

The impact of family models on spatial mobility and integration of immigrants in Spain

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Due to the sustained and recent arrival of immigrants in the country, significant demographic change has taken place in Spain over the last ten years; not only has this change altered the public face of the population already resident in the community, it has also transformed its demographic structure and its development. In a new era of international migration shaped by the internationalization of societies, Spain is no longer a society from which people emigrate; rather, it has become a host society for people coming from an ever-increasing number and variety of countries.

This sudden change of direction in the trend – intensity and type – of migratory flows has brought visible and significant change in Spanish society. In numerical terms, Spain heads the list among members of the European Community with regard to the acceptance of foreign immigrants. Hence, the increasing significance of migration issues for society as a whole, which is reflected in the coverage they receive on a daily basis in the media. Foreign immigration has become a thought-provoking, sometimes worrying, and engaging subject of public debate in Spain. As a result, it has also become a focus of interest in academic terms, and of research in general.

In spite of the important work that has been carried out in this regard thus far, our understanding of this issue, which is of such fundamental importance to Spanish society, remains partial. Among the reasons which may explain such limited understanding are the following: the relative novelty of the phenomenon; the speed at which it has taken place; given the high rates of mobility among (often unregulated) immigrants, the difficulty inherent in any study of this kind; and the limited statistical sources available on a national scale. Studies carried out therefore have focused on specific groups, nationalities or defined territorial areas, using *ad hoc* designed surveys; in many cases, moreover, the methodology followed has been a qualitative one. A review of the published literature on this issue discloses that none has adopted the family as a structural principle for such research. Studies which focus on the immigrant as an individual, rather than as a member of a family group, are the most common.

The recent National Survey of Immigrants (“Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes”, ENI) (2007) carried out by the National Statistics Institute (Spain) enables the development of a more precise and detailed account of many of the still little understood aspects of the international migration phenomenon and, in particular, of the characteristics of the foreign population, the spatial mobility and social integration processes of which they are part, and the role of the family in both.

The survey was drawn up for respondents 16 years old and upwards born in a foreign country, and living in a family residence for a period of one year or longer, or intending to reside in Spain for at least one year. The nationality of the respondents – Spanish or otherwise – was not a consideration for the survey. The sample framework was the municipal continuous register (“padrón”) of the population. The sample size was 15,500 people. In contrast to the information sources on the immigrant population and its mobility available thus far – the 2001 Census of the population, the municipal population register (“padrón”), the residential variations statistics (“estadística de variaciones residenciales”) which derive from the latter, and the Migrations Yearbook (“anuario de migraciones”) – the ENI supplies a greater amount of better information, including biographical detail. Complementary aspects of the other information sources are enhanced, exploring household structure, the characteristics of living conditions, family relationships (parents, siblings and children living together and apart), the situation in the country of origin, migration routes, professional development, development in terms of accommodation, and relations with the home country and within Spain.

The purpose of the study outlined here is to examine the influence of immigrant family models on spatial mobility and social integration patterns. On the basis of an analysis of the nature of immigrant households, mobility patterns are explored in relation to family types and the correlations between family, residential and professional stability in order to assess the degree to which immigrants are integrated within Spain in social terms. The discriminant variables comprise the following: the period of time spent in the country, the family reagrupation, the sex, and the nationality of those interviewed. The guiding hypotheses of the study are as follows: first, the process of integration is more fluid and successful for those immigrants living with family members of school-going age; and, second, even if that is the case, there are significant differences between immigrants depending on their nationality.

The methodological approach to be followed in this study is quantitative. The questionnaire data will be entered in the SPSS program for subsequent analysis. The study

will proceed on the basis of descriptive statistical analyses of the relevant variables. Thereafter, by means of a multivariate logistic regression analysis, the predictive factors in social integration are to be defined.