

I. INTRODUCTION. RESEARCH TOPIC AND ITS RELEVANCE

- **Introduction**

Taking households as the unit of analysis has become commonplace in economic studies of labour markets. However still not in studies of immigration. Given that much of recent migration to the developed countries is family based this omission in the literature leaves us with both a theoretical and methodological quandary. In order to obtain a complete understanding of immigrant decisions and behaviour, it is crucial to place individuals within their household context and that is what my dissertation aims to do.

In effect, family reunion became the main legal entry door for new immigrants into developed countries in the late seventies. From then onwards, the family has received an increasing attention in the analysis of the contemporary international migration. Initially, the "New Economics of Migration" demonstrated how the migration decision was a decision typically made by families/households, instead of isolated individuals; later on, different authors have studied how the family component affect the skill composition of migration flows (Borjas, 1990), the public budget of the host countries (Bauer et al., 1999) and the own process of integration of the immigrants into the receiving society (Waldinger, 1990; Portes, 1995; Light, 2000).

However, conventional explanations of the immigrants' economic performance in the receiving labour markets have often omitted references to the "household context". Such as omission, which may be explained by different reasons like the prevalence of males in labour migration and the lack of the required information on other household's members, might be particularly serious for the case of immigrants.

Just as the migration decision is often based upon what is best for the immigrant family rather than a particular family member (Massey, cita), the labour decisions at the

receiving countries are also expected to be family-conditioned. Even further, immigration policies ultimately result in the selection of families rather than individuals since, as repeatedly pointed out, whatever the original intentions of migrants, employers and governments, migration usually leads to family reunion and permanent settlement in receiving countries (Castles, 1997; Coob-Clark and Crossley, 2001:2).

Thus, the better understanding of the immigrants' labour behaviour and their economic performance clearly requires a household approach that simultaneously consider the behaviour of men and women and their interactions. My research precisely intends to contribute to these issues by focusing on the labour market behaviour of immigrant women, in particular on their participation in paid work and their earnings profile (assimilation and contribution to household income).

- **Relevance of the research**

This topic presents a twofold interest.

Firstly, the public debate on immigration is often framed within cost-benefit reasoning. Concerns on the economic consequences of immigration, their economic performance, welfare dependency and poverty risk become hot issues shortly after their arrival.

In effect, several circumstances increase the risk of poverty and, consequently, of welfare dependency among foreign households: on the one hand, immigrants are generally trapped in unskilled low-wage jobs with few career prospects and, on the other hand, the average size of foreign household tends to be larger than the native ones.

Taking into account that the risk of poverty is proved to be higher for single-earner households (Room, 1990; Smeeding et al., 1990; Förster, 1994, in Bernardi 1999: 13), than for dual-earner ones, the economic contributions of family members other than the husband, especially wives, may result a key factor in making better the economic position of immigrant households as a whole and, consequently, easier their members' integration into the receiving society.

In fact, some pieces of evidence have recently pointed out that women's contribution to family earnings creation is crucial for immigrants (Raijman and Tienda, 2000). In Canada, for instance, the share of the family earnings contributed by women is larger in immigrant families than in non-immigrant families and the trend is toward a still greater role for the immigrant wife in the earnings creation of the family (Worswick, 1996: 392-393)¹.

However, the labour participation rate of foreign women is systematically lower than that of their native counterparts, as Table 1 shows. Activity rates widely differ between nationals and foreigners, both for men and women. However, while the sign of the male differential varies across countries (male foreigners have participation rates higher than native in some countries and lower in others), differences among women display a more similar pattern. With the exception of Austria, Italy and Luxembourg, foreign women systematically suffer participation rates much lower than their native counterparts. Looking at the foreign women column, one can see that the percentage of female participation is around 50% (higher in Austria, Finland and US, and lower in Belgium and Netherlands). One question rises immediately: who are the immigrant women that work and why they work? Or, conversely, why 50% of female immigrants do not work?

Table 1. Participation Rates of national and foreign population by sex

	Men			Women		
	Nationals	Foreigners	Differential	Nationals	Foreigners	Differential
Austria	79,8	84,3	4,5	62,4	63,4	1
Belgium	72,9	69	-3,9	55,1	40,7	-14,4
Denmark	84,1	69,4	-14,7	76	51,6	-24,4
Finland	76	81	5	70,2	57,8	-12,4
France	75	76,1	1,1	62,5	49	-13,5
Germany	79,4	77,3	-2,1	63,4	48,7	-14,7
Ireland	77,4	73,3	-4,1	52,1	50,9	-1,2
Italy	73,6	89,1	15,5	44,4	54	9,6
Luxembourg	74,6	78,3	3,7	43,9	53,5	9,6
Netherlands	83,2	66,5	-16,7	63,5	40,8	-22,7
Sweden	79,1	70,5	-8,6	73,4	52,9	-20,5
UK	83	78,1	-4,9	67,4	56,1	-11,3
Australia	74,8	70,8	-4	57,1	48,7	-8,4
Canada	73,8	68,4	-5,4	60,2	52,9	-7,3
US	82,8	87,4	4,6	72,5	62,2	-10,3

Source: OECD, SOPEMI Reports; Trends in International Migration, 2000.

¹ Even when immigrant women are mainly housewives, they often earn a wage at home, working in the informal economy (Light, 2000: 135; Raijman and Tienda, 2000: 296).

Secondly, birth rates in most of developed countries have dipped so low that they threaten to shrink the populations and undermine the European equivalents of Social Security. Some people are increasingly looking to immigration by young Third Worlders and their children to maintain the current proportion of workers to pensioners².

However, the argument about the potential benefits from replacement migration is misleading because such benefits largely depend on the economic performance accomplished by immigrants in receiving countries. If a significant share of immigrants undertake family formation/reunion processes and settle permanently in the receiving countries, their potential contribution to the maintenance of the pensions system will depend not only on the tax they pay but also on the money they receive. Both the former and the latter are directly related to their economic performance in the labour market³.

The aforementioned reasons make evident that questions like why some immigrant women decide to work and others not and how do they perform once employed, are relevant questions for both the foreign populations themselves and the receiving societies as a whole.

- **Contributions of my research**

My research will make two basic contributions to the analysis of the immigrants' economic performance:

On the one hand, by putting the analysis in a household (rather than individual) framework, I will be able test the different ways in which husbands and wives interact with each other regarding their labour behaviour and performance. In particular, the focus on **women within households** may provide us with a better understanding of the economic role of the household for immigrant populations and will allow us to analyse

² The French Minister of the Interior is proposing the European Union {TO} admit 75 million immigrants. [<http://www.vdare.com/eu.htm>] and a recent United Nations report asserts that to maintain the same ratio of retirees to workers as at present, over the next 50 years Italy would have to take in 113 million immigrants - and Germany 182 million! [<http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration.htm>]

³ On the other hand, immigrant women are often assumed to have higher fertility rates. However, this fact may change according to their labour market activity and, consequently, the demographic and economic benefits from immigration might be lower than expected.

issues like the partner's influence on female labour behaviour, the effect of children on women's activity, the effects of extended household structure for women's work (child-rearing support and other household's income).

On the other hand, both migration and integration are processes. Thus, to analyse them requires a **dynamic approach**, in order to assess correctly changes through time. I will apply such dynamic analysis, either **life course analysis** (a statistical technique that permits to analyse the impact of key life events on the individual behaviour) or a **cohort analysis**, which focuses on different cohorts of immigrants instead of individuals (see Data availability section), depending on data constraints.

II. EXPLAINING THE LABOR MARKET PERFORMANCE OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN

▪ Human Capital Theory, Transferability of Skills and Assimilation

The Human Capital Theory emphasises the role of individual endowments in the explanation of the labour market success (or failure), in particular the importance of schooling and training that increases the labour productivity of individuals and thus their earnings' capacity. Accordingly, the human capital approach predicts that the higher the educational level of individuals, the higher will be their wage and occupational status (citar Chiswick y otros).

However, the effect of education is not so clear for immigrants because they face many difficulties in transferring pre-migration skills and schooling to the host labour market upon arrival. In effect, the transferability of skills is expected to be low between countries with different level of development, different languages and different labour market structures. So, the more different are sending and receiving countries regarding these aspects, the larger the initial earnings gap between immigrants and natives (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1999).

Even so, the human capital approach expects immigrants to improve their socio-economic position as time elapses. The explanation is not acculturation as much as post-migration human capital investments. With increased time of residence in the host country, the migrants are expected to invest in the country-specific human capital of the receiving country and adapt their stock of human capital acquired in the country of origin. This additional human capital investment will improve the position of the migrants in the occupational hierarchy, as well as increase their earnings when compared to natives.

In short, the initial employment and wages gaps between natives and immigrants are expected to reduce with the time of residence in the host country as the immigrant invests in specific human capital, learns the language and adapts his/her original skills to the requirements of the new labour market.

The vast majority of the available studies are framed within the human capital approach and offer different results for male and female immigrants. Regarding the former, many research show that immigrant men have significantly lower wages than non-immigrant men at the time of arrival and they experience low rates of wage assimilation (Worswick, 1996: 384). However, there exist large differences across nationalities⁴. Regarding females, the evidence remains inconclusive although many studies point out that immigrant women, unlike their male counterparts, are found to reduce hours of work with years since migration and suffer a flatter wage profile along time⁵. These results for female immigrants have challenged the assimilation hypothesis and forced researchers to look for alternative explanations. In doing so, they have formulated and developed the Family Investment Hypothesis.

▪ **Family Investment Hypothesis**

The Family Investment Hypothesis (FIH) emerges as alternative explanation for the counterintuitive findings that the labour-market participation of immigrant women is higher than that of the native women upon arrival but declines with years since migration. According to the human capital theory, immigrants were expected to assimilate to the native population, in terms of employment and wages, as their time of residence in the host country increased. While the empirical evidence confirmed the hypothesis for the case of male immigrants, whose earnings assimilation is quicker than that of women⁶, the female labour experience did not fit the assimilation hypothesis, as pointed above.

Long (1980) tried to explain simultaneously these unexpected results, by formulating the Family Investment Hypothesis (FIH), which has been successively tested (Long,

⁴ Chiswick, Borjas, etc... for US; Schmidt (1992), Pischke (1992), Dustmann (1993) and Litch and Steiner (1994) for Germany; Chiswick (1980) and Bell (1997) for the UK; Kee (1993) for Netherlands; Winter-Eber (1994) for Austria; Venturini and Villosio (2000) for Italy.

⁵ Chiswick (1980a and 1980b), Blau (1980), Long (1980), Reimers (1985), Duleep (1988), MacPherson and Stewart (1989), Duleep and Sanders (1993), Duleep, Regets and Snaders (1998) for the US; Beach and Worswick (1993), Baker and Benjamin (1994), Worswick (1996), Baker and Benjamin (1997) for Canada; Coob-clark and Crossley (2001a and 2001b) for Australia; Dustman (2000) for Germany and Dahle and Holdsworth (1997) for UK.

⁶ Worswick (1996) challenged these results for the case of Canada, by comparing the earnings of the immigrant married men and women in tandem relative to their non-immigrants counterparts. The wage differential between immigrant and natives was found to be lower for women than for men and to evolve more positively.

1980). The rationale of the new hypothesis is the following: immigrants suffer different difficulties in adapting their skills' profile to the receiving labour market upon arrival (language, non-transferability of pre-migration skills, lack of knowledge about the institutions and functioning of the receiving labour market, etc.). In order to overcome these difficulties, they need to make specific-country human capital investments but they face strong credit constraints for financing them. The FIH maintains that the immigrant families' strategy for overcoming such constraints consists of a particular division of task in the labour market: females find employment shortly after arrival in jobs that offer relatively high initial wages but little future growth. The earnings from this employment finance family consumption, while their husbands undertake investments that command low initial wages but larger returns. Once the husband has completed the human capital investments and achieves better paid jobs, the wife give up the paid work and return home (see Baker and Benjamin, 1997)⁷.

However, the available empirical evidence remains inconclusive. Some studies affirm that labour force participation of immigrant women decreases with years since migration (Long 1980, Duleep & Sanders 1993; Beach & Worswick, 1993) while others deny it (Chiswick 1980, Reimers 1985 and Worswick 1996). Some studies conclude that female immigrants' assimilation is lower and slower than male (Long, 1980; Beach & Worswick, 1993; Baker & Benjamin, 1997) and other conclude the opposite (Worswick, 1996).

In short, since the behaviour of immigrant households is quite complex and, since there is weak evidence to support the family investment hypothesis and since there is strong evidence that other factors, like family type and gender roles, are also at work, a dynamic analysis of the labour behaviour of immigrant women that include individual endowments, family factors and characteristics of the migration process itself, is clearly required.

In effect, the FIH presents some weaknesses and leave many unanswered questions:

⁷ The described specialisation along gender lines assumes males to be the partners who enjoy the comparative advantage in the receiving labour market. In principle, to proxy comparative advantage in the labour market by gender is empirically-supported since that immigrant men seem to receive the same return on education as non-immigrant men (Worswick, 1996: 386), while female immigrants suffer lower

1) They commonly use cross-sectional data or pooling time series with a time-span restrained to a short period (three or five years in the majority of studies). So they are incapable to capture the medium and long-term variation in labour market behaviour. They do not disentangle the factors explaining female immigrants' labour force participation after the first years, which is likely to be crucial in understanding the role of the women's work on the economic situation of the immigrant households.

2) They are focused on traditional immigration countries like US, Canada and Australia, and on some particular immigrant groups, especially Asians (Hispanics are frequently omitted and when included no internal distinction by nationality is made).

As a result, the existing studies on the labour participation of married immigrant women concentrate in a particular migration pattern (couples whose members arrived simultaneously) in labour markets with little segmentation and a little role of the welfare state. These elements make difficult to generalise the achieved conclusions to other countries and other national groups' experience.

Firstly, family migration usually follows a staggered path in which family reunion emerges as a crucial event for immigrants. In traditional cases of family reunion the wife arrives several years later than her husband. In these cases, husbands are expected to be already employed and to have economic stability upon their wives' arrival, so it makes no sense to explain the entering of immigrant wives in the labour market by appealing to her role as secondary worker who finances her partner's human capital investments⁸. Thus, it is necessary to disentangle the factors explaining the labour market participation of married immigrant women who migrated after their husbands (higher pre-migration skills, economic necessity, husband's dismissal, household size).

rates of return on education than their native counterparts (Long 1980 for US; Beach and Worswick 1993 and Worswick 1996 for Canada).

⁸ Firstly, housing and economic requirements exist in most the family reunion regulations. And secondly, the likelihood of human capital investments decreases with age and "years since migration" (Coob-Clark and Crossley, 2001a). Previous research has shown that human capital investments are decreasing with age, years since migration after the first period of settlement (inverted U-shaped relationship, which means YSM have a positive effect during the first years upon arrival and a negative effect after) and transferability of pre-migration skills and increasing with the refugee migrant status (versus labour migrant). The evidence on the impact of own pre-migration educational level and the tied-mover status is inconclusive, although some pieces of research regarding the former conclude that the relationship is positive.

An important question is does first-movers' gender make any difference regarding the household labour supply decision?

Secondly, given the many differences regarding both the immigration policies and the structure and functioning of labour markets among different countries, the economic decisions of immigrants are likely to cope with a very different set of incentives depending on the country they enter (i.e., returns on human capital are lower and more uncertain in Europe than in US, whereas welfare state benefits play a greater role). In effect, institutional factors should receive more attention in explaining immigrants' economic behaviour and some other theories beyond the human capital, in particular the social capital and networks theories, should be taken into consideration.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Once surveyed the relevant literature and the available empirical evidence, I can specify the questions that I intend to answer with my research:

1. Whether and how the processes of migration and family formation affect the labour market behaviour of immigrant women.
 - 1.1. Does pre or post-migration marriage make a difference? How?
 - 1.2. Does the first-mover status modify the labour behaviour of married immigrant women? Does the pre-marriage (or pre- family reunification) work experience make a difference?
2. How the impact of the household structure on labour behaviour differs among native and immigrant women?
 - 2.1. How the labour decisions of immigrant wives are related to their husbands:
 - Are immigrant wives more likely to work when their husband is unemployed?
 - Are immigrant wives married to low-wage husbands more likely to work?
 - Do immigrant women work exclusively to finance the human capital investments of their husbands?
 - 2.2. How the labour decisions of immigrant wives are related to the presence of children and other adults within the households?
 - Do children hamper the labour activity of immigrant women to the same extent than that of native women?
 - Does the presence of adults other than the husband increase labour force participation of immigrant women by providing them with child-rearing assistance? Or, on the contrary, does it hamper labour force participation via supplementary household incomes?
3. What are the effects of welfare benefits and services on labour force participation of married immigrant women?
4. Within two-earners immigrant households, which is the importance of wives' earnings in the total household income? Is it higher within poor households? Is it higher or lower than in non-immigrant households?

IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

- **Dependent Variable: economic performance (female labour market participation, earnings and contribution to family income creation)**

A complete assessment of individuals' the labour market performance implies a twofold task: firstly, to analyse the entry/access to the labour market and, then, the outcomes obtained once inside it. Regarding the former (access), the factors underlying the entry, exit and re-entry decisions have to be disentangled. Regarding the latter (performance), earnings profile and mobility patterns need to be explained.

Immigrants' labour force participation is less widely understood than their earnings assimilation experience (Baker and Benjamin, 1997: 705). However, the few studies that examine hours of work emphasise linkages within the family. Given that my interest focuses precisely on those linkages, which are expected to be particularly relevant for the case of women, the main concern of my research will be with the participation decision.

In fact, as Dustmann pointed out, "participation issues present a formidable obstacle to direct wage comparisons between immigrant and native women" (Dustmann, 2000: 3). In other words, the understanding of the behavioural patterns regarding labour force participation among immigrant women comes first than analysing their wage assimilation. However, depending on the quality of data and the kind of analyses that they finally allow for, I will focus only on participation (in case of event history analysis possible) or, more generally, on economic performance.

- **Looking for explanations. Independent variables and hypothesis**

1. Independent variables

In explaining the female labour supply we can distinguish between those factors that influence women in general and those unique to immigrant women. The former include individual endowments, family factors and economic factors; the latter include variables related to the migration process itself and institutional factors related to immigration policy provisions.

1. Traditional variables:
 - 1.1. Individual: age, sex, education, experience (pre and post-migration), marital status,
 - 1.2. Familial: household size and composition (number of children and their ages, other adults' presence, their sex and activity) and husband's characteristics (nativity, educational level, social class).
 - 1.3. Economic factors: husband's wage, other household members' income, non-labour income
2. Immigrant-specific variables:
 - 2.1. Migration process: cohort, age at migration, time of residence, marital status at migration time, first-mover or tied-mover status, family reunion process (order and timing), permanence expectations (temporal or permanent migration) and national origin.
 - 2.2. Institutional factors: immigration provisions regarding both family reunion and labour market access.

2. Hypotheses

In the following paragraphs I will focus on those variables most directly related to the interplay between migration and family formation processes: cohort, age at migration, years since migration, migration timing within the reference-household, marriage timing (pre or post-migration) and household composition.

1. **Cohort and age at migration:** Labour force participation is expected to be increasing with cohort and decreasing with age at migration.

The most recent cohorts are expected to include women with an average educational level higher than the older cohorts, according to the process of education expansion in less developed countries. Regarding the effect of age, for immigrants the crucial variable is age at migration rather than age. Those women who migrated when they were a child are likely to have attended the school at the host country and thus to have a country-specific skills, fluency in the host country language and preferences regarding participation in paid work more similar to native women. Women who migrated once

they were adult are expected to offer more or less hours in the labour market depending on their family responsibilities (see below).

2. **Years since migration:** in principle, the more years since migration, the more similar the labour behaviour between immigrants and natives (assimilation hypothesis). However, as I pointed out before, the available evidence regarding this issue remains inconclusive.
3. **Migration timing within the reference-household:** migration is a “household decision” thus it has to be analysed within the household context. The reference-household is the household to which the woman belongs, that is the “parental home” for single women and the “marital home” for married women.

A single women may migrates either independently or to join the “parental home” (or some of its members) at the country of destination; a married woman may migrates either independently or to join the “marital home” (her husband) at the country of destination. Those who migrate independently are first-movers within their reference-households and those who migrate to join others are tied-movers. Thus we have the following typology:

1. Single woman who migrates independently
2. Single woman who migrates to join the parental home
3. Married woman who migrates independently
4. Married woman who migrates to join her husband
5. Married woman who migrates at the same time as her husband

First-mover migrants, either single or married, are the most likely to work immediately after migration since their wages probably are the main source of income for themselves and/or their families at the country of origin. However, in the medium-term, after the first years upon arrival, both first and tied-movers’ behaviour regarding market work is expected to be conditioned by the process of family formation (for single) and family reunion (for married), as I specify below.

4. **Family formation and reunification, household composition and income**

I expect “first-mover status” to have a lasting effect on participation, that is, higher participation rates among those who migrated as first-movers, even after marriage or family reunion. The hypothesis is that a “previous work experience in the host country” is likely to alter in some way traditional gender roles regarding the household labour supply decisions.

However, familial and economic factors will affect both first and tied-movers.

- **Household size and composition:**

The larger the households' size the larger the economic needs they have to cope with and, consequently, the stronger the pressure for increases in the total amount of labour supplied to the market. However, composition is even more important than size: additional children and non-nuclear relatives (mother in law, grandparents, brothers and sisters of the partners and so on) are likely to have different effect on the likelihood of participate in paid work for women, depending on their own situation regarding activity. Immigrant women living in extended households (which include one or more non-nuclear members) are more likely to work if non-nuclear members are out of the labour market (i.e, grandparents) due to a twofold reason: firstly, they represent an additional economic charge for the family and, secondly, they may release women's time by providing child-care and home work help. On the contrary, the presence of younger relatives in the households, especially if they are males, are likely to reduce wives' market work since probably they will provide the household with additional income to compensate the augmented economic needs.

- **Household income:**

Women's labour supply decisions are heavily influenced by cultural factors and traditional gender role patterns. However, women in households suffering financial constraints are likely to be more heavily pressed by economic factors than women who do not face such constraints. Thus, immigrant women living in households below line of poverty are expected to supply more market work.

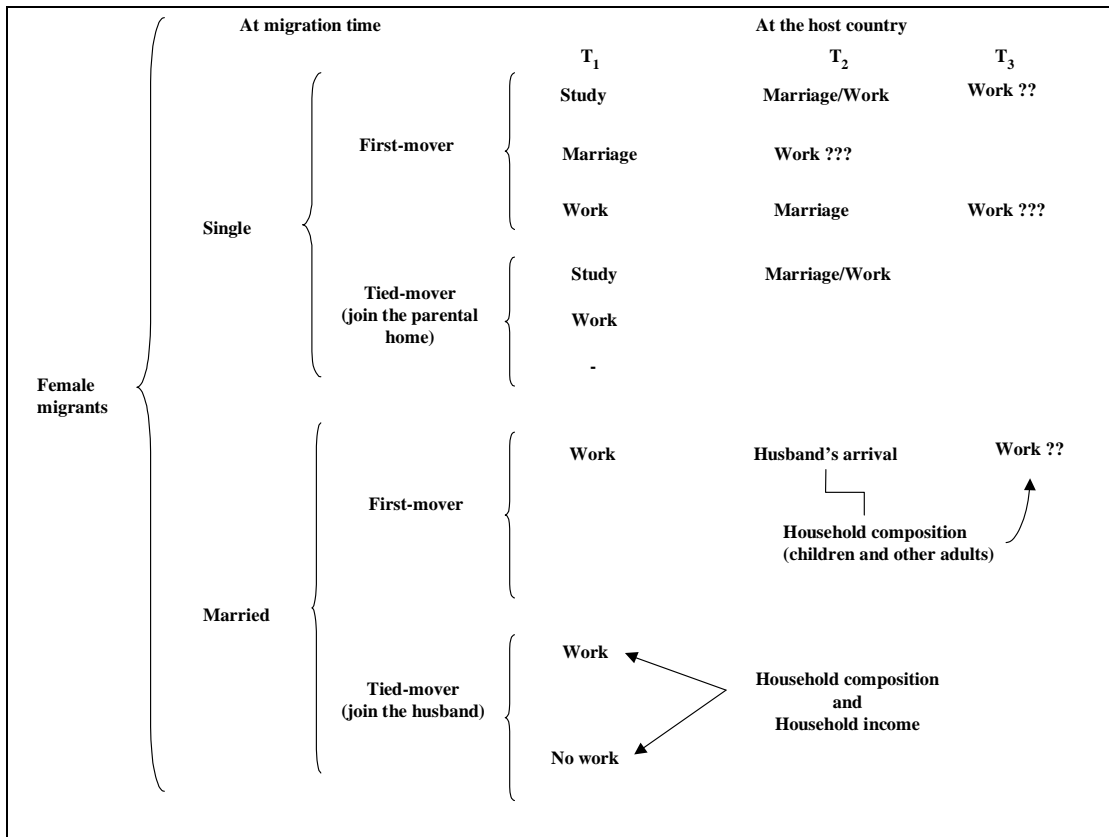
A twofold comparative strategy

In order to answer the aforementioned questions, I may follow a twofold comparative strategy: 1) comparisons across family types within the same country and 2) comparisons across countries within the same national groups.

1. Comparison across family types within the same host country

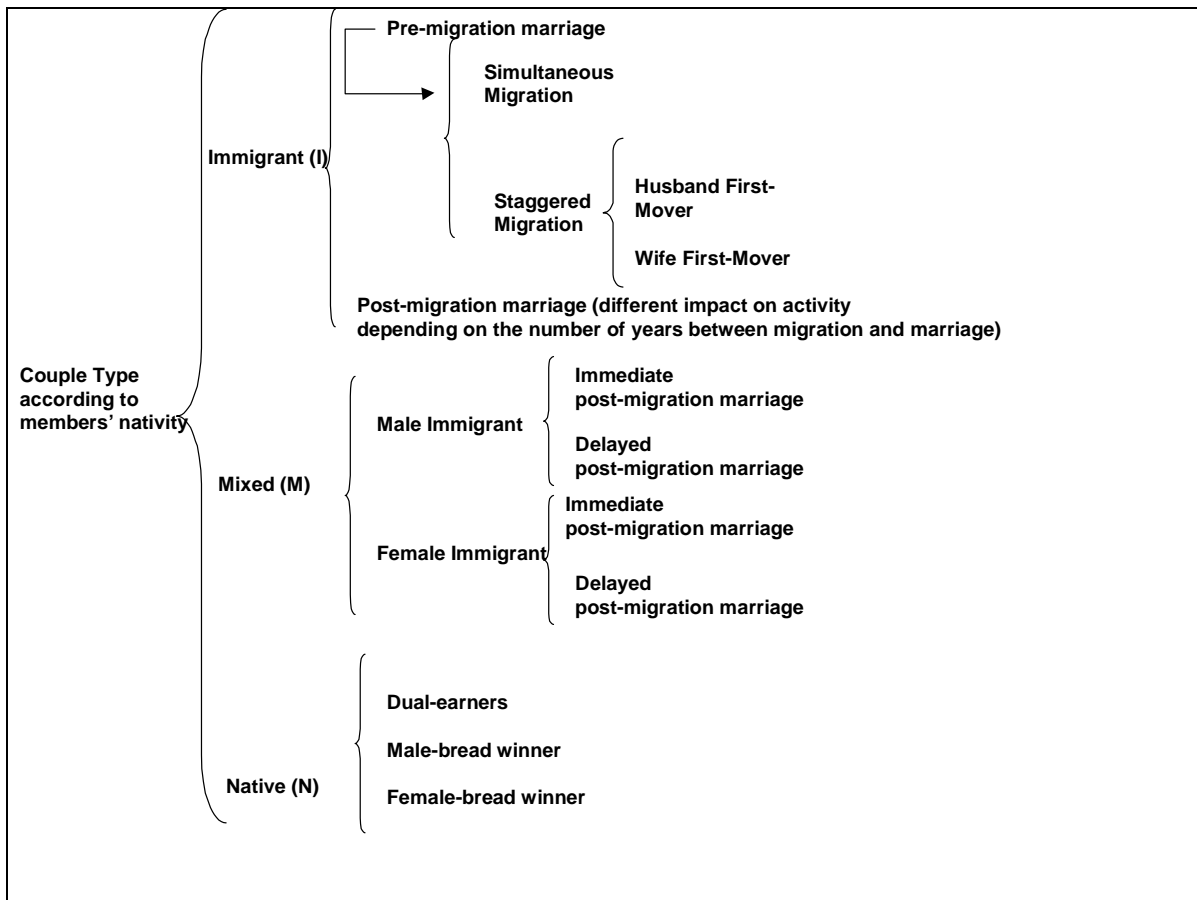
As I mentioned before, single and married women are expected to display remarkably different labour behaviour. Consequently, I will analyse each group of immigrant women separately, as the Scheme 1 shows.

Scheme 1. Single and married immigrant women



However, the focus will be on married immigrant women, especially those married to an immigrant partner, since my intention is to analyse women's work within the household context. However, I will make use of married women in mixed and native couples as control groups, in order to test hypotheses related to the credit-constraints argument or the potential usefulness of the social capital of the native partner and to assess the importance of the migrant status itself and the integration process into the receiving society.

Scheme 2. Couples according to nativity



Thus I will carry out the following comparisons:

- 1) Comparison between single and married women, controlling by socio-economic variables, especially educational level, in order to assess to what extent “marriage” hampers participation in paid work for immigrant women.
- 2) Comparison between immigrant and mixed couples. This comparison will allow me to test both the family investment/credit-constraints and the social capital hypotheses.

Regarding the former, immigrant females with native spouses do not face the same need to perform a borrowing function for their families as their counterparts with immigrant husbands since native husbands are likely to need less human capital investments and, in any case, they are likely to be less credit-constrained. Consequently, immigrant women in mixed couples are expected to behave more similarly to native women.

However, immigrant women with a native partner experience a twofold and contradictory influence regarding their labour behaviour. On the one hand, they are less likely to enrol the paid work during the first years upon arrival than immigrant women with an immigrant partner because the former suffer neither the transferability of skills nor the credit-constraints problems. However, on the other hand, they are likely to have benefit of husband's social capital, which may ease job search and language learning and, thus, increase both labour activity and wage performance.

Moreover, if the reason underlying the labour behaviour of immigrant women are cultural preferences about the appropriate division of labour between men and women (gender roles ideologies) instead of the aforementioned credit-constraints, we would expect to see little variation in women's outcomes across mixed and immigrant families (Coob-Clark and Crossley, 2001b: 14).

In short, the question here is whether the presence of a native spouse accelerates the process of assimilation of immigrant women or not and why.

However, two problems to deal with are the difficulty for obtaining samples of mixed couples large enough and the possibility of "selectivity into mixed marriage". In case of lacking of data for mixed couples, an alternative strategy to test the credit-constraints hypothesis may be to consider immigrant women married to immigrant men with more than 8/10 years of settlement as "mixed couples" (see Coob-Clark and Crossley, 2001b). However, this possibility would prevent us of analysing the role of gender ideologies and cultural differences regarding them.

3) Comparison between immigrant and native couples. Any assessment of the immigrants' economic performance must hold comparable natives as a benchmark. In fact, this is the only way to assess the importance of the migrant status itself and the improvements or failures of the integration process. Moreover, if we intend to evaluate the impact of the immigration and welfare policies on the situation of immigrants, the comparison with the native people becomes obligatory.

4) Comparison between mixed and native couples.

2. Comparison across countries: the same immigrant group (national origin) in different countries

This second comparison will allow me to catch properly the effect of institutional factors on the immigrants' labour behaviour. By focusing on particular immigrant groups who settle in countries that differ regarding immigration policies and welfare arrangements, I will be able to assess critically the positive or negative impact of issues like child-care facilities, family allowances, social assistance, mandatory waiting-period after arrival for entering the labour market on the labour participation of immigrant women.

Data availability and cases studies

One of the hardest tasks while designing this proposal has been to find the required data sets. Panel data are still scarce and panel data including immigrant populations are even harder to find. The basic dilemma that I face is to sacrifice “quality” in favour of “interest” or viceversa. Some longitudinal data on immigrant households are available in Australia, Germany and Sweden. However, the immigrants’ profile in these countries does not match my research questions adequately because of different reasons. On the contrary, countries receiving immigration flows that contain a considerable share of female economic migrants and “family migration” only offer pooled data, which allow to follow only cohorts but not individuals like in the US or cross-sectional like in Spain.

1) Longitudinal data: Sweden and Germany

- Sweden: LINDA is a register-based longitudinal data set that consists of a large panel of individuals and their household members, which is representative for the population during the period 1960 to 1998⁹. LINDA also includes a specific sample of immigrants (20% of total immigrant population, approximately). This sample has the same design and covers the same time period as the population sample. Both statistical quality and substantive information are good. However, the Swedish immigration profile sharply differs from other Western European countries, which render short the possibility of substantive generalisations. Economic migrants to Sweden were abundant during the 1960s but from 1990 onwards the largest share of immigrants are political refugees coming from Asian countries (Iran, Iraq) and ex-Yugoslavia. Besides, most of the former economic migrants came from other Nordic countries (Finland above all) and, consequently, their socio-economic characteristics widely differ from the current economic migration coming from the less developed countries. In addition, the Swedish labour market presents specific characteristics (high minimum wages, strong occupational sex-segregation between public/private employment, etc.) that makes extremely difficult for low-skilled immigrants to find a job. Thus, the results of applying my analysis to the Swedish case might be very interesting from a methodological point of view (it would be one of the first dynamic analyses of

⁹ <http://www.nek.uu.se/pdf/2000wp19.pdf>

household labour supply among different immigrants groups, political and economic migrants) but not so much in substantive terms.

- Germany: The immigrant sub-sample of the GOSEP (German Socio-Economic Panel) includes detailed information not only on individuals but also on households with specific questions on migration issues¹⁰. However, the sub-sample is restricted to five immigrant groups (Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Yugoslavian and Turkish) and its size is relatively small to carry out analyses group by group. Like in the Swedish case, the characteristics of post-war migration to Germany (guest-workers programs) are completely different from the most recent flows. In addition, it does not allow the comparison between immigrant and mixed couples and the share of women who migrates before their husbands is relatively low (approximately 30% for the five groups together).

However, the mentioned data sets would allow us to compare two specific groups (Turks and Ex-Yugoslavians are large groups in both countries and adequately represented in the respective dataset) in different institutional contexts. Sweden and Germany represent different welfare regimes (Scandinavian and Corporatist model respectively) and different immigration policies, Sweden having more generous immigrant specific provisions aimed at promoting their integration. So the comparison of their experience in each country allows us for an ideal comparative design in which cultural patterns can be controlled for.

2) Pooled data from decennial Census: UK, (France??) and US

- UK: 1% Household Samples of Anonymised Records (SARs) is a sample of the Census that contains data at the household level, including ethnic minorities. It is available for 1991 and 2001. In addition, the British Household Panel Study and the ONS Longitudinal Study allow for ethnic-specific research. The latter is a database

¹⁰ "Sample B \Foreigners in the FRG" covers persons in private households with a Turkish, Greek, Yugoslavian, Spanish or Italian household head. Compared to Sample A (native population) the population of Sample B is oversampled in order to allow for stand-alone analyses of this population which was thought to be affected by additional drop-out behaviour, due to re-migration. It started in 1984 with 1393 households (1326 in the 95% Scientist Use Version). In 1994/95 started "Sample D \Immigrants" with two different samples (D1 and D2) that makes a total of 522 households. This sample

linking census and vital event information for one percent of the population of England and Wales at each Census date since 1971 (1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001), which includes a representative sample of ethnic minorities population. However, I have to check the kind of information it includes and its reliability.

- US: Decennial Census allow for cohorts analyses of specific national origin groups. I am particularly interested in the US case because it is one of the main receivers of feminised immigration flows, coming both from South American and Asian countries. This is particular of my interest since South American groups (Argentineans, Peruvians, Ecuadorians and Colombians) account for a considerable share of the migrants leaving for Spain as well. In fact, I am considering the possibility of carrying out a comparative research on specific South American groups in both countries, despite of the data difficulties in the Spanish case. Suggestions are welcome.

consisted of households in which at least one household member had moved from abroad to West Germany after 1984.

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