



Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics

**GENDER, GENERATION AND IMMIGRATION:
FAMILY REUNION IN SPAIN**

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Resum.- *Gènere, generació i immigració: el reagrupament familiar a Espanya*

En els darrers anys del boom migratori a Espanya -amb l'arribada de més de cinc milions d'immigrants des del començament del segle XXI-, el reagrupament familiar ha augmentat en volum, tot i el caràcter restrictiu de la legislació vigent. Per analitzar el tema s'utilitza, com exemple, les dades de la Subdelegació del Govern de Barcelona, per al període 2004-2008 (es van enregistrar 109.863 sol·licituds de reagrupament familiar). Els resultats mostren clarament les diferents estratègies migratòries segons gènere, essent un dels aspectes més importants per entendre els patrons diferencials del reagrupament familiar, per nacionalitats. Les polítiques restrictives són aparentment alienes a les dinàmiques migratòries i a la lògica de gènere prevalent en aquests processos de reagrupament i s'observa que, en lloc de limitar les entrades, han tingut un impacte en les característiques de la població reagrupada.

Paraules clau.- Reunificació familiar, demografia, població estrangera, Espanya, Província de Barcelona.

Resumen.- *Género, generación e inmigración: la reagrupación familiar en España*

En los últimos años del boom migratorio en España -con la llegada de más de cinco millones de inmigrantes desde el inicio del siglo XXI-, la reagrupación familiar ha aumentado en volumen, a pesar del carácter restrictivo de la legislación vigente. Para analizar el tema se utiliza, como ejemplo, los datos de la Subdelegación del Gobierno de Barcelona, para el periodo 2004-2008 (se registraron 109.863 solicitudes de reagrupación familiar). Los resultados muestran claramente las diferentes estrategias migratorias según género, siendo uno de los aspectos más importantes para entender los patrones diferenciales de reagrupación familiar, por nacionalidades. Las políticas restrictivas son aparentemente ajenas a las dinámicas migratorias y a la lógica de género prevaleciente en estos procesos de reagrupación y se observa que, en lugar de limitar las entradas, han tenido un impacto en las características de la población reagrupada.

Palabras clave.- Reunificación familiar, demografía, población extranjera, España, Provincia de Barcelona.

Abstract.- *Gender, Generation and Immigration: Family Reunion in Spain*

In the most recent years of the migratory boom in Spain -with the arrival of more than five million migrants from the beginning of the twenty-first century-, Family Reunion has increased in volume despite the restrictive character of the corresponding legislation. Using the province of Barcelona as a sample, we will analyse the data from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona for the period 2004-2008, when 109,863 Family Reunion sponsorship requests were registered. Results clearly show the differential gender-based migratory strategies as one of the most important issues to understand Family Reunion patterns among different nationalities. Restrictive policies are apparently alien to the migratory dynamics and the gender logic prevalent in Family Reunion processes. Rather than limiting the inflows, they have had an impact on the characteristics of the reunited population.

Keywords.- Family Reunion, Demography, Foreign Population, Spain, Province of Barcelona.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| 1.- Introduction: Gender, migration and Family Reunion | 1 |
| 2.- The State of the Art of Family Reunion in Spain | 4 |
| 3.- The Legislative Framework on Family Reunion | 6 |
| 4.- Data | 9 |
| 5.- The Evolution of Family Reunion Requests | 10 |
| 5.1.- Age and Kinship | 14 |
| 5.2.- Requests Granted and Made Effective | 16 |
| 5.3.- Family Reunion Sponsors: Main Characteristics According to Nationality | 17 |
| 6.- Male and Female Centred Strategies | 19 |
| 7.- Conclusions: the Influence of the Economic Crisis on the Family Reunion Phenomenon | 25 |
| References | 28 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| 1.-Average days elapsed according to nationality between the momento province of Barcelona. A family request was submitted and made effective in Spain, requests over the period 2004-2008 | 14 |
| 2.- Family reunion rejected requests according to sex and age, province of Barcelona, 2004-2008 | 15 |
| 3.- Approved requests (2004-2008) but not made effective according to sex and age* | 16 |
| 4.- Yearly evolution of family reunion requests submitted, approved and made effective for the province of Barcelona, 2004-2008 | 17 |
| 5.- Family reunion requesters in the province of Barcelona, main nationalities, 2004-2008 | 18 |
| 6.- Population pyramids of the family reunion requests granted and made effective and of requesters*, in the province of Barcelona, 2004-2008 | 20 |
| 7.- Reunited population pyramid depending on the sex of the requester in the province of Barcelona, 2004-2008 | 20 |
| 8.- Made effective family reunions: reunited and requesters of four of the main nationalities in the province of Barcelona, 2004-2008* | 22 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.- Family reunion requests submitted to the Government office in Barcelona according to the year of the request and its status, 2004-2008 | 10 |
| 2.- Family reunion requests submitted to the Government office in Barcelona according to nationality and status, 2004-2008 | 13 |
| 3.- Relationship between the date a family request was submitted and the date made effective in Spain* | 17 |

GENDER, GENERATION AND IMMIGRATION: FAMILY REUNION IN SPAIN¹

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1.- Introduction: Gender, migration and Family Reunion

The growing interest that family reunion is receiving in Europe contrasts sharply with the little attention given to it by demographers. Often, demographic analysis merely reassesses classical studies in which family reunion was regarded as an indicator of the migratory strategies of specific communities (Dejong *et al.* 1986), to forestall future flows (Jasso and Rozenzweig 1986), or to contribute to the growth of the segregation and concentration of the immigrant population, and give rise to a phenomenon known as “balkanization” (Frey 1996).

The lack of demographic interest is not only due to the difficulty to gain access to Administrative data, often non-harmonized or centralised, as in the case of Spain, but to the tendency shown in most European countries to focus exclusively on the individual. The restrictive conceptualization of family-based immigration policies contrasts from the ones adopted in the United States (Kofman 2004). Nevertheless, this biased perspective does not reflect the European reality during or after the migration waves of the sixties. Despite the official “*Gastarbeiter*” programme conceived under individual migratory strategies, family reunion is seen as an unavoidable phenomenon given the settlement process of long-term

¹ This research has been elaborated in the framework of the R+D Project “Demographic behaviours and social integration of immigrants and their children in Spain” (CSO2008-04778/SOCI), directed by Dr. Andreu Domingo and funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, through the National R+D+I Plan 2008-2011.

workers and employers' interest to retain the most experienced in the host country (Pflegerl 2002).

Most host countries experienced a foreign population increase despite the restrictive policies as a reaction to the economic downturn nurtured by *de facto* family reunion. A retrospective glance of the phenomenon has considered the neglect of the family dimension as one of the causes for the failure of the European immigration policies developed during the sixties (Castles 2004). Migration has brought to the European Union the most significant third-country inflows until the economic crisis triggered in 2008. However, the treatment family reunion receives in European legislation (see EU Council Directive 2003/86/EC) has constrained the theoretical demographic developments on this subject. It is in fact a response to two fundamental premises. First, immigration admission policies are almost exclusively designed to grant residence on the basis of labour contracts; and, second, the migrant family has been increasingly perceived as an obstacle to social integration, thus making family reunification more subject to restrictions (Bilger and Kraler 2010). Therefore, policies were useless also to positively influence family reunion procedures of subsequent regulations. Furthermore, the increasing interest that transnational community studies are giving to the importance of migratory networks has led researchers to assess the role that gender and to some extent intergenerational relationships may play in family migratory strategies (De Jong 2000; Boyle 2002; Bayley and Boyle 2004; Raghuram 2004). Together these studies shed a light on family reunion analysis, stressing the importance of migratory chains, depending on the sex of the so-called pioneer (Thierry 2007). The increased housework demand satisfied by foreigners has incentivized the analysis on the employment sector of female sponsors and, therefore, of the role of gender on migratory projects (Croes and Hooimerijer 2009).

If migration is determined by the labour market, family reunion diversifies the characteristics of the migrants (Massey *et al.* 1994) at the same time that corrects the inflows' gender imbalance (Donato *et al.* 2011). Thus, as a natural result of settlement, the motivation behind the new inflows could be independent from the incentives behind the pioneer's migratory project (Castles and Miller 2004).

Research on family migration has considered five main areas of interest (Boyd 1989), named: 1) Economic, politic and social determinants at origin and destination; 2) Bilateral agreements on labour migration; 3) Migration policies; 4) Social ties at origin and destination; and, 5) The effect of family in social integration of migrants. Therefore, family

reunion understood as the “processes of bringing in immediate family members (children, spouses and parents and others were permitted) by the primary migrant” (Kofman 2004: 246), should be enshrined in at least one of these perspectives.

On the one hand, changing gender roles at destination should be considered as determinant of foreign labour force demand. This phenomenon is particularly observed in the complementarity between the arrival of women from abroad and the increased female labour-force participation for natives. Directly related to the existence of segmented labour markets (Piore 1979) and the female labour demand linked to the tertiarisation of the post-Fordist economy (Sassen 1984), it has incentivized the housework and day care demand often satisfied by foreigners (Parella 2003) and especially intense in the Spanish economy (Domingo and Gil 1007).

In addition to employment opportunities, the distribution by sex of the inflows –also related to origin- will determine the composition of the reunited migrants’. The complex family reunion process would rely on the characteristics of the society at origin and the selection made by the migratory process itself (King and Zontini 2002). The later, referred to social class, traditions and educational attainment level among others. The legislative framework behind family reunion perpetuates the economically dependent position of the reunified at the same time that ignores or hinders the recognition of housework carried by women. Consequently, it has also contributed (perhaps involuntarily) to their economic dependence but also, to a higher incidence of informal female work. In that respect, Soler (2000) stresses the challenges potential sponsoring women have to face based on their precarious working conditions and their lower salaries.

It is precisely with this demographic analysis of family reunion that the roles of gender, generation and age gain more importance, making us wary to rely on the traditional dichotomy that characterises labour division as a solely function of gender. The inclusion of gender in migration research sheds a light on the mechanisms behind the migration processes (Mahler and Pessar 2006). We should also bear in mind that the phenomenon known as “family reunion” is ruled by a specific policy framework. Family dynamics, as a driving force of migratory movements exists outside of this policy framework, though its statistics are blurred and therefore not relevant for our study.

2.- The State of the Art of Family Reunion in Spain

In Spain, two factors have exceptionally come together to draw our attention on family reunion: the first one is of a strictly demographic nature; the second is of a political one. However, both are determined by the prevailing economic situation at the time. First, the migratory boom which Spain experienced during the first years of the twenty-first century has led to the creation of a striking potential for family reunion, not only due to the dimension of the phenomenon but for period of time it took place as well. Hence, if the number of non-nationals living in Spain were a scant 748,954 on 1 January 1999, by the year 2010 it had multiplied by 7.6, reaching 5,708,940 persons. According to the 2007 National Survey on Immigrants (ENI) the estimated number of potential immigrants who could gain admission on the basis of family ties are more than a million people with respect to the 4.5 million foreign-born residents living at the time of the survey.

The swift growth of the immigrant population has moved Spain from being at the bottom places of the list of European countries regarding foreign-born residents to the top ones. Spain's migration inflows have been so significant that they have accounted for nearly 50 per cent of the net absolute migration in the European Union (EU), to the extent that it has had the highest absolute net migration in the EU (with a peak of 920 thousand arrivals in 2007) and the second highest in the world after the USA. The aforementioned growth has been mainly motivated by the economic growth experienced over the last few years stimulated not only by the real estate bubble but by deep demographic changes that have taken place in the Spanish society. These have turned the non-native population into a new population segment seeking to achieve a higher social status within the Spanish population (Domingo and Gil 2007; Vidal *et al.* 2009).

Gender imbalance in the migratory processes to Spain has been in some cases clearly linked to origin. Such is the case of the predominantly male inflows from Asian and African countries whereas the majority of Latin-American pioneers are women.

Following the economic recession, the arrival of foreign workers decreased. As a result the migratory inflows originating from family reunion have shown a relative growth, however we cannot estimate its behaviour in absolute values. It is precisely the economic downturn that allows us to understand the Government's decision to modify the Law on Foreign Nationals including the proposal to make the family reunion regulation more stringent.

Although family reunion had been already contemplated with a certain apprehension in the past, it was seen as an alternative to sidestep the legal requirements imposed on economic immigration.

The number of studies on family reunion in Spain has been rather small in the past, current socioeconomic climate has multiplied its number over the last years. However, prior to presenting the current literature on family reunion studies in Spain, we want first to mention the data available on this issue. As we mentioned previously there are still no unified and harmonized data available on the family reunion process for Spain. This is largely due to the high number of local Administrations involved as well as to the fact that this type of Register was not designed as a statistical tool. Therefore the registers do not adhere to homogeneous criteria. Formalities that grant family reunion in Spain comprise three major steps: the first step depends entirely on local Governments. As of 2005, there are obligated to write out a report on the quality and characteristics of the potential family reunion sponsors' dwellings. Though not decisive it represents a condition to be fulfilled that has a shortlisting effect. The second step is to submit the family reunion sponsorship request in order to obtain the authorization from Government's Province Sub-Delegations². Finally, once the application has been authorized by the Central Government, each family member must obtain a visa from the Spanish embassy in their home country.

Despite the scarce demographic data available, we can rely on the indirect estimates of the family reunion potential taken from the 2001 Census (Devolder *et al.* 2002), from the Labour Force Survey (Cebolla and González 2008) and from a specific study carried out on the Gambian population (Bledsoe 2006). A first assessment of data from the province of Barcelona for the period 2004-2006 can be found on Domingo *et al.* (2009) or for the year 2008 (Domingo *et al.* 2010). Apart from these data gatherings we have found that the rest of the studies come largely from the legal field (Ezquerra 1997; Fernández-Sánchez 2002; Lázaro 2002; Santolaya 2004; González 2007; Mata and Burgarolas 2008). Another field which may furnish data is Sociology which tends to produce little quantitative data if not from a gross perspective (Cerón 1995; Aparicio 1998; Gómez-Crespo 1999; Alcalde 2008; Sanahuja and Rendón 2008; González-Ferrer 2009).

² Provinces are considered to be the administration units (a total of 50 in Spain) plus the two autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

Following the publication of the National Survey of Immigrants a few studies have been carried out: González-Ferrer (2010) that focuses on the likelihood of spouse reunion, another by Camarero (2010) emphasizes family transnationality or more recently, a study on the impact of family reunion on female labour (González-Ferrer 2011). Due to the gender focus adopted, we want to mention qualitative approximations like those made by Pedone and Gil-Araujo (2008). These points out the bias which Spanish legislation has regarding men, considering women to be solely responsible for caring and establishing links between family, gender and immigration.

To sum up, the analysis of family reunion processes opens the door to new theoretical and methodological challenges. The lack of literature that appends family reunion under a gender perspective has left behind the differential decision-making processes and the influence of legislation on the migratory projects. The theoretical perspective and the databases used have also been conditioned by the migratory cycle and the political debate at the analysed host countries at specific point of time.

3.- The Legislative Framework on Family Reunion

The willingness to restrict the definition of family reunion and the constant legislative changes this definition has undergone, constitute the two main features of the regulation that rules family reunion in Spain. The *Organic Law on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain, of 1 July 1985* -best known as the Foreigners Law or *Ley de Extranjería*, and its corresponding regulation³ on the *Royal Decree 1119/1986 of 19 November 1986*- are behind the inception of this legislation.

In itself, it does not represent a Spanish exception but are in keeping with the European legal framework. According to European legislation and particularly to the *Revised European Social Charter*⁴ foreigners legally residing in EU countries have the right to reunite their family. The family may consist of one spouse and underage, unmarried, and economically dependent offspring -in accordance to the regulation of the country of

³ A regulation is a form of secondary legislation which is used to implement a primary piece of legislation appropriately.

⁴ From Strasbourg dating 3 May 1996, in force since 1 July 1999 and ratified by Spain on 23 October 2000.

residence (Vargas 2006). The limits that European policies set on family reunion compared to other countries such as the United States, and particularly the ones regarding next of kin, have been imposed largely on account of the difficulties of integration, or more overtly due to the failure that integration policies have experienced in various European countries. In that sense, regulation on family reunion serves as a direct policy tool to restrict immigration flows (Kofman 2004).

The family reunion cases which will be analysed took place between 2004 and 2008. All of them were ruled by the *Organic Law 14/2003*⁵, a law which modified the previous Spanish Law on Foreign Nationals. According to Law 14/2003, legal residents initiating a sponsorship of their qualifying family member have to comply with the following requisites outlined in Section 18 namely: 1) the sponsor, who must be a legal resident in Spain, should have his/her residence permit renewed and extended for at least a year; 2) his/her dwelling should be adequate to accommodate his/her family and him/herself; 3) his/her economic means should be enough to support his/her family and him/herself. Hence, all foreign-born residents initiating a sponsorship process should be in possession of a work permit that allows at least one additional year of legal residence. Their dwelling should be located in a municipality that belongs to the province in which the family reunion will occur. However, there are no mandates regarding the adequacy of the dwelling nor of the amount of money a potential sponsor should earn in order to request a family reunion.

According to this Law people likely to reunite fall into four basic categories with respect to the sponsor: 1) spouse; 2) his/her own offspring or of the spouse, including adopted ones, as long as they are underage, unmarried or have a disability; 3) people underage or with a disability in the case that the sponsor acts as their legal tutor; 4) his/her first degree ascendants or of the spouse as long as they are economically dependant and there are reasons to justify their residence in Spain. In the case of ascendants who gained admission on a previous family reunion procedure, they will be entitled to sponsor only if they have a permanent residence status and prove to be economically solvent (Section 18.3). Anyhow, besides the Government Sub-Delegation family reunion approval, its beneficiaries must

⁵ Organic Law 14/2003, of November 20, amending the Organic Law 4 / 2000, of January 11, on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration, as amended by Law 8/2000, of December 22; of Law 7/1985 of April 2, Regulation of the Local Government, of Law 30/1992 of November 26 on the

obtain a visa issued at the Embassies of their countries of origin in order to enter into Spain⁶.

Not only are the requisites to reunite the family or to be reunited important, but some legal conditions for the people to be reunited under the procedure must be satisfied as well. The legal situation facing the people under reunion process is regulated by means of Section 17 of the same Law. In it, it is manifested that spouses must remain married (i.e. not separated legally or by agreement) and that under no circumstance can there be more than one spouse (directly addressing polygamous families). In case of more than one marriage, the right to reunite will be extended only to the spouse that at that moment is married to the person requesting the reunion and his/her relatives. This will hold, as long as there is legal proof that specifies the negated status of the former spouse and his/her offspring regarding dwelling, spouse allowance and family support for the underage offspring.

The person to be reunited will obtain an authorization for legal residence that depends on the sponsor requesting family reunion. The person to be reunited will not be entitled to work until a year elapses since his/her arrival. To counter frauds in the so-called “chain family reunions” a resident who had previously been reunited may only request family reunion if he/she possesses an independent residence permit. That is, foreigners who have entered into Spain by means of a family reunion procedure may not request a further family reunion until at least a year has elapsed since their arrival once their independent legal residence has been granted.

Finally⁷, according to the reform of the Law on Foreign Nationals (Bárbulo 2009) descendants under 65 year olds will be restricted from family reunion and granted solely for humanitarian reasons. Furthermore, this reform suggests that not only the income of the potential sponsor should be taken into account but also that of the spouse, and that Spaniards or -even naturalized Spaniards- requesting family reunion should be awarded with preferential conditions.

Legal Regime of Public Administrations and Common Administrative Procedures, and Law 3/1991, of January 10, on Unfair Competition.

⁶ Cabinet decision of the president's Ministry issued on 8 January 1999 (BOE 13 January 1999).

⁷ For a more detailed analysis on family reunion legislation see Bedoya (2010).

4.- Data

Given the lack of data at national scale, we will use the province of Barcelona as a representative sample for the whole Spanish territory. We make use of the restricted Administrative data from the Foreigners Office of the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona. The database covers the period from 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2008. During the period of analysis the province of Barcelona -which consists of 311 municipalities- held 15.5 per cent of the total foreign-born population of Spain. This share reached 18.5 per cent of the total non-EU resident population with 20+ years and with a residence permit. Those could be considered the potential family reunion sponsors. According to Izquierdo and León (2008), between 2003 and 2006 the Province of Barcelona was accountable for approximately a third of the total 300,000 family reunions that had taken place in Spain confirming the representativeness of our sample selection.

The databases from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona for the period 2004-2008 contain all the family reunion sponsorship requests registered in the province as well as the proceedings which are registered in the Government office mentioned above. The former allows us to analyse the demographic characteristics of the family members to be reunited, either for potential or successful reunions, while the latter will supply the same data for the sponsors requesting family reunions. For this reason, our study will include not only those requests which have been approved by the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona -*granted requests*- but also those which have completed the subsequent procedure in the country of origin and finally arrived into Spain -*made effective requests*-.

Bearing in mind the composition of the population to be potentially reunited according to the prevailing legislation, three major groups have been arranged according to kinship: ancestors, spouses and descendants. The group of descendants includes not only offspring related by blood or by adoption but the legal tutors of children under 18 years old or with a disability. For this reason reunified descendants of 18+ may be found, though in small numbers. Also, in some cases the time interval that elapses between the moment a request is sent and the final arrival of the members to be reunited is so long, that descendants under 18 may arrive at the province of Barcelona at an older age.

The demographic characteristics of family reunion sponsors were obtained by matching the dataset of the formalities carried out in the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona. As a

result, the basic characteristics of the sponsors may be obtained, but only for those who have complied with a formality at the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona starting from 2004. Thus sponsors who are in possession of a residence permit issued in any other Government Sub-Delegation, have Spanish nationality or a permanent residence permit issued before 2004⁸ could not be identified. Despite these facts 97 per cent of actual requesters have been identified.

Special care has been taken to ensure that no double registers existed for family members to be reunited or sponsors. For those cases where more than one family reunion has been requested, the sponsor's age is estimated taking into account the latest registered date.

5.- The Evolution of Family Reunion Requests

According to the database of the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona, 109,863 family reunion sponsorship requests were registered between January 2004 and December 2008 (Table 1).

Table 1.- Family reunion requests submitted to the Government office in Barcelona according to the year of the request and its status, 2004-2008

| STATUS | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | Total |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Filed | 138 | 107 | 132 | 50 | 151 | 578 |
| Successful Reunions | 20.465 | 9.406 | 17.363 | 23.066 | 15.807 | 86.107 |
| Potential Reunions | 1.872 | 1.080 | 2.849 | 4.028 | 4.371 | 14.200 |
| Rejected | 667 | 525 | 1.313 | 1.661 | 3.154 | 7.320 |
| Other disapproved | 31 | 17 | 43 | 446 | 703 | 1.240 |
| Still being processed | 4 | 3 | 4 | 13 | 394 | 418 |
| TOTAL | 23.177 | 11.138 | 21.704 | 29.264 | 24.580 | 109.863 |

Source: Database from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona.

⁸ Permanent residence permits must be renewed every five years.

Of them, 91.3 per cent were finally approved. It should be mentioned that prior to submitting the family reunion request to the Government Sub-Delegation the report regarding the suitability of the dwelling in each municipality has to be positive. It was found that between 2 per cent to 40 per cent turned out to be negative depending on the criteria used in each municipality (Moreno and Samper 2009). Out of the total requests submitted only 6.7 per cent were rejected, together with a further 1.7 per cent that were either filed or disapproved.

By October 2009, 14.2 per cent out of the 100,307 approved family reunion requests still remained ineffective, and, owing to the time elapsed we assume that some of them may never become effective. The data of family reunion requests for the year 2008 stand out, marking a change of trend with former years. Indeed, the proportion of rejected requests is duplicated, one in six requests is turned down (12.8 per cent), disapproved following an appeal (2.9 per cent) or filed due to incorrect request (0.6 per cent). These figures show thus an important change of the previous dynamics, since they all represent a relevant increase over the 7.4 per cent that these categories reflected the previous year. This change of trend may be associated with the economic crisis and the debates over the new legislation for foreigners with a more stringent view on family reunion.

The evolution of the number of family reunion requests is discontinuous as can be seen on Table 1. In 2005, a minimum number of 11,138 requests were submitted. The 2005 extraordinary regularisation process that allowed over 600,000 foreign workers to become legal in Spain that year can explain the minimum sponsorship requests, playing havoc in Government offices. In 2007, a maximum of 29,264 requests were submitted, a figure that decreases the following year to 24,580 (Table 1)⁹ due partly to the beginning of the economic crisis.

The total number of family reunion sponsorship requests approved and made effective reached 86,107. The database contains three main dates of reference. The date the sponsorship request was submitted together with the date it was resolved is known as standard procedure. Finally, the date when the Government Sub-Delegation registers the

⁹ The fluctuations between 2004 and 2008 are due to the lag or the promptness of formalities and to the legislative changes and the migration evolution. So that the figures for 2004 and 2006 reflect the efforts shown to accelerate the granting of the requests. While part of 2006 and 2007 reflect the improvement brought about by the 2005 regularization. Finally the figures of 2008 may well reflect the impact the crisis has had and the decrease in the number of requests.

moment family reunion process has become effective. At this date reunified family members are given an identity card for foreigners. This card in theory is obtained within the first month of stay in Spain (though no precise reference time is known for this procedure). For as many as 14,200 persons, we have no proof as to whether they have entered into Spain despite having a granted sponsorship request. It can be assumed that in most cases the entrance into Spain has not taken place. But due to the poor reliability of the data (no unified family reunion Spanish Register exists) we cannot know if their registration took place in a different Spanish province. Nevertheless, most of the entrances take place during the first year the sponsorship request is submitted, or the following year. A fact that seems to indicate that approved requests that do not register an entrance in Spain may never become effective. In other words, out of the total requests approved in 2005, 85.9 per cent entered into Spain the same year or the next of approval, 2.2 per cent during 2007 and less than 1.1 per cent in 2008.

Few nationalities are found in the process of requesting family reunion. Eighty-nine percent of them are concentrated in ten nationalities (Table 2). A large share are submitted by Moroccans followed at a distance by Ecuadorians, Pakistanis and Chinese. All of these nationalities have submitted requests exceeding 10,000. Moroccans and Ecuadorians are the most represented nationalities in the province of Barcelona (125,197 and 71,557 respectively according to the Continuous Register¹⁰ at the beginning of 2008), whereas Pakistanis were only 25,488 for that same year. The weight of Asian nationalities should be stressed: they represent five out of ten family reunion requests, even though they only represent 11.3% of the non-national residents in the Barcelona province. In this group of ten nationalities, sharp differences appear when it comes to requests approved but never made effective. Such is the case for Pakistanis who have only made effective less than half of the submitted requests (Table 2) or for Bengalis (62.8 per cent). The high number of pending entrances could be explained by either bureaucratic hassle at the embassies or difficulties for obtaining the visas. A similar situation can be found among nationalities with a lower number of requests (not shown in Table 2), such as Gambians, Senegalese and Nigerians. Though it is worthwhile mentioning that some of these nationalities had already been subject to rejection with a maximum of 12.5 per cent among Bengalis when the minimum was of 5.6 per cent among Peruvians.

Table 2.- Family reunion requests submitted to the Government office in Barcelona according to nationality and status, 2004-2008

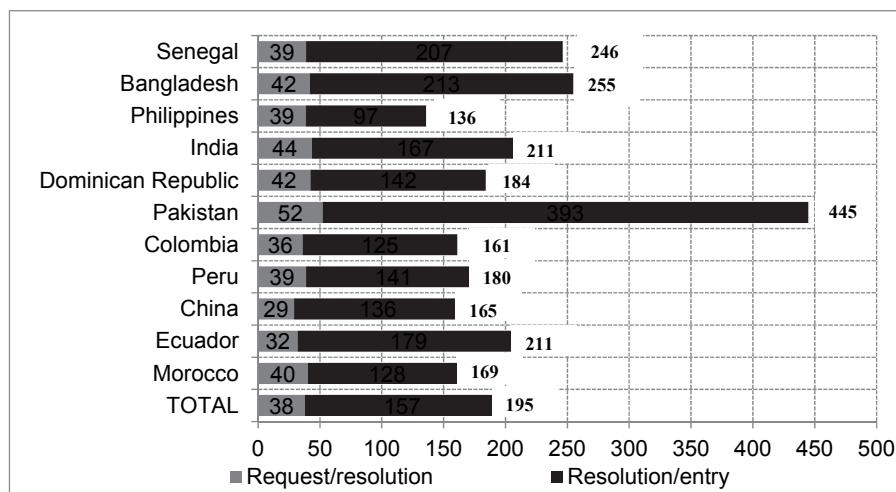
| | Successful reunions | | Potential reunions | | | Rejected | Being processed | | % TOTAL |
|--------------------|---------------------|------|--------------------|-------|---------------|----------|-----------------|------|-----------------------|
| | reunions | % | % | Total | % | | % | % | |
| Morocco | 25.076 | 86,2 | 1.860 | 6,4 | 26.936 | 92,6 | 2.107 | 7,2 | 55 0,2 29.098 |
| Ecuador | 11.541 | 75,8 | 2.429 | 15,9 | 13.970 | 91,7 | 1.206 | 7,9 | 57 0,4 15.233 |
| Pakistan | 5.588 | 46,3 | 4.932 | 40,9 | 10.520 | 87,1 | 1.415 | 11,7 | 138 1,1 12.073 |
| China | 10.625 | 89,6 | 345 | 2,9 | 10.970 | 92,5 | 870 | 7,3 | 17 0,1 11.857 |
| Peru | 8.421 | 88,8 | 507 | 5,3 | 8.928 | 94,2 | 532 | 5,6 | 18 0,2 9.478 |
| Colombia | 5.997 | 83,1 | 637 | 8,8 | 6.634 | 91,9 | 564 | 7,8 | 18 0,2 7.216 |
| Dominican Republic | 4.251 | 77,3 | 711 | 12,9 | 4.962 | 90,2 | 495 | 9,0 | 43 0,8 5.500 |
| India | 2.295 | 80,8 | 236 | 8,3 | 2.531 | 89,1 | 302 | 10,6 | 8 0,3 2.841 |
| Bangladesh | 1.613 | 62,8 | 623 | 24,3 | 2.236 | 87,1 | 320 | 12,5 | 11 0,4 2.567 |
| Philippines | 1.678 | 89,3 | 48 | 2,6 | 1.726 | 91,8 | 150 | 8,0 | 4 0,2 1.880 |

Source: Database from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona.

The average time that each phase of the family reunion process takes, can be known by the registered entry into Spain. We have only considered family reunion sponsorship requests that have been submitted and approved between 1 January 2004 and 31 December 2008, but including entries into Spain as late as October 2009, a moment when datasets cease to furnish information. We have calculated, first, the time a submitted sponsorship takes to be approved and, second, the time elapsed between the approval and the entry into Spain. The time it takes for a request to be approved is relatively short, 38 days on average (Figure 1), with small variations according to nationality (from 29 days for Chinese to 52 for Pakistanis). But sharp variations appear when considering the time taken before entrance in Spain: 157 days on average, showing the Filipinos a low 97 days while Pakistanis require over a full year. To sum up, nationalities which complete a fast family reunion process require at least four months whereas for other nationalities this time may be extended to over a full year.

¹⁰ This data source is based on the Municipal Register, in which inhabitants are registered and constitutes proof of residence in the municipality.

Figure 1.- Average days elapsed according to nationality between the moment province of Barcelona. A family request was submitted and made effective in Spain, requests over the period 2004-2008



Source: Database from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona

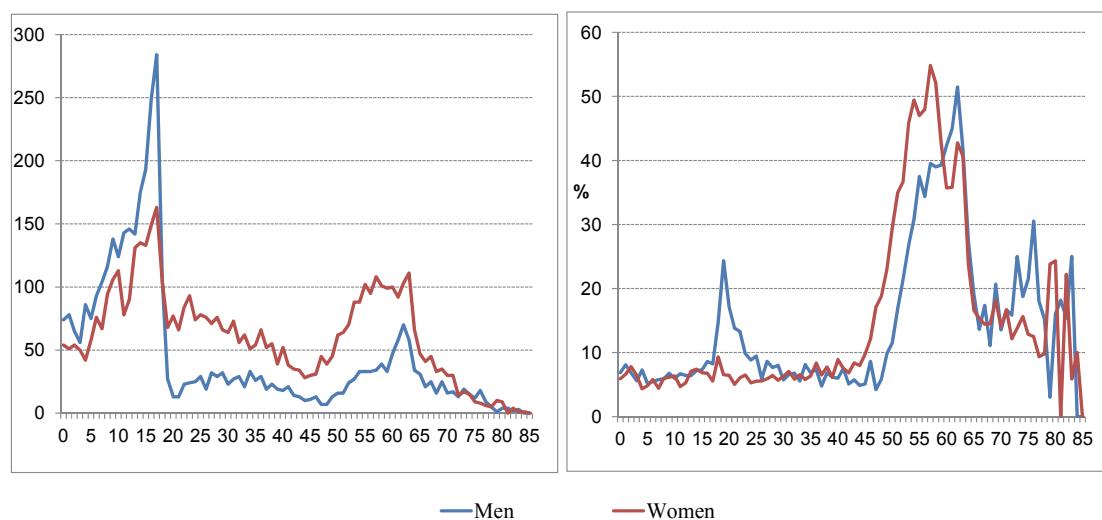
5.1.- Age and Kinship

One of the most relevant factors for a sponsorship request to be approved is kinship together with age. The age factor is treated disparagingly since it causes an unequal rate of requests to be turned down (Figure 2) and conversely for requests to be granted in the end (Figure 3). With respect to rejected requests, the age threshold is about 17 (the age the moment the request is submitted). The number of men rejected is higher than women though beyond this age more women are rejected. At the other end, as can be seen clearly in the graph, ages between 50 to 65 correspond to the highest proportion of rejected requests, more than 50 per cent of the total. These age groups belong to ancestry at working ages, who in accordance to the latest reform of the Law on Foreign Nationals limits family reunion age over 65+, and hence are rejected.

With respect to the kin relationship, we have found that most family reunion sponsors refer to spouses and offspring. Fifty seven per cent out of the total submitted between 2004 and 2008 were of this type, reaching nearly 60,000 requests. A 35 per cent corresponded to spouses -over 36,000 requests- and the remaining 7.5 per cent refer to ancestry, with over 7,000 requests. This willingness to reunite the family hits against a stubborn denial from

the Administration: 30.2 per cent are rejected in the case of ancestry, 5.1 per cent for spouses and 6.2 per cent for offspring.

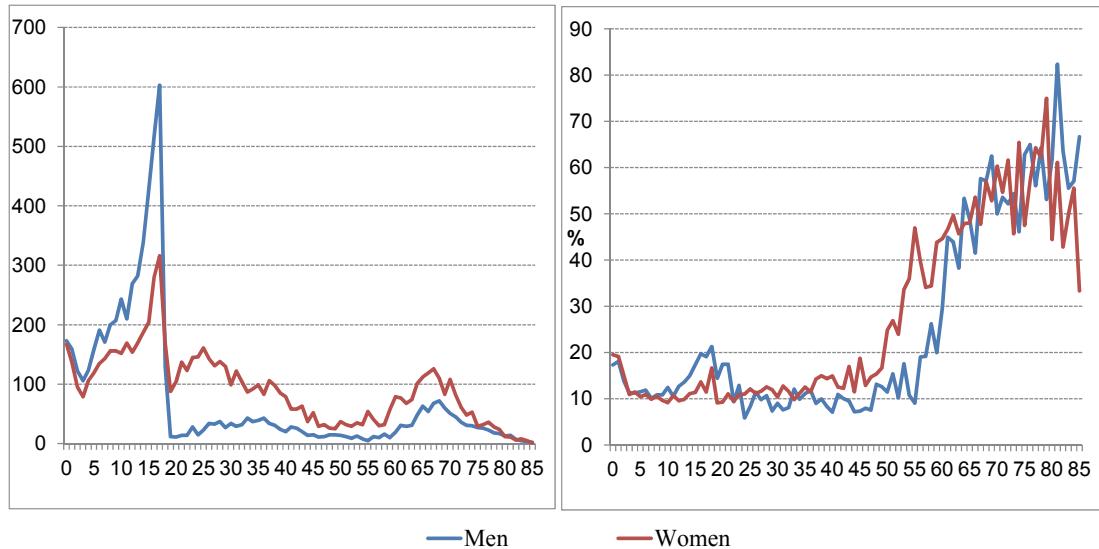
Figure 2.- Family reunion rejected requests according to sex and age, province of Barcelona, 2004-2008



Source: Database from the Sub-Delegation in Barcelona

A further drawback is found in embassies, either because the family reunion visa request was denied in the initial stage or problems due to the bureaucracy problems involved in the procedure in certain diplomatic offices. This can be observed by comparing the requests approved with the ones made effective (Figure 3). As shown for the 55+ age group, more than 50 per cent of granted requests still have to become effective. Though it must be said that some of them may be completed in the end, since our study has only had access to a share of the 2008 requests. Hence, some of them did not have time to become effective (estimated date 15 October 2009). Age and nationality are seen as drawbacks in some consulates as well, though no data allows us to confirm this assumption. As a result, counting rejected requests and the ones approved but not made effective we find that 75 per cent of ancestry willing to reunite do not succeed in the end.

Figure 3.- Approved requests (2004-2008) but not made effective according to sex and age*



Source: Database from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona.

* Age when the request is presented.

5.2.- Requests Granted and Made Effective

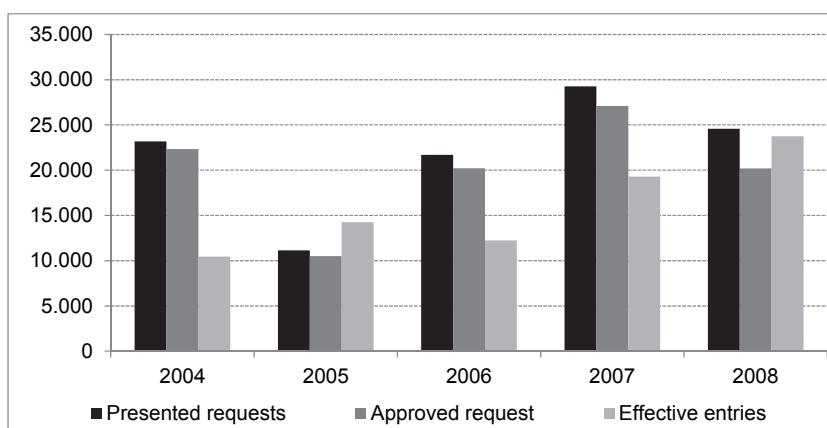
Out of the total submitted family reunion sponsorship requests, the ones made effective during the same year, range from a low 42.7 per cent in 2006 to a top 66.2 per cent in 2008. The rest of them took about two years following the submission. This fact causes the periodicity of the requests and the effective entries to differ to a large extent. For example in 2005, requests were significantly low though entries made effective were higher; whereas in 2004, 2006 and 2007 the reverse was true, less people entered into the country but more requests were submitted, in 2008 the trend was reversed again (Table 3 and Figure 4). In 2009, owing to the economic crisis, fewer requests were submitted and again the entry of people was higher.

Table 3.- Relationship between the date a family request was submitted and the date made effective in Spain*

| Date Request | Date of entry in Spain | | | | | | TOTAL |
|--------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | |
| 2004 | 10.447 | 9.320 | 613 | 49 | 27 | 9 | 20.465 |
| 2005 | | 4.921 | 4.205 | 233 | 32 | 15 | 9.406 |
| 2006 | | | 7.413 | 8.639 | 1.131 | 180 | 17.363 |
| 2007 | | | | 10.375 | 12.104 | 587 | 23.066 |
| 2008 | | | | | 10.457 | 5.350 | 15.807 |
| TOTAL | 10.447 | 14.241 | 12.231 | 19.296 | 23.751 | 6.141 | 86.107 |

Source: Database from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona. * estimated date October 15, 2009.

Figure 4.- Yearly evolution of family reunion requests submitted, approved and made effective for the province of Barcelona, 2004-2008



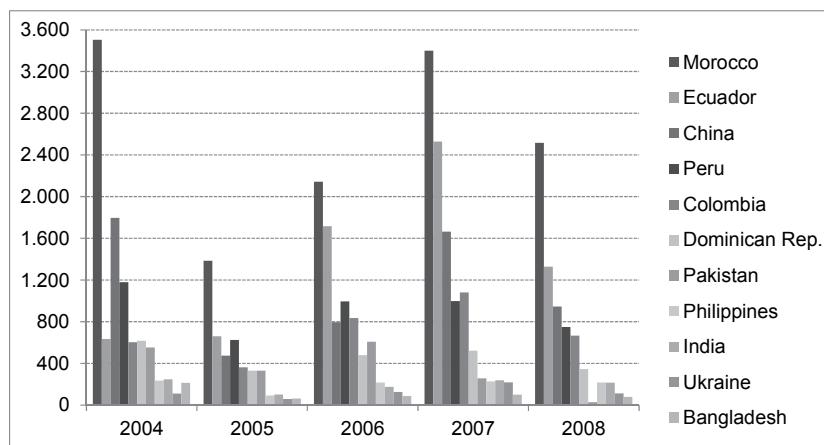
Source: Database from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona

5.3.- Family Reunion Sponsors: Main Characteristics According to Nationality

Up to 45,286 different family reunion sponsors have been identified, who in turn have reunited 83,370 people¹¹, giving an intensity of 1.84 reunited family members per sponsor during the five years of our study. Since the majority of sponsors and their reunited family members share the same nationality, the differences in the figures shown below with

respect to requests made effective can be explained by the varying intensity of this phenomenon. Intensity ranges from a low 1.6 people per sponsor for Filipinos, and in between 1.86 for Moroccans, to a top 2.91 and 3.11 for Bengalis and Pakistanis. The way sponsors evolve is in line with that of family reunion members, with a sharp decrease in 2005, as was the case for the total requests submitted that year. With respect to nationality, we have noticed a growth in the number of Ecuadorians since 2005 or a practical absence of Pakistanis in 2008 due in part to the long time members to be reunited take to enter into Spain. In aggregated figures, it can be said that Moroccans, with 12,951 people (28.6 per cent of all requesters) are the group with more weight followed by Ecuadorians with 6,872 people (15.2 per cent) and other five nationalities with more than a thousand people (Figure 5).

Figure 5.- Family reunion requesters in the province of Barcelona, main nationalities, 2004-2008



Source: Database from the Sub-Delegation in Barcelona.

¹¹ The differences regarding the 86,107 made effective reunions are due to a lack of information found in the records. In approximately 3.2 per cent of the cases we have not been able to reconstruct the relationship between reunited people and sponsors.

6.- Male and Female Centred Strategies

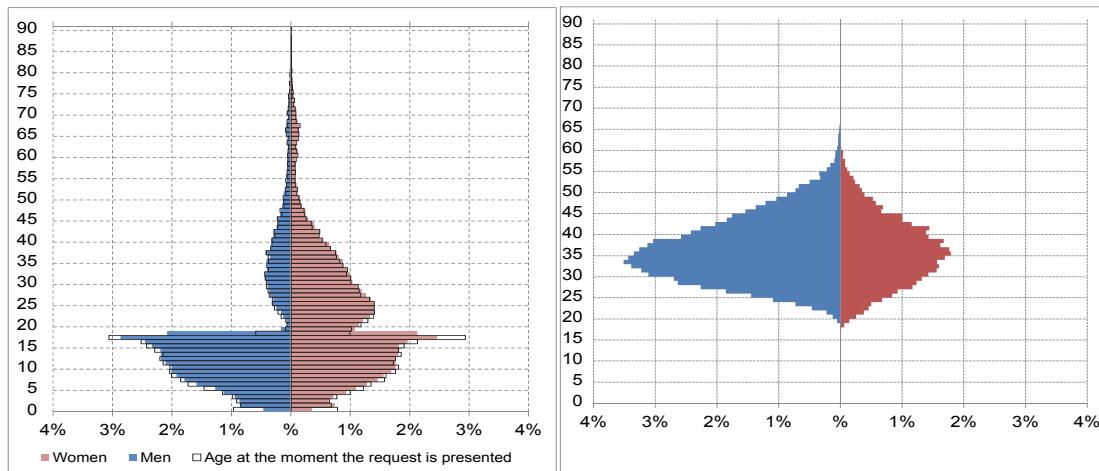
In this section, we analyse the demographic profiles of sponsors, reunited family members, and the relationship between them. Certain characteristics of the population under study such as sex and age, are surprisingly missing in some cases from the data sources used. As a result, we analyse 77,494 people who were reunited and 45,286 requesters of whom we possess the full data, assuming that there are no relevant differences in the sex and age profiles in the missing records.

The structure arranged by sex and age of the population requesting family reunion and the reunited population can only be understood if we consider the role gender plays in the various migratory strategies. Regarding the population structure, the majority of the 77,494 people reunited between 2004 and 2008 were underage proving the offspring relevance. This group represents 60 per cent of the total granted requests and 56 per cent of the ones made effective, the difference being due to the time that elapses between the moment the request is submitted and the entry into Spain. Males outnumber women in this group, 55 per cent in the requests made effective. However, women outnumber men in the group 18-64, suggesting that the majority of spouse reunions are requested by men, though this pattern may vary with the nationality. The group 65+ is made up mostly by women (62.5 per cent of requests made effective) and represents a low 3.4 per cent of the total granted requests and an even lower 1.8 per cent of the requests made effective. These differences between granted requests and made effective may be explained either by possible changes in the migratory project or by visa denials in the country of origin. According to the 2008 ASTI report, family reunion visa denials are up to 10.6 per cent for all Spain requests, with differences depending on age and nationality (ASTI 2008).

Demographic profiles indicate that the original migratory project rounds off with the family reunion phenomenon (Figure 6). This is true not only due to the differences in the patterns of reunited men and women (Figure 7) but in the preferences shown when requesting family reunion as well. Hence, men sponsored 65.7 per cent of the women arriving in Spain; 61.7 per cent of them being between 18 and 64 years of age, emphasizing spouse reunion process. Likewise, women sponsored a 65.7 per cent of men arrivals, but opposite to men, the age group 18 to 64 represents only 45.7 per cent and spouses have less weight. Despite the low proportion of 65+ people, it is interesting to notice the sex of the sponsor, women in this case (3 per cent of women against 0.9 per cent

of men). The difference found regarding underage children sponsored for biological reasons is highly significant, i.e. the number of people underage is directly proportional to their ages: the higher the age, the more people are requested.

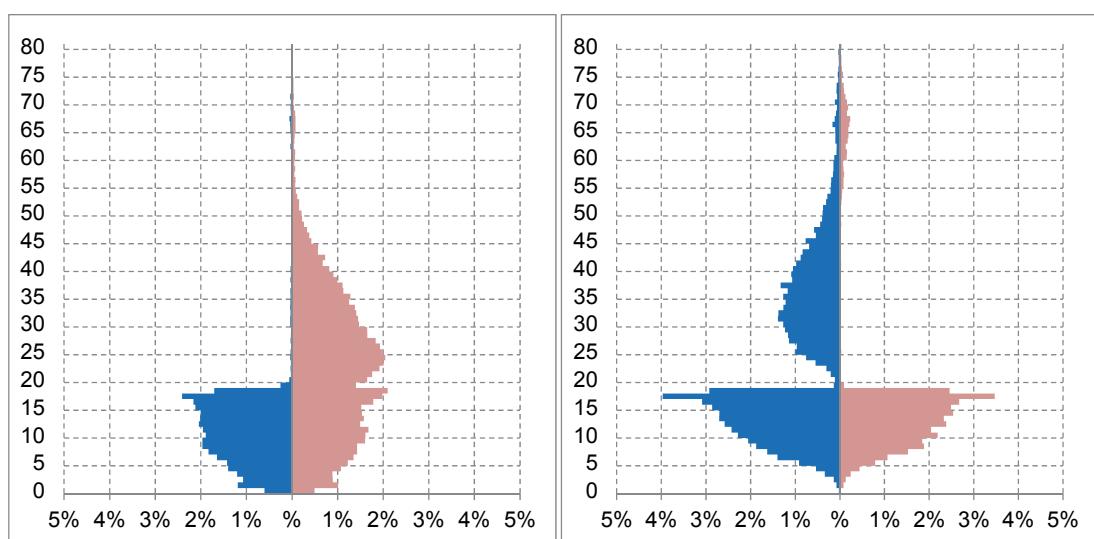
Figure 6.- Population pyramids of the family reunion requests granted and made effective and of requesters*, in the province of Barcelona, 2004-2008



Source: Database from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona.

* For those requesters with more than one effective reunion, the age has been calculated with the last request presented.

Figure 7.- Reunited population pyramid depending on the sex of the requester in the province of Barcelona, 2004-2008.



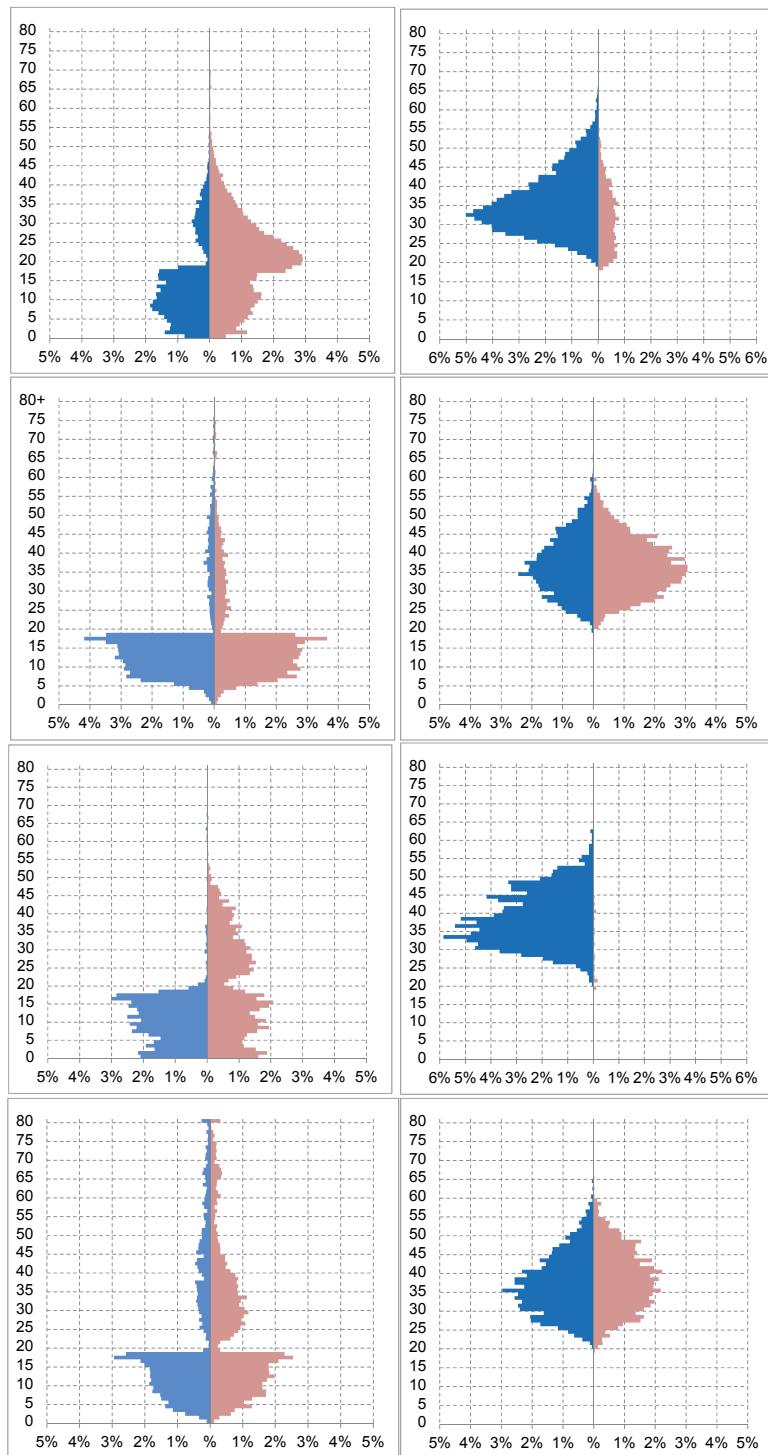
Source: Database from the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona.

With respect to differences due to nationality, we found that gender plays a major role regarding migratory strategies. Dominican women play an overriding role (70.3 per cent of female family reunion sponsors), as example of female-centred strategy, whereas for Pakistanis the reverse is true with 99 per cent of male sponsors for the period of analysis. Colombian men and women are on equal terms, with no difference between sexes. As can be seen, the family reunion phenomenon exerts a direct influence on the distribution by sex of migratory flows. Therefore, family reunion can be regarded as a mechanism that offsets the demographic imbalance of the first migratory in-flows as pointed out by Izquierdo and León (2008).

Moroccans show a distinct and diverging gender role when it comes to migrating decisions. For men, a migratory culture in a given region is decisive, whereas for women, family networks are the determining factor (Heering *et al.* 2004). This gender role dichotomy may well be extended to migratory chains with a strong male representation, as for example Pakistanis and Gambians. In turn, it would be reflected in family reunion patterns, though with important differences. Furthermore, the pioneer role that men have and their attachment to well defined job niches -as is the case for Moroccans- may cut short job opportunities for newly arrived women. This is so because the jobs their husbands hold (which also outline their social and information networks) bear no relationship with the domestic jobs their wives could take. This situation reinforces even further their sole role as housewives, creating a strict division of labour between sexes.

Figure 8 shows the sex and age profile of the main nationalities which entries were made effective into Spain. These include the total family reunion sponsorship requests submitted between 2004-2008 (entry into Spain until October 2009), indicating age at arrival and age at the time of submitting the request. We deem this double source information to be important, since it allows us to know the legal age limits family reunion is subject to, and also the age the moment they arrive in Spain. For most nationalities the male profile of the underage boys outnumbers the female one, a fact that leads us to think that job strategies give priority to boys. We find that 58 per cent of underage Pakistanis are boys, 62 per cent of Indians and 82 per cent of Bengalis. This pattern is also repeated among North African countries with a high volume of family reunion requests, e.g. 72 per cent of Gambians. The reverse, higher number of underage girls, though not so noticeable, can be found in Ukrainians (52 per cent) and Filipinos (50.2 per cent).

Figure 8.- Made effective family reunions: reunited and requesters of four of the main nationalities in the province of Barcelona, 2004-2008*



Source: Database from the Sub-Delegation in Barcelona.

* For those requesters with more than one effective reunion, the age has been calculated with the last request presented.

A second noticeable difference we have found among the underage is their distribution by ages. Reunited offspring minor than 3 years are practically nil among nationalities whose migration project shares an equal distribution of sexes or are predominantly female. Moroccans show that 15 per cent of their underage children are 3 or 3-, Pakistanis 20 per cent, and at the bottom line we find Ecuadorians 2 per cent or Dominicans 3.3 per cent. These low percentages could be explained by a migratory project which differs largely from the rest of nationalities. In the case of Ecuadorians, owing to a majority of female sponsors, it could be assumed that in case of having offspring 3 or 3- they would have been born in Spain and not in Ecuador, or, if not, had arrived with their mothers. For Moroccans and Pakistanis, where the father is the relevant family reunion sponsor, it could be assumed that the underaged children arrive in the company of their mothers as it happens in most nationalities whose pyramid base is far wider. Anyhow, a larger number of 3 or 3+ may well explain the influence the schooling years –including the non-compulsory– might have on the migratory project, having a direct bearing not only over the schooling system as such but in the process of integration of families in the host country.

However, among the adult population, it was found that very distinctly that the reunited members are women. Exceptions in which reunited members are men were found for Filipinos (54 per cent), Dominicans (63 per cent) and Bolivians (55 per cent). Thus showing that among Latin-Americans, gender differences are not apparent. Predominantly female migratory inflows have characterised nationalities as the ones mentioned above, particularly in the first stages of the migratory wave. Moroccans instead show that only 18 per cent of reunited members are men, a figure that is even lower, below 10 per cent for other nationalities (Pakistanis 9.7 per cent or 3.5 per cent for Nigerians). If we draw our attention to the 65+ group, we find that only four nationalities have made effective over 100 requests, mostly women among Peruvians, Colombians and Ecuadorians, and in equal share between sex among Chinese. The higher life expectancy among women, together with their roles as grandmothers for their daughters, could explain the small differences observed. In relative figures the highest percentages are found among Cubans (9.8 per cent), Filipinos (5.9 per cent) or Peruvians (5.2 per cent) and the lowest among Pakistanis (0.1 per cent) or Moroccans (0.3 per cent). If kinship is considered these figures increase, since the majority of ancestors are 65- the highest now are 15.6 per cent, 8.8 per cent and 7.8 per cent, and the lowest 0.5 per cent and 0.6 per cent for the same nationalities.

The gender of the family reunion sponsor plays a fundamental role within the migratory strategy. Consequently, in nationalities where migratory in-flows are predominantly female, we find a larger number of reunited ancestors due to their importance within the family nucleus. Their family role looking after the grandchildren would allow the breadwinner's continuity in the labour market or even an increase of their activity. The larger number of ancestors would then be undoubtedly related to the distribution of traditional household chores according to gender.

More extensively, and for four of the nationalities with the highest number of family reunion requests, we find that the predominantly Moroccan male family reunion sponsors are matched with a 64 per cent of reunited women (13,454 people), mostly spouses. Moreover, 53 per cent out of the 10,745 underage reunited (51 per cent of the total reunited Moroccans) are boys. A fact that leads us to believe that the family migratory project considers their early entrance in the labour market. As mentioned earlier, the majority of Moroccan family reunion requesters are men (83.6), with an average age of 14.8 for reunited men and 21.1 for reunited women. This age difference is due to the fact that most of the reunited men are sons and most of the women are reunited spouses.

Contrary to the male majority of Moroccan requesters, we find that, for Ecuadorian, women are the predominant family reunion sponsors (57.4 per cent). The profile of the reunited Ecuadorians shows an equal distribution between sexes (5,468 men and 5,394 women), though it stands as one of the few nationalities which shows a higher number of men than women among the reunited members. These are mostly under aged (75 per cent or 81 per cent if the 18 year old are considered). Therefore, as a result, their average age is comparatively low and with a small difference between sex 16.4 for men and 17.9 for women. Their profile reveals that the migratory process followed entailed entrance into the country of both spouses simultaneously or with a small difference in time and without resorting to the legal channels of family reunion.

As mentioned previously Pakistanis represent the most predominantly male nationality in our study, 99 per cent of male family reunion sponsors. This outlines that their migratory project is clearly male driven and consistent with the high number of reunited women (57.4 per cent) and the distribution per kin of the reunited: 27 per cent of spouses and 72 per cent of descendants. Though 98 per cent of the spouses are women and 57.5 per cent of the offspring are men. So that the total reunited Pakistani population is remarkably young, with an average age of 10.6 for men and 20.6 for women. In this case, the rounding off

between the original migratory project and the family reunion phenomena becomes clearly manifest, but also a certain liking for reuniting sons, which may be related to their professional activity.

Finally, we find that Peruvians show a greater equality between sexes among sponsors, 53.5 per cent are men. They also tend to reunite an older people than the rest of the countries under study, with average ages of 22.3 for men and 25.7 for women. As mentioned before, Peruvians show a higher percentage of reunited ancestors, enhancing the pioneer role of women in the migratory process, with 7.8 per cent (621 people) out of the total and a lower percentage of descendants with 59 per cent (4,709 people), mostly below 18 years of age.

7.- Conclusions: the Influence of the Economic Crisis on the Family Reunion Phenomenon

The role men and women play in migratory processes is crucial to assess the arrangement by sex and age of the reunited population and the intensity of the family reunion requests. This gender role becomes apparent not only when the sex of reunited people is considered but also when the logic underlying trading of goods and intergenerational services, closely linked to reproductive tasks, are accounted for as well. When women act as pioneers they tend to reunite their male spouses and their offspring. Among them, the eldest (often teenagers) outnumber the young ones purely out of biological reasons, with no sex distinctions. Apart from this nuclear family, it is noteworthy that women tend to submit a high number of requests for reuniting parents. In the case of a male centred immigration strategy, we find that family reunion focuses mainly on wives (spouses) and offspring. The distribution by age of these offspring may indicate, to a certain extent the will to settle as a family (with a high percentage of children with no sex differences) or an economic pursuit (with a major arrival of around 18- year old young men). As opposed to women, the requests for reuniting elderly people are much lower and directly related to the aging process of family members and the seniority of the settlement.

As a result, it can be ascertained that the immigration boom that Spain has faced throughout the twenty-first century, is due in part to the internationalisation of domestic chores. Especially, when on account of domestic tasks and childcare these chores were not

taken over by the elderly members of the family. Once again, the number of elderly people (females mostly) who are reunited becomes apparent when women are the pioneers in migratory processes. In a way, what these immigrant women are doing is simply following the same path native women used to take: their place in the labour market entailed either that the elderly had to look after the offspring or that an increase in the labour demand could be met by the presence of international immigrants (with a female majority), owing to the frailty of the Spanish welfare state.

As can be seen from our observations, the evolution that the family reunion phenomenon has had in the province of Barcelona is discontinuous. The causes of this discontinuity can be found in the legal restrictions imposed on family reunion requests together with its bureaucratic burden. Nonetheless, the economic crisis that broke out in 2008 could well explain the decrease in the number of requests submitted, as well as in the ones approved, despite the exceptional family reunion potential owing to the recent migratory wave. A decrease which firstly (second half of 2008) could be due largely to the prevalent economic uncertainty. Though the following year (2009), it could be understood as a consequence of the laying off of immigrants or even by the refusal to renew residence permits, a *sine qua non* condition to submit a family reunion request. Secondly, restrictions when granting residence permits may also be considered. At this time, the Government Sub-Delegation in Barcelona turned down a high number of applications on the grounds that many of the reports said that immigrant dwellings did not meet the required specifications. Likewise, the granting of visas in the country of origin becomes stiffer. Needless to say, it is tempting to interpret this evolution as a consequence of the more stringent administration regulations that are implemented to react against the economic crisis.

On the one hand, Spain's Government announced its decision to put in force restrictive policies to curtail family reunion requests, a phenomenon which is considered suspiciously to be responsible for the existence of migratory chains, though no proof has demonstrated this link so far. On the other hand, a few municipal authorities may have also deemed negative an increase of a population that is heavily reliant on social services financed with local resources. This concern has arisen not only from the impact the economic crisis per se has had over local public budgets (in particular to the one allocated to social services and welcome and integration plans for the immigrant population), but from the negative reaction immigrants stir among a share of the local population as well. A vote in favour or against often seals the decision the Government may take on this issue.

Other features, such as age and nationality of the candidate to be reunited seem to reinforce the restrictive character of the law, even prior to the economic recession (responsible for further restrictions). So that requests that are refused reflect age groups very distinctly: below 18 (the age limit to adulthood) and between 55 to 64 (the previous years of retirement). For the former, the intention is to prevent family reunion from contributing to increase the flow of people who directly have access to the labour market, dodging the regulations that apply for adults. The latter intends to prevent that these arrivals may serve as a bridgehead for future migratory processes. Both of these mistrusts have been overtly announced in the press by migration policy makers, alleging the need to reform the Law on Foreign Nationals and the regulations that rule family reunion based on these assumptions. In short, ratify what was common practice in the past. The declarations the Ministry of Labour and Immigration made soon after he took office with the newly elected government of the March 2008 elections may well prove our point (Vilaseró 2008; Bárbulo 2008). It is also worth mentioning that elderly people could be seen as particularly costly consumers of the Spanish Public Health System. Therefore, the restrictions imposed on the right to family reunion according to the legislative framework together with the incentives promoted with the Voluntary Return Programme (*Royal Decree-Law 4/2008* dated 19 September 2008) have become the two poles of a restrictive policy oriented to curtail migratory flows into Spain. This new view is completely alien to the gender logic outlined above.

However, this crisis has also had effects on the gender relationship of immigrants which will later have a bearing on future family reunion processes. The previous boom of the real estate sector played a decisive role regarding job opportunities. The downturn that has appeared in the construction sector after years of growth, has caused thousands of male workers to lose their jobs, while domestic chores taken over by foreign-born women have held on both in the formal or submerged economy. This new symmetry regarding jobs by sex, has led households in which women were inactive and men held jobs in sectors most affected by current unemployment (i.e. populations originating out of a male centred migratory process) to become more vulnerable. Conversely, households in which women hold jobs seem to be more resilient. These women are being faced with the tensions that a change of roles usually brings together with the contradiction of having a real need to reunite their parents against the restrictions that the newly implemented migratory policies impose.

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