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ScienceDirect

Journal of Behavior, Health & Social Issues xxx (2017) xxx–xxx

Journal of Behavior,
Health & Social Issues

www.journals.unam.mx/index.php/jbhsi

Monographic article

Effects of immigration on women's education. "Here they wake you up to a different way of thinking"[☆]

Efectos de la migración en la educación de mujeres. "Aquí te despiertan a una manera diferente de pensar"

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Received 23 March 2016; accepted 21 October 2016

Abstract

Immigration is a process that allows an individual to acquire capitals linked to attributes of education: knowledge, abilities, attitudes and values. Intrastate migration is a major phenomenon in Mexico that is dominated by women. In 2010, Yucatan was the state with the most internal movement. We applied a four-stage model to analyze migration among nine immigrant Maya women in Merida, the capital of Yucatan, during 2011. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Using this theoretical basis and content analysis, we identified types of capitals and their relationship to attributes of education, and how the studied women had used them during their rural-to-urban migration. Emphasis was placed on the Instability and Establishment stages, and the adjustments they made in their new urban environment. Immigration is clearly an element of informal education that allowed the studied women to develop new decision-making skills and ways of appreciating themselves.

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Keywords: Informal education; Gender migration; Human capital; Cultural capital; Social capital

Resumen

La migración es un proceso que permite al individuo adquirir capitales vinculados a los atributos de la educación: conocimientos, habilidades, actitudes y valores. La migración intra-estatal es un fenómeno importante en México dominado por las mujeres. En 2010, Yucatán tuvo la mayor migración interna. Utilizamos un modelo de cuatro etapas para analizar la migración de nueve mujeres inmigrantes mayas en Mérida, Yucatán, durante el año 2011. Empleamos entrevistas semi-estructuradas para obtener información. Con base teórica y análisis de contenido, identificamos tipos de capital y su relación con los atributos de la educación, y cómo las mujeres del estudio los utilizaron durante su migración rural a urbana. Hacemos hincapié en las etapas de Desequilibrio y Establecimiento y en los ajustes que realizaron en su nuevo entorno urbano. La inmigración es claramente un elemento de educación informal que permitió a las mujeres estudiadas desarrollar nuevas formas de apreciarse y habilidades para tomar decisiones.

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Palabras clave: Educación informal; Género migración; Capital humano; Capital cultural; Capital social

Introduction

Internal migration within Mexico has profound sociocultural and economic implications. In this study, we identify an informal education process to which immigrant Maya women are exposed in the city of Merida, Yucatan. Analyzing how it enriches their

[☆] Peer review under the responsibility of Asociación Mexicana de Comportamiento y Salud.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbhsi.2016.10.002>

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Please cite this article in press as: Salazar-Pastrana, A., et al. Effects of immigration on women's education. "Here they wake you up to a different way of thinking". *Journal of Behavior, Health & Social Issues*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbhsi.2016.10.002>

education is vital to better understanding the phenomenon of migration. Our analysis treats migration as a process involving actions that lead to personal changes caused by informal education.

Women who emigrate from rural to urban environments acquire and modify their cultural, human and social capitals (CK, HK and SK, respectively). They transform these into the tools they need to confront different life conditions as they interact with their new sociocultural and environmental surroundings. These capitals are closely linked to knowledge, abilities, attitudes, social values and relationships, all attributes of education (Argudín, 2005), and specifically of informal education (IE). We used the concept of capitals to identify the education acquired by women during a rural-to-urban migration process, and to analyze this process as an IE field.

To identify those IE attributes associated with migration and understand the life experiences of the participating women, we developed a four-stage model to distinguish how they acquired and modified their capitals before and after immigrating, and how they adjusted them to urban conditions. Use of the CK, HK and SK concepts was important because it allowed identification of the main education attributes present in each, and of how each constitutes an element of the IE that occurs during migration. We began by addressing the relationship between gender and migration, and the concepts of migration, education and capitals with the women who participated in the study.

The study's main aim was to analyze the acquisition, use and modification of CK, HK and SK as part of the IE process inherent to migration.

Migration

Migration within Mexico mainly involves women, whereas emigration from Mexico to other countries largely involves men. This difference is attributed to the costs, risks and benefits intrinsic to each kind of migration (Curran & Rivero-Fuentes, 2003).

Gender and migration

Over the last 40 years, gender and migration research has experienced three general phases. Between 1970 and 1985, interest in gender studies in Mexico first appeared and began to grow (Szasz, 1999). During this period, research focused on identifying differences in power relations, and emphasizing how actions, positions and privileges favored men. Studies highlighted how women were considered passive beings for whom men answered, and most analyzed the relationship between female migration, education and the labor market. Comparisons of education and income levels between men and women made it clear that income segregated the genders within the social dynamics of migration. Until gender studies developed as a discipline, gender had not been considered in studies of social relationships within the family, the labor market and migration. As it consolidated, from 1985 to 1995 (Ariza, 2007), the gender focus was applied to migration patterns, mainly by analyzing the domestic ambit. However, the discipline rarely addressed other areas where gender also plays a role, such as work, pol-

itics and consumer habits. Use of ethnographic methods with a gender focus helped to identify the conflicts and negotiations derived from male domination (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). Immediately before and during this period, analyses began to be limited to interpretations linked mainly to economic destructuring, thus losing sight of women's role in other migration-related social processes. In the third phase (1995–2005), gender studies focused on the effects of migration on work, wages and women's domestic role. Analyses were also done of how migration alters social relationships by improving women's social position through their incorporation into the labor market and social networks (SN) (Ariza, 2007; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007).

The migration process

This process “involves a series of anticipated, planned and tested acts” (Du Toit, 1990: 308) in which those involved can explore opportunities, confront new situations or return to the starting point before remaining in a place other than the point of origin. We considered two models that treat migration as a process and identify its stages. The first is a psychological model proposed by Tabor and Milfont (2011) that allowed us to identify not only relevant aspects of the women's daily life and their towns, and their motivation to migrate, but also the sociocultural and environmental adaptation process linked to migration. The second model is a human ecological approach proposed by Lomnitz (1975) that emphasizes the adaptation to environmental and cultural changes associated with migration.

The psychological model was based on the Change Model of DiClemente and Prochaska (1982), and divides the migration process into four stages: pre-contemplation; contemplation; action; and acculturation. Pre-contemplation involves development of certain abilities – intrapersonal factors, strength and perseverance, an individual's links to SNs – but without considering the possibility of emigrating. Contemplation is when emigration is considered as a possibility. This can occur in response to an unexpected job offer and/or undesirable conditions in the place of origin and/or attractive conditions at the destination. This is when emigration options are analyzed. Action is the act of emigrating, and requires social support before departure, during migration and after arrival. Acculturation occurs in response to contact with the new culture at the destination. This is when psychological adjustments and socio-cultural adaptation occur.

The ecological model involves three stages (Lomnitz, 1975): instability; movement; and establishment. Instability is characterized by environmental and/or social instability that causes displacement. Movement is the act of displacement, and the change of residence from the place of origin to a new place. Establishment is when interactions occur that link immigrants among themselves, facilitating their stay at the destination and making it lasting or permanent.

Our model integrates elements from both models to analyze the migration process as part of an IE field in which IE attributes can be identified as differentially expressed in HK, SK, and CK. It includes four stages:

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