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Endogamy of Foreign-born Population in Spain: Individual and Structural Factors

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Short Abstract

We explore marriage patterns of foreign-born population in Spain, a country that has experienced a dramatic and unprecedented increase of foreign population in the last decade. Precisely, we use alternative sources (2001 Spanish census and vital registration data of the last fifteen years) to examine endogamy patterns for a selected and representative group of origins. We apply multivariate regression techniques to examine the effect of individual and contextual factors on the likelihood of being in union with a partner of the same origin. We find that, after controlling for individual and couple characteristics, differences in endogamy levels by gender and origin prevail. Instead, our results suggest that group characteristics, such as group size, sex ratio, and migratory background, are highly associated to the distinct patterns of endogamy.

Extended Abstract

Who do immigrants marry in Spain? Do they intermarry? Do we find differences according to origin and sex? Do these differences account for the sociodemographic composition of the immigrant groups? Do they account for the migratory background? Or have they something to do with the shape of the marriage market? In order to face these questions we explore marriage patterns of foreign-born population in Spain, a country that has experienced a

dramatic increase of foreign population in the last decade. We use 2001 Spanish census and vital statistics of the last fifteen years to examine endogamy patterns for a selected and representative group of origins. We apply correlation techniques and multivariate regression analysis to consider the effect of individual and contextual factors on the likelihood of being in union with a partner of the same origin.

The absence of research into intermarriage of foreigners in Spain contrasts with the abundant literature existing in countries with a greater and lengthier experience of immigration, among these particularly the United States (Blau et al., 1982; Pagnini and Morgan, 1990; McCaa, 1993; Qian and Lichter, 2001; Rosenfeld, 2002; Gray, 1987; Hout, Goldstein, 1994; Jacobs, Labov, 2002). The same thing occurs in European countries with a longer tradition of immigration, such as France, Belgium and Germany (Filion and Varro, 2005; Lievens, 1999; González Ferrer, 2006). Nevertheless, empirical evidence on intermarriage from other countries and institutional and historical contexts cannot be mimetically transferred to the study of marriage patterns and the composition of foreign couples in Spain. The heterogenisation of the Spanish population by origin is very recent, and a result of the massive arrival of international immigrants. For this reason it is inadequate to use as a reference societies of structural heterogeneity and where there are second and later generations of immigrant descendants. The case of Spain is however one of a new immigration country, in which the second and later generations are still few and the immigrant population is reshaping the Spanish marriage market. In this precise context of a new immigration country, we aim at analysing inmarriage patterns of foreign-born.

International migration in Spain.- The number of foreign nationals in Spain has risen dramatically in the last decade, making its image of a country of emigration a thing of the past, and bringing it into line with the other European countries. According to data from the Municipal Register of Population, the foreign population has grown from 542,314 in 1996 to 3,730,610 in 2005, or in relative figures, from 1.4% to 8.5% of the total population. The magnitude of the increase is such that 72% of Spanish population growth over the 1996-2005 period was due to the increase in the foreign population. Together with population growth, the incidence of immigrant population is beginning to have an important impact on demographic dynamics, both in terms of the immigrants themselves and of the total population in Spain; as has been shown for the birth rate (Delgado and Zamora, 2004) or for internal mobility (Recaño, 2003). To quote but a few figures, in 2004

16.2% of all the births in Spain were from a foreign father and/or mother, and in the same year, 24.3% of the internal mobility was undertaken by foreigners.

In the field of marriage, the figures are very eloquent too: the proportion of marriages performed in Spain in which the husband and/or the wife were of foreign nationality was 4.7% in 1996 and 14.3% in 2004, according to figures of the Spanish vital registration data, not including the marriages performed abroad or 'consensual unions' (cohabitation or living together). This is so much the case that the characteristics of unions and marriages in Spain cannot be understood without the role played by marriages and unions in which at least one of the partners is foreigner (Cortina, Esteve, Domingo, 2006).

Data and methods.- In this paper we use three different statistical sources: microdata from the 2001 Spanish census and microdata from the vital registration data of marriages and births. Compared to the marriage records, census and birth records present two advantages: i) they include consensual unions; ii) and marriages contracted abroad. Nevertheless, birth records provide information only on the couple having a child, and census offers a somewhat old portrait of immigrants, because since 2001 immigrant flows have continued to increase. That means that none of the sources is 100% appropriate and that the combination of them and the comparison of the results is necessary for the analysis.

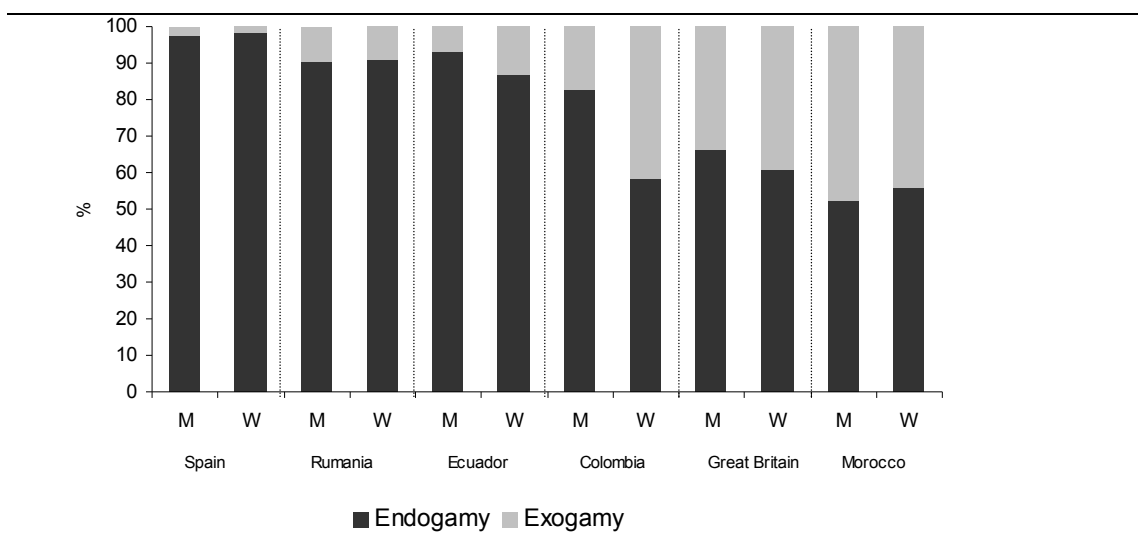
Using birth place and/or nationality (depending on the data source), we select six groups of foreigners representative of the new and old immigration flows in Spain, and these, together with the Spaniards, will constitute the object of our analysis. The selection includes Great Britain as an example of Europeans; Rumania, as an example of the recent immigrants from Eastern European countries, Morocco as a more important African nationality and with its antiquity as a distinctive feature, and finally two Latin-American groups, Colombia and Ecuador, which also correspond to more recent immigration flows.

Regarding the methods, in the first place, we use multivariate regression techniques to explore the effects of both structural and individual factors on union formation patterns. Three main structural factors are considered: group size, sex ratio and timing of arrival. At individual level explanatory variables are: educational level, age group, birth place and citizenship; at level of the composition of the union, the educational difference between partners, the age difference between partners, and the type of union and endogamy respectively.

Preliminary results.- As an outcome of the findings to be produced by this research, we stress here the differences found in our results according to the statistical source used, and the variation of endogamy levels across origins and sexes. Firstly, we observe that, according to the vital registration data on marriages, foreigners who have married in Spain from 1989 until 2004 have chosen mainly a Spanish partner. The endogamy proportions are consistently higher when we examine through census and birth records statistics the whole of the unions of foreign born. The differences in endogamy obtained from each source depend on the universe covered by each of them. Marriage records consider neither immigrants who have come to Spain already in union, nor those who have got married abroad once they were already living in Spain or, even, those living in consensual union. These cases, frequent among immigrants, are clearly the most likely to be endogamous and therefore census and birth records offer more reliable measures of immigrant's intermarriage patterns.

Secondly, we observe that endogamy is highly variable between the different groups analyzed. Figure 1 shows that foreigners that present the greatest proportion of endogamy are the Ecuadorians, the Rumanians and the Colombians. Only the Moroccans show a lower proportion. Also noteworthy are the important differences existing between men and women of the same group. Thus, endogamy of Colombian and other Latin-American men is far higher than that of their female counterparts.

Figure 1. Proportions of endogamy by sex and origin



Source: 2001 Spanish Census

In our paper, we explore to what extent these differential patterns among Spaniards and foreigners, and among foreigners themselves, may be explained by the differences in their individual characteristics and in those of the couples they form. After controlling for the individual and union characteristics, then, we test several hypothesis about the fact that these differences could be directly related to the marriage market constraints of each group. That is, for example, how sex imbalances reduce options of mating within the group. As the migratory background is responsible for the particular structural characteristics of each group, we argue that taking this background into account is essential when analyzing immigrant marriage patterns.

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