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The labour complementarity between female international migration and national women in Spain from a gender perspective

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During last decade, Spain has experienced an important grown in its volume of immigrant population from outside the EU-25. Those recent flows are product of the development of a dual labour market, where immigrants hold those positions than native workers (due to the massive educational improvement) try to avoid. Intensity and temporal concentration of immigrations flows in Spain, and in general to all Southern EU countries, make especially interesting the study of labour segmentation in those countries. The labour demand due to the general improvement of native born population, especially of female population, is interpreted as the main reason of the massive arrival of international female migration. Data analysis shows processes of sociodemographic “complementarity” between native and foreign workers, where arrival of immigrants (more of them women) is directly related with a process of social and labour promotion of native population, in special of native women. This paper focuses in the female population, as female immigrant demand in the Spanish labour market is directed related with educational, labour and social improvement of young female generations in Spain. In this context, this upward labour and social mobility of young women have generated new labour demand to fill those gaps that young Spanish women are not going to hold anymore and also to fill new vacancies in domestic and other personal services, because of the increase female participation in the labour market.

Effectively, immigrant female labour demand is mainly product of the externalisation of domestic tasks, which were historically assumed by autochthonous women as a part of the reproductive work that was assigned to them in the division of gender roles. Despite of this, not all immigrant women are holding jobs in domestic

services and some men also may be found in these labour positions. However, what is true is that a great share of foreign women in Spain inserts in the labour market through domestic services and that their social image is derived from this position in the labour market. Moreover, all those different occupations that immigrant women hold could be identified as traditional feminine jobs: as a cleaners/ assistants/ taking care of children or old people, etc. As so on, immigrant women suffer a triple discrimination: class, gender and ethnic group discrimination.

In this context, far from the traditional model in which female migration was identify as family reunification migration posterior to their husbands or parents previous migrations, new female migration must be understood as a personal project of women, an answer to a specific labour demand.

In this investigation it has been used data from the Spanish Labour Force Survey for the 1999-2006 (second quarters) period. This survey interviews approximately 200.000 persons in 65.000 households and is representative of working age population in Spain. The survey contains a great variety of variables at individual level about socio-demographic and labour characteristics of population, as sex, age, employment status, employment characteristics of main job, labour status, previous work experience, search for employment, etc. that makes its analysis the best option for the purpose of this paper. In order to overcome any kind of under-representation of foreign population, Spanish LFS is modified in 2005 in order to adapt it to the new demographic and labour context, in special due to the rapid and recent grown of foreigners residing in Spain. One of the most significant changes was the substitution of the sampling frame based of 1991 Census by the new sampling frame based in the 2001 Census and successive population revisions. The most important consequence of this change is that new weight factors applied to the sample are more coincident with recent volume of population, recent age and sex structure in every region, and recent volume of population by nationality.

This paper aims to investigate which has been the impact of the recent and intense grown of immigrant feminine labour force in the Spanish segmented labour force. The starting hypothesis is that the demand of immigrant women in the Spanish labour market is a response to the improvement of the educational and socio-economic position of young female generations in Spain. Analysis demonstrates that young native

women prefer more skilled jobs, and those traditional female labour positions, such as domestic services or other personal services, are now reserved for immigrant women.

In a first section, a descriptive analysis about the labour characteristics of national and foreign female population in Spain is carried out. Their labour market experience is described analysing different aspects like: Economic Activity, the Employment Status, the Industry sectors, the Socio-economic group, the percentage of people working in Permanent or Temporary work. In the second part of the analysis, using explanatory models, through logistic regression analysis, the article tries to prove the hypothesis that differentials in the labour attainment of national and foreign women are not only due to personal characteristics (sex, educational levels, etc.) but also to their national identity. Finally, analysis aims to demonstrate that occupational position of foreign women in the Spanish labour market improves in parallel to the length of stay in the host country, as a consequence of the adaptation process to the new labour market and society that allows them to advance in their labour positions.