2017—and using social media as a central mobilization resource for sharing information and growing their movement, Bolivian migrant women frame their resistance by linking it with the feminist and human rights movement in Argentina to give themselves legitimacy and coalition building potential. Without doing so, participation in their collective action efforts would be limited to migrant women and continue to be invisible to the rest of Argentine society. Through effective framing, seizing political opportunities and using resources, such as Facebook, to mobilize, Bolivian migrant women successfully resist invisibility, both from laws and society.

**Resistant and Empowered: The Impact of Migration on Gender**

By putting more attention on the resistance and agency of migrant workers, we are better equipped to understand how migration may impact gender. The few studies that do look at the resistance of migrant workers have found that when these women successfully resist and challenge the invisibility they face, their perceptions of gender changes. For example, Recalde
finds that after an initial “suffering in solitude” due to marginalization, migrant women working as domestic workers in Buenos Aires eventually experience a process of personal growth, increased autonomy and even financial independence.\textsuperscript{215} As a result, these women experience empowerment they may not have experienced if they stayed home and didn’t undergo the—albeit challenging and unjust—labor migration experience. Through these new feelings of empowerment, women are able to renegotiate gender roles and men’s participation in the social reproduction of their households, whether it be upon their return home or when their families reunite with them in Argentina.\textsuperscript{216} Similarly, in her study about Peruvian migrant women in Argentina, María José Magliano finds that women who have resisted—and acknowledged their resistance—recognize their own empowerment and personal growth. One of the women Magliano interviews directly states that because of all the hardships she went through and the resistance to these hardships through participation in a union, she became “more of a fighter” in Argentina.\textsuperscript{217}

We can observe this increased sense of empowerment, specifically on the basis of gender in the story of Delia Colque, the Bolivian women who is an active participant in Ni Una Migrante Menos Argentina who returned home after 15 years in Buenos Aires and told her story on a radio show. In this radio interview, Delia describes how the reason she migrated to Buenos Aires was the “violencia machista” that was occurring in her home. Delia and her mother were both trapped in this situation due to a lack of financial freedom that would allow them to leave. In order to change this situation, Delia migrated to Argentina to work with her uncle. Although she experienced extreme labor exploitation in a textile factory, she was able to eventually send enough money to her mother so that she could separate from her father and break the cycle. When asked why she returned home to Bolivia, Delia says that she wanted to change the
situation of gender-violence experienced by women in Bolivia after gaining valuable skills during her participation in migrant feminist organizations such as NUMM:

“It is like an outstanding debt that I have with myself... I want to see how I can also pass all that knowledge that I have been able to generate there [in Argentina] here [in Bolivia] ...I think what happened with us at home, they pass it on to a lot of women, a lot of families. And that is something that I does not make me feel calm, thinking that there are still women who continue to live the situation that we lived with my mother and I think it is important to return and look for ways to change the situation.” 218

Delia also describes how she has come to believe that it is “important to also visibilize migrant women’s situations because it is not easy to be a woman, a migrant woman and an indigenous migrant woman.” Although Delia’s lived-experiences with gender-based violence is an important impetus to her feminist outlook, her organizational experiences in Argentina with migrant feminist organizations motivated her to return home and seek ways to change how women are treated and perceived in Bolivia.

Another Bolivian migrant woman in resistance, Andrea Murga Gutiérrez also describes how her experience organizing alongside other migrant women had changed her perception of gender and empowered her as a woman. In an interview with El País, Andrea describes how she has seen “how many compatriots grew as women and empowered themselves.” She discusses how like many women; she grew up with a “machista mentality” and believed in the traditional gender roles of serving men, until she began organizing in Argentina. She states that in the migrant feminist movement she found “her space of freedom, a space whereas a gender delegate, she was able to accompany other colleagues for many years from her own experience.”219 With these two examples, we see that through collective resistance, Bolivian migrant women become more aware of their power as political subjects and their power as women. Nevertheless, there has been little research on the long-term effects on this increase in autonomy and empowerment,
making it difficult to tell if these changes in gender roles last and can be considered real steps 
towards greater gender equality or if the patriarchal order is eventually simply put back into 
place, as many scholars argue.\textsuperscript{220} More longitudinal studies from diverse working contexts are 
needed to answer this question.

CONCLUSION

Through collective resistance, migrant women are empowered, and their autonomy is 
strengthened. In fact, in 2001 Marcelina’s sister-in-law founded the Marcelina Meneses Integral 
Center for Women in order to do just that, to “strengthen the autonomy of migrant women and to 
empower them.” The Center has successfully promoted migrant women’s rights, demonstrating 
how collective resistance to invisibility can empower migrant women. As a direct result of the 
death of Marcelina Meneses, the Marcelina Meneses Integral Center for Women, uses social 
media to mobilize, organized activities within the migrant community and seeks to connect 
themselves with a broader feminist and migrant movement in Argentina, like the other four 
migrant feminist organizations analyzed in this study.

Looking at the case of Bolivian migrant women workers in Argentina, this thesis has 
demonstrated how there are many macro-level—laws and labor market segmentation—and 
micro-level factors—the conditions of work and gendered migration dynamics—that interact and 
compound to make Bolivian migrant women a highly invisibilized sector. However, in both 
macro-level and micro-level spheres, invisibilization is also resisted. Migrant women—like 
many other marginalized groups—don’t just quietly accept the injustice they face. In addition to 
everyday forms of resistance, Bolivian migrant women collectively resist, negotiate and endure 
invisibilization through migrant feminist organizations.
Although the scholarship is still relatively new and fragmented by topics, disciplines and scholars publishing in different languages, it is connected by a shared attempt to answer two general questions: how does gender shape migration? and how does migration shape gender? As seen in this analysis, the first question is addressed when thinking about the gendered migration challenges Bolivian migrant women face. Due to their gender and overwhelming indigenous heritage, migrant women are naturalized in different forms of work or specific tasks, which presents its own unique challenges that require adaptations to traditional modes of resistance. The answer to the second question, however, is much more contested by scholars. By putting more attention on the resistance and agency of Bolivian migrant women, we are better equipped to answer this question. This study finds that although individual women may feel empowered as a result of their resistance to labor migration challenges, further research is needed to understand the long-term effects on this increase in autonomy and empowerment. More longitudinal studies from diverse contexts are needed to tell if these changes in gender roles last and can be considered real steps towards greater gender equality or if the patriarchal order is simply put back into place after time, as many scholars argue.221

Even if this personal growth and transformations in gender perceptions are long-lasting, as a global community, we still must make efforts to visibilize migrant women in Argentina and beyond. We cannot take the experiences and hardships as simply being a case in which “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” mind-set allows us to justify turning a blind eye and simply hoping that migrant women are able to overcome injustice alone. Although resistance from Bolivian migrant women themselves—both individual and collective—is essential and has proven effective in many cases, it is not enough to make lasting impacts on the way gender is seen and functions in the lives of Bolivian migrant women. As seen in this analysis of the many
factors that invisibilize Bolivian migrant women, many actors are complicit in the struggles of multiply oppressed immigrant groups. In Argentina and beyond, all must do their part to listen when Bolivian migrant women speak out their lived-experiences and lift their voices of resistance.
ENDNOTES

1 Cristian Alarcón, “Un testigo cuenta como una mujer boliviana fue arrojada del tren: Relato de un viaje a la xenofobia,” Página 12 (Buenos Aires, Argentina), June 2, 2002.


3 Alarcón, “Un testigo cuenta como una mujer boliviana.”

4 Alarcón, “Un testigo cuenta como una mujer boliviana.”

5 Alarcón, “Un testigo cuenta como una mujer boliviana.”

6 Alarcón, “Un testigo cuenta como una mujer boliviana.”


10 The dichotomies implied in the terms “north,” “south,” “developed countries,” and “developing countries” have been debated and contested in the literature. However, I used them here to simply distinguish different analyses of migration within the scholarship and how certain regions have been privileged over others in terms of research. These terms are not to suggest that the regions and countries they cover are in any sense homogeneous.


22 Bastia, “From Mining to Garment Workshops,” 658.

23 Bastia, Gender, Migration and Social Transformation, 10.

24 Bastia, Gender, Migration and Social Transformation, 10.


27 Bastia, “From Mining to Garment Workshops,” 658.


31 Bastia, “From Mining to Garment Workshops,” 664.


33 Bastia, “From Mining to Garment Workshops,” 665.


38 Benencia, “Participación de los inmigrantes bolivianos,” 168.


44 Bastia, “From Mining to Garment Workshops,” 658.
53 Borgeaud-Garciaandia, “La cuidadora domiciliaria de ancianos”; Magliano, “Migración, género y desigualdad social”.
57 Pizarro, “Intersection of Inequalities,” 63.
59 Bastia, “Migration as Protest?” 158.
60 Bastia, “Migration as Protest?” 154.


Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” 150.

Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection,” 150.

For a recent theoretical discussion on the need to integrate race, see: Ramon Grosfoguel, Laura Oso, and Anastasia Christou, “‘Racism’, Intersectionality and Migration Studies: Framing Some Theoretical Reflections,” Identities 22, no. 6 (2015) 635-652.

King, “Multiple Jeopardy,” 52-69.

What is now the countries of Bolivia and Argentina were once territories of the Viceroyalty of Peru—and later the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata—under Spanish rule, so up to the early nineteenth century movement was not restricted by present-day nation-state borders.

Original Spanish: la Ley No. 817 de Inmigración y Colonización de la República Argentina


Juan Bautista Alberdi, Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina (1852) 89. Original Spanish: ¿Queremos plantar y aclimatar en América libertad inglesa, la cultura francesa, la laborsiosidad del hombre de Europa y de los Estados Unidos? Traigamos pedazos vivos de ellas en las costumbres de sus habitantes y radiquemoslas aquí.

Original Spanish: Art. 12: “Reputase inmigrante para los efectos de esta ley á todo extranjero jornalero, artesano, industrial, agricultor ó profesor, que siendo menor de sesenta años, y acreditando su moralidad y sus aptitudes, llegase á la República para establecerse en ella, en buques á vapor ó á vela, pagando pasaje de segunda ó tercera clase, ó teniendo el viaje pagado por cuenta de la Nación, de las Provincias, ó de las empresas particulares protectoras de la inmigración y la colonización.”
Art 13: “Las personas que estando en estas condiciones no quisiesen acogerse á las ventajas del título de inmigrantes, lo harán presente al tiempo de su embarque al capitán del buque, quien lo anotará en el diario de navegación, ó á las autoridades marítimas del puerto de desembarco, debiendo en estos casos ser considerados como simples viajeros. No es extensiva esta disposición á los inmigrantes que viniesen contratados en calidad de tales para las colonias ó ú otros puntos de la República.”

Magliano, “Migración, género y desigualdad social,” 353. Cabecitas negras is a derogatory term used in Argentina associated with people from the working class who are often have darker skin and hair than those of the upper and middle classes.


Original Spanish; Art 31. “Ninguna persona de existencia visible o ideal, pública o privada, podrá proporcionar trabajo u ocupación remunerada, con o sin relación de dependencia, a los extranjeros que residan ilegalmente o que, residiendo legalmente, no estuvieran habilitados para hacerlo, ni contratarlos, convenir u obtener sus servicios.”

Original Spanish: Art.48. “Quienes infringieran las disposiciones establecidas en los Artículos 31 y 32, serán sancionados ante la sola comprobación de la infracción, por la Dirección Nacional de Migraciones con las multas que a continuación se detallan) Cuando se trate de los responsables mencionados en el Artículo 31 las multas ascenderán a la suma de Cinco Mil Pesos ($5,000) por cada infracción verificada. Para el caso dañadores de trabajo doméstico, la multa a aplicar será de Doscientos Pesos ($200) por cada infracción, previo emplazamiento de Treinta (30) días.”


“After Trump, Argentina Restricts Immigration to Fight Crime,”


This is the state agency that is responsible for the issuing of ID cards in Argentina.


Original Spanish: Las disposiciones de esta ley no serán aplicables.
100 Original Spanish: Al personal de casas particulares, sin perjuicio que las disposiciones de la presente ley serán de aplicación en todo lo que resulte compatible y no se oponga a la naturaleza y modalidades propias del régimen específico o cuando así se lo disponga expresamente. (Inciso sustituido por art. 72 inc. a) de la Ley N° 26.844. Vigencia: de aplicación a todas las relaciones laborales alcanzadas por este régimen al momento de su entrada en vigencia).


103 Original Spanish: El presente decreto regirá en todo el territorio de la Nación las relaciones de trabajo que los empleados de ambos sexos presten dentro de la vida doméstica y que no importen para el empleador lucro o beneficio económico, no siendo tampoco de aplicación para quienes presten sus servicios por tiempo inferior a un mes, trabajen menos de cuatro horas por día o lo hagan por menos de cuatro días a la semana para el mismo empleador.


105 Mallimaci and Magliano “Mujeres migrantes sudamericanas,” 115.


107 Poblete, “Modos de regulación del trabajo doméstico,” 3

108 Original Spanish: sean exclusivamente contratadas para cuidar enfermos o conducir vehículos.

109 Borgeaud Garciandía, “La cuidadora domiciliaria de ancianos,” 332-334

110 Original Spanish; “Será obligación de los empleados domésticos guardar lealtad y respeto al empleador, su familia y convivientes, respetar a las personas que concurran a la casa, cumplir las instrucciones de servicio que se le impartan, cuidar las cosas confiadas a su vigilancia y diligencia, observar prescindencia y reserva en los asuntos de la casa de los que tuviere conocimiento en el ejercicio de sus funciones, guardar la inviolabilidad del secreto familiar e materia política, moral y religiosa y desempeñar sus funciones con celo y honestidad, dando cuenta de todo impedimento para realizarlas, siendo responsables del daño que causaren por dolo, culpa o negligencia.”

111 Original Spanish: Además del incumplimiento de las obligaciones señaladas en el artículo anterior, las injurias contra la seguridad, honor, intereses del empleador o su familia, vida es honesta del empleado, desaseo personal, o las transgresiones graves o reiteradas a las prestaciones contratadas, facultan al empleador para disolver el vínculo laboral sin obligación de indemnizar por preaviso y antigüedad.

112 The International Labour Organization estimated that in 2016, 77.5 per cent of domestic workers in the world experienced informality (cited in Magliano, “Las trabajadoras invisibles,” 7.


114 Original Spanish: Régimen Especial de Contrato de Trabajo para el Personal de Casas Particulares

ARTICULO 2° — Aplicabilidad. Se considerará trabajo en casas particulares a toda prestación de servicios o ejecución de tareas de limpieza, de mantenimiento u otras actividades típicas del hogar. Se entenderá como tales también a la asistencia personal y acompañamiento prestados a los miembros de la familia o a quienes convivan en el mismo domicilio con el empleador, así como el cuidado no terapéutico de personas enfermas o con discapacidad

117 Pereyra and Poblete, "¿Qué derechos? ¿Qué obligaciones?" 78.
118 Gorbán and Tizziani, “Comparative Perspectives on Domestic Work,” 12.
119 Original Spanish: “firmado por el trabajador y el empleador, y suscripto ante escribano público o ante un agente de esta Dirección Nacional de Migraciones” (Borgeaud-Garcíandía, “La cuidadora domiciliaria de ancianos”, 331-332).
120 Borgeaud-Garcíandía, “La cuidadora domiciliaria de ancianos,” 331-332. Original Spanish: (1) “título de propiedad, contrato de locación (alquiler) u otros del lugar donde va a desempeñarse” (2) “acreditar mediante prueba idónea la solvencia económica suficiente del empleador que garantice el cumplimiento de las cláusulas contractuales a favor del trabajador extranjero.”
121 Baquero and Klein, Empleo y condiciones de trabajo de mujeres temporeras agrícolas, 15.
122 Baquero and Klein, Empleo y condiciones de trabajo de mujeres temporeras agrícolas, 16-17
123 Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 757-767
124 For further discussion of migrant women employed as salaried workers in this specific type of agricultural industry see: Linardelli “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa” and Verónica Trpin and Silvia Brouchoud, “Mujeres migrantes en producciones agrarias de Río Negro aportes para abordar la interseccionalidad en las desigualdades,” Párrafos Geográficos 13, no. 2 (2014): 108-126.
125 Extensive discussion about Bolivian immigrants participation in Argentine horticulture can be found in Benencia, Roberto, “Participación de los inmigrantes bolivianos en espacios específicos de la producción hortícola en la Argentina.” Política y Sociedad 49, no. 1 (2012): 163-178.
126 Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 766.
127 Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 763.
128 Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 761.
132 Romero and Politi,” Argentina’s Trump-Like Immigration Order.”
135 Romero and Politi, “Argentina’s Trump-Like Immigration Order.”
137 Studies that find these stereotypes perpetuated in Bolivian women’s work include: Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 746; Mingo, “Resistentes, comprometidas y conflictivas,” 98; Borgeaud Garciandía, “La cuidadora domiciliaria de ancianos,” 338.
138 Hondagneu-Sotelo, Doméstica.
139 Hondagneu-Sotelo, Doméstica.

Magliano, “Migración, género y desigualdad social,” 358-359. Original Spanish: Nosotros no quitamos el trabajo a nadie, tomamos el trabajo que no quieren los argentinos, o sea en los cortaderos de ladrillos, en las obras de construcción, en las quintas, como tenemos una práctica de trabajo, una cultura de trabajo.”

Magliano, “Migración, género y desigualdad social,” 358-359. Original Spanish: En estas quintas trabajan hombres y mujeres, hasta niños, viven familias completas, en malas condiciones generalmente y todos trabajan. Mayoritariamente se contratan bolivianos porque son más dóciles y trabajadores (...) Hubo un caso de un argentino que trabajaba en las quintas y le hizo a un quintero juicio por un accidente de trabajo, eso no ocurre entre los bolivianos

Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 764.

Mingo, “Resistentes, comprometidas y conflictivas,” 98.

Mingo, “Resistentes, comprometidas y conflictivas,” 98. Original Spanish: Yo lo vería como una parte más machista. No veo que haya excusa para no poner mujeres ahí. Yo pondría. Pero el clarckista si, son cien por ciento hombre...En el caso del clarckista en sí, es un empleado fijo del galpón. Esos son mensualizados, vienen con años, es muy raro que se contrate un clarckista por la temporada.

Mingo, “Resistentes, comprometidas y conflictivas,” 98.

Mingo, “Resistentes, comprometidas y conflictivas,” 98. Original Spanish: Las romaneadoras, ahí tienen un trabajo que es pura y exclusivamente de mujer, porque es más minuciosa, sabe llevar ese tema.

Mingo, “Resistentes, comprometidas y conflictivas,” 98. Original Spanish: Las seleccionadoras ganan menos porque no es un trabajo en el que pueda crecer la persona. Un obrero general puede empezar estibando, pero se perfecciona para la parte mecánica, para el autoelevador, quizás puede ir creciendo. En la parte de selección no se puede crecer, es una labor monótona. Por eso no hay manera de crecer.

Ataide, “Género y migraciones”.

Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 770.

Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 766.

Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 766. Original Spanish: Mire ahora, ahora ya no es con los patrones, ahora son cuadrilleros. Una sola persona se encarga de hablar con el patrón, no sé qué relaciones tendrán ellos... nosotros le pedimos trabajo al cuadrillero. El cuadrillero a nosotros no nos paga ni la jubilación, no nos paga nada [...] me da apuro decirle ¿me están aportando? No sé... me da vergüenza... que se yo, somos extranjeros y... ¿Cómo le puedo decir? me da cosa preguntarle, encima que me da trabajo.

Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 767.

Poblete, “Modos de regulación del trabajo doméstico,” 3.

Recalde, “Renegotiating Family,” 15.


Ciarallo and Trpin, “Migration and Labor Market in Horticulture,” 277

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Doméstica, 29.


Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 767. Original Spanish: Cuando llegué [a Mendoza] trabajé en el ajo con mi papá y mis hermanos, toda la familia junta. Pero nomás él cobraba, yo ni sé cuánto cobraba, él tenía todo y no me daba a mí. Yo no conocía la plata. Cuando empecé a trabajar aparte él me quitó la plata que yo tenía para comprar algo a mi hija.


Linardelli, “Entre la finca, la fábrica y la casa,” 767. Original Spanish: Cuando llegué [a Mendoza] trabajé en el ajo con mi papá y mis hermanos, toda la familia junta. Pero nomás él cobraba, yo ni sé cuánto cobraba, él tenía todo y no me daba a mí. Yo no conocía la plata. Cuando empecé a trabajar aparte él me quitó la plata que yo tenía para comprar algo a mi hija.

Ataide, “Género y migraciones,” 2019. Original Spanish: Una tiene que volver y seguir haciendo en la casa. ¡Ay! ¡Qué pesado que era antes! ¡Una pesadilla, como para no acordarse! Ahora por ejemplo, tengo mis nenas más grandes, una va a la mañana al colegio y la otra va a la tarde. Ella, la que se queda a la mañana ya cocina, eso es una ayuda muy grande.


Hondagneu-Sotelo, Doméstica, 38.


Original Spanish: “…yo soy migrante y sigo migrante porque estando en Bolivia me hacen sentir que no estoy que me ido…Cuando migramos y dejamos nuestra tierra, no solo dejamos nuestra tierra, el lugar donde hemos nacido, sino dejamos a nuestra familia a nuestros amigos a todo el entorno social y cuando vamos por otro lado perdemos todo eso, …..vamos terminando siendo mucho más vulnerables todo el tiempo nos hacen sentir eso de que somos ajenos que somos extraños que no somos argentinos/as sino que somos siempre el ajeno que no tiene nada que no tiene derecho a reclamar (…) Y a volver nos pasa lo mismo, no? Cada que volvemos espero vos no sabes lo que está pasando acá porque vos ya no estás acá, vos ya no eres de acá vos qué opinas o sea por qué por qué opinas por qué te metes si vos no estás acá, si vos no sabes lo que está pasando si vos no estás viviendo lo que nosotros estamos viviendo como si a nosotras no nos doliera lo que está pasando acá. Obviamente que nos duele obviamente que de alguna manera vamos a tratar de ver y de saber lo que está pasando y de qué manera también nosotras tratamos de opinar, digamos, sobre lo que fue pasando (…)pero hemos visto una agresividad enorme o sea mensajes bastante horribles no solo de compañeros/as e inclusiva de familiares porque creo que la sociedad se ha roto de tal manera inclusiva la familia (…)”

McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, “Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Process toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements,” in Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures and Cultural Framings, ed. McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1–20.


Scott, Weapons of the Weak, 29.

Benencia, “Practices of Resistance.”

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Doméstica, 124.

Scott, Weapons of the Weak, 18.


Gorbán and Tizziani, “Comparative Perspectives on Domestic Work,” 16.

Scott, Weapons of the Weak, 29-30.


Benencia and Canevaro, “Migración boliviana y negocios,” 175-196; Pizarro, “Ciudadanos bonaerenses-bolivianos.”

Shoaff, Borders of Visibility, 73.

McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald., “Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Process.”

McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald,” Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Process,” 3.

McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald,” Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Process,” 10.

Original Spanish: Repudiamos la reforma por decreto de la ley de migraciones que no sólo vulnera derechos y estigmatiza, sino que busca dividirnos violentando nuestros históricos lazos de hermandad. Exigimos la anulación del Decreto de Necesidad y Urgencia 70/2017.

“Mujeres migrantes de Bolivia en Argentina - Delia Colque (Migrante),” Youtube video, 30:29, “Radio Deseo 103.3,” Feb 3, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_F0i3P9zT8 Original Spanish: Lo logramos armar con compañeras de otros colectivos migrantes el 2017 a raíz de un decreto de necesidad y urgencia que se creó allá en Argentina el 27 de enero del 2017 donde Mauricio Macri de alguna manera saca a este decreto como para volver a utilizar más nuestros derechos como migrantes y ante la alerta de esas situaciones donde nosotras tomamos la decisión, bueno, de organizarnos con compañeras que nos conocíamos de diferentes colectivos...tanto de Chile, de Paraguay de Perú de Bolivia....y después por suerte se fueron sumando compañeras de otros colectivos migrantes también.


Original Spanish: En el año 2017, nuestra situación como migrantes en Argentina cambió. Las políticas antimigratorias que desarrolló el gobierno de Mauricio Macri recrudecieron la xenofobia y el racismo.

Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados/as, “Para nosotras/os migrantes y refugiados/as que hacemos parte de,” Facebook, September 7, 2020. Original Spanish: Pero como migrantes, no nos íbamos a quedar sentados. Así nació la Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados/as. (…) Trabajamos sobre tres principales ejes. Primero, la anulación del DNU 70/2017 que modificó la Ley de Migraciones 25.871, que fue ejemplo mundial por brindar derechos como iguales a migrantes, haciéndoles sentir parte de la sociedad argentina. Con la aplicación de nefasto DNU, la palabra migrante se convirtió en sinónimo de criminalidad, estigmatizando al migrante pobre y trabajador.

Secretaría de Trabajadores Migrantes y Refugiados/as 2/2/2020

Bloque de Trabajadorxs Migrantes, Facebook, February 2, 2021.

Harlow, “Social Media and Social Movements,” 225.

Maria Elena Valenzuela and Claudia Mora, *Trabajo doméstico: un largo camino hacia el trabajo decente*. (Santiago de Chile: Organización Internacional del Trabajo, 2009), 925.

Ni Una Migrante Menos, Facebook, February 23, 2021.

English Translation: “the only fight loss is the one abandoned….migrating is not a crime…..we are against decree 70/2017 that separates migrant families…and we are going to bring down the patriarchy.”


Ni Una Migrante Menos, Facebook, March 1, 2021.

McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, “Introduction: Opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing process,” 2.


Blofield, *Care Work and Class*, 132-133.


Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work Arrangements,” 14.

Magliano, “Las trabajadoras invisibles,” 314.Original Spanish: (1) “más luchadora” and (2) “Creo que me he vuelto así después de que me pasaran tantas cosas.

Original Spanish: Es como una deuda pendiente que tengo conmigo misma… quiero ver de que manera también poder pasar todo ese conocimiento que yo he podido llegar a generar allá [en Argentina] acá [en Bolivia]… creo que lo que pasó con nosotras en casa lo pasan a montón de mujeres, un montón de familias. Y eso es algo que no me quedo tranquila digamos de que sigue habiendo mujeres que seguimos que siguen viviendo la situación que nosotras vivimos con mi mama y creo que es importante venir y buscarle la vuelta como para cambiar esa situación.


Courtis and Pacecca, “Domestic Work and International Migration”; Bastia, *Gender, Migration and Social Transformation*.

Courtis and Pacecca, “Domestic Work and International Migration”; Bastia, *Gender, Migration and Social Transformation*.

Ambort, María Eugenia. “Género, migración y trabajo en la agricultura familiar: Trayectorias laborales y migratorias de agriculturas bolivianas en el cinturón hortícola del gran La Plata (Argentina).” Revista Latinoamericana de Antropología del Trabajo 3, no. 6 (2019).


