

Women, immigration and entrepreneurship in Spain: A confluence of debates in the face of a complex reality

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Abstract

Social, academic and political interest in entrepreneurship has grown over the last few years. In capitalist societies, it is seen as a way to curb unemployment and combat exclusion among certain groups, i.e. women and immigrants, who suffer social and labour discrimination and marginalisation. Adopting a qualitative method based on semi-structured interviews, this research examines - from the psychosocial gender perspective - the entrepreneurial behaviour of 52 immigrant women living in Spain. From their testimonials, this paper reports on the broad range of reasons that lead immigrant women to set up businesses, identifying the most common self-employment profiles and strategies, while also describing the individual and social consequences of their entrepreneurial behaviour, and how the entire process is conditioned by their belonging to the female gender.

Keywords: Gender, entrepreneurship, women, immigration, Spain.

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Introduction

Social, academic and political interest in entrepreneurship has grown over the last few years. In capitalist societies, it is seen as a way to curb unemployment and combat exclusion among certain groups, i.e. women and immigrants. These groups suffer social and labour discrimination and marginalisation, based in part on the notion that both groups have alternative areas in which to work productively, namely the family, domestic, private arena for women, and paid employment in their countries of origin for migrants (Alund, 2003).

Both groups differ significantly from the entrepreneur as classically envisioned. From the classical viewpoint, an entrepreneur is standardised as a young or middle-aged male developing his business in dynamic and innovative sectors, seeking mainly financial profit. This entrepreneur has so-called “class resources” such as human, financial and social capital, as well as certain social and demographic features and political conditions that are favourable to his enterprise. Among these, we can cite being a national of an economically developed country with all the social and civil privileges that entails and a command of the language spoken in the country where the entrepreneur sets up in business. However, for a decade now in Spain, and a little longer in other western countries, we are seeing a new model of entrepreneurship emerge where the protagonists are individuals who belong to groups at risk of social exclusion, and who are in business or have become self-employed as a result of either unemployment, precarious conditions, marginalisation or social and labour exploitation. The main motivation for these new entrepreneurs centres less on making a fortune and more on generating their own employment to earn their living. They tend to develop their businesses in economic and labour niches that have been abandoned and/or rejected by other more prosperous businessmen. Their lack of “class resources” is compensated for by huge amounts of motivation, effort and sacrifice and by the support provided by their ethnic or national groups and/or their families (Apitzsch and Kontos, 2003, 2008). The entrepreneurial behaviour of immigrant women – the focus of the present study – exemplifies this new type of entrepreneurship.

So entrepreneurship has traditionally been considered as a male-dominated activity, where the features of a business-oriented person (leadership, risk-taking, rationality, innovation) are associated with the male stereotype (independence, aggressiveness, autonomy, instrumentality, courage) and stand apart from the stereotyped role for women (expressiveness, empathy, kindness, sociability, oriented to caring for others, shyness) (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004a; Ogbor, 2000; Gupta, Turban, Wasti & Sikdar, 2009). This difference has been reinforced by the fact that, even today, global entrepreneurship rates are lower among women than men (Minniti & Nardone, 2007). Also, despite the high levels of education and training among businesswomen, men tend to hold more specifically business-oriented university and professional qualifications, as well as greater business experience (Mueller, 2004).

The literature reports on numerous gender-based differences vis-à-vis entrepreneurship. It has highlighted that the need to juggle domestic, family and work responsibilities is a decisive factor in female entrepreneurial behaviour, whereas this is a much less salient motivation for men (Hughes, 2003; Taniguchi, 2002). Many women are perceived fundamentally as mothers, educators and care-providers and thus they are

more likely to experience conflict between their private, family and professional lives. However, men are seen to a larger extent as financial and material providers for their families and hence they find it easier to reconcile business with their gender role (Cowling and Taylor, 2001). Likewise, personal and intrinsic values such as self-fulfilment, professional growth, and social and interpersonal relations seem to have a greater motivational influence on female than on male entrepreneurship; men are more motivated by social and economic achievement, again stemming from the values at the heart of their gender role (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004b).

Furthermore, businesses led by women exhibit certain distinguishing factors that set them apart from those led by men. For instance, in the vast majority of cases, women get involved in the services sector. Female-led businesses tend to be related to occupations that are stereotypically considered feminine, and when compared to male-led businesses they are characterised by less start-up capital and financial credibility, lower profits, smaller size, and shorter times of business survival (McManus, 2001; Muravyev, Talavera and Schaefer, 2009; Startiene and Remeikiene, 2008). Moreover, female entrepreneurs take fewer risks than men and they adopt more defensive business strategies (Brindley, 2005; Malach-Pines and Schwartz, 2008).

While female entrepreneurship has been studied extensively in the realm of feminist discourse (Cromie and Hayes, 1988; Hisrich and Brush, 1984; Marlow, 2002), self-employment among immigrants has been investigated through the literature published on ethnic businesses (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; Portes, 1998; Waldinger, 1995). So although there has been progress in studies on ethnic business communities in the United States and Europe, papers focussing on the role of immigrant women in business are scarce and specific to precise ethnic groups and/or nationalities (Apitzsch and Kontos, 2003; Dallafar, 1994; Dhaliwal, 1998; Morokvasic, 1991; Strüder, 2003). The traditional invisibility of immigrant women - denounced in the literature on gender and migration - now affects self-employed women too (Apitzsch, 2003). Studying ethnic business communities from the gender perspective raises new questions - Why do some immigrant women develop a flare for business? How does the process unfold? What are the consequences of self-employment for immigrant women, as compared to those for non-immigrant women and for immigrant men?

The initial approaches adopted to analyse and explain immigrant entrepreneurship tended to account for migrants' propensity toward business on the basis of their specific culture (Bonacich, 1973), bearing in mind that groups like Jewish, Chinese, Pakistani or Senegalese nationals were more prone to take up self-employment. The distinctive cultural background favouring entrepreneurship was thought to include certain behaviour patterns - from the business culture in the country of origin, to a higher propensity towards saving, or the ability to sublimate reward as cultural and religious values. Culturally-based interpretations have been called into question by more recent approaches since they fail to pay sufficient attention to the social, economic and contextual conditions under which immigrant entrepreneurs operate.

So, from the structural point of view, we should stress that the "context" of the host country involves specific social environments for immigrants which pose

restrictions on individuals (discrimination, legal hurdles, demand for certain skills, etc.) as well as providing opportunities (unmet demand for products and services among conationals, social capital and support networks), regardless of their individual human capital or cultural traits (Portes, 1998). Despite the importance of these economic and other contextual factors, however, they cannot fully explain the phenomenon and the particular dynamics of ethnic businesses. For instance, they cannot account for the varying rates of self-employment among ethnic groups, or why businesses run by certain nationals tend to be more stable and successful than those run by members of other groups or communities. Hence, during the 1990's, especially in the US, academic research adopted a more comprehensive approach to explain entrepreneurship by linking the opportunities and determining factors in host societies with the cultural characteristics of the migrant community (Waldinger, 1995).

These models are formulated on the basis of the social, economic, labour and ethnic features of the United States. So although they have had a huge impact there, alternative interpretations have emerged in Europe arguing that legal and regulatory requirements in place in many European countries give rise to a different interaction between consumer demand and business offerings than is typical in the States. Indeed, Kloosterman and Rath (2001) proposed the mixed embeddedness theory by adapting the integrating model developed in the U.S by Waldinger to the socio-economic features of Europe, leading specifically to two different models depending on the country where the model is applied. Firstly, there is the Neo-American model in place in English-speaking countries, where public services and those linked to social reproduction are provided by a dynamic market capable of generating considerable low-paid employment. In this model, resorting to self-employment does not occur as a result of scant opportunities in the open market, or as an alternative to unemployment but rather as a strategy to enjoy higher income and increased job mobility. Secondly, there is the Rhineland model – tailored to Western and Central European countries such as France, Germany and Austria. In these countries, the labour market is structured on the basis of an *insider/outsider* dichotomy where high salaries and job stability for the host population co-exist with high rates of immigrant unemployment as a result of the hurdles newcomers have to overcome to secure employment. Here, less qualified migrants with lesser professional skills are the most highly motivated to start a business, but the lack of financial and human capital invariably relegates them to the bottom of the occupational ladder, often in unprofitable activities, with fierce competition and in sectors that are progressively being abandoned by the business community of the host country.

A third model has been proposed in recent years in the light of the social and economic specificities of Nordic countries such as Denmark and Sweden. Here, despite the State's significant control over the economy and industry – similar to that exercised by countries in the Rhineland model – there is a fully-fledged welfare state and strong social/labour equal-opportunities policies. This curtails the number of immigrant entrepreneurs compared to other countries, since most take up paid work in the standard labour market (Rath and Kloosterman, 2000).

The social, economic, labour, legal and migratory characteristics of Southern European countries such as Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal do not allow for a perfect

match with any of the three types described by Kloosterman and Rath in the European mixed embeddedness model. Quite possibly, the countries in the Rhineland model show greater similarities to those of Southern Europe given that control of immigrants and social/labour requirements are extremely stringent. However, unlike the Central European countries where this model is applied, Southern Europe has a large informal or underground economy, as well as high rates of unemployment, temporary work and job insecurity. In addition, sectors providing labour insertion opportunities are limited to the fields of agriculture, construction work, catering, textiles and home help, with fewer jobs in industry. There are also enormous regional differences within each country. Thanks to the economic, social and labour development gained by joining the European Union, Southern European countries have only just recently ceased to be countries where emigration originated and have now become destinations for high numbers of very diverse immigrants from Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and some Asian countries such as China, the Philippines and Pakistan.

These circumstances have led some authors (King and Zontini, 2000) to propose a model that better fits this state of play. It is called the South-European model and focuses on low self-employment rates for immigrants in Southern Europe as a result of the wide range of difficulties that aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs have to overcome, and on the effect of irregular employment of foreign workers in the informal economy which has flourished in these countries.

Three major biases arise in research on the issues raised above, hindering adequate explanation of, and thus appropriate responses to, immigrant entrepreneurship. Firstly, most studies adopt an androcentric perspective with special attention on self-employment among male migrants but with little regard for the relation between class, ethnicity and gender which so comprehensively affects this phenomenon (Holvino, 2008). Here women are assumed to be passive subjects who follow in the steps of men through a male-dominated process. This emphasises the need to adopt a gender-based approach to ensure a thorough analysis of the variables that make female migrant entrepreneurial projects so specific and the degree to which their projects are influenced by variables stemming from their female status.

Secondly, the “macro” perspective has taken precedence in this area of study on female immigrant entrepreneurship as a result of the importance of the above-mentioned social, economic and political factors. Nevertheless, we believe it is essential that more personal research is undertaken to reflect the subjective standpoint of the immigrant population (Werbner, 1999).

Thirdly, in addition to the cultural, social, economic, labour, and migratory factors mentioned above, the Southern European geographical context also involves a particular Mediterranean gender ideology, which has not been studied in detail in relation to female ethnic self-employment in the region. Hence our interest in bearing all these factors in mind in our research relating to Spain (Reyneri, 2003; Apitzsch and Kontos, 2008).

For these reasons, our research investigates the entrepreneurial behaviour of female immigrants in Spain from the psychosocial gender perspective. The goals of this

study are to pinpoint the reasons why these women decide to set up business, to describe the most common self-employment profiles and strategies and to analyse the consequences, both individual and social, of these women's entrepreneurship.

The study

We adopted a qualitative method because we believe that it is well suited to capture the complexity inherent to the topic of immigration, self-employment and gender, including the women's own subjective perspectives. Statistical studies on migrant entrepreneurship invariably simplify the complexity of the topic as a result of the method adopted and leave out of the equation certain essential personal and subjective issues (Erel, 2007). Moreover, the emotional and cultural aspects of gender issues are better studied using qualitative methods (Campbell & Wasco, 2000).

A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of immigrant businesswomen residing in Spain, in the region of Andalusia, to be exact. The interview-based method helps to illustrate the influence of various social, psychological and gender factors on the business project. This method also provides interviewees with greater flexibility and control when narrating their experiences (Apitzsch, 2003). Information for this study was compiled in a very open manner with little direction of the conversation by the researcher. The starting point was a script of questions related to the aims of the research, namely reasons for taking up self-employment (personal, work-related, cultural), entrepreneurial profiles and strategies (business activity and characteristics, perceived availability of resources, limiting and facilitating factors) and the consequences of entrepreneurship (individual, family-related, social).

Consideration of the three methodological criteria of qualitative research determined the number and the features of subjects participating in the study, as well as the data compilation process. As a result, in order to capture the social and demographic heterogeneity, the variability of discourse and the diversity of profiles or strategies used by the target social group, we first sought representation by types or psycho-social structure rather than numerical statistical representation. Secondly, the saturation or redundancy criterion was applied to decide when we should stop, both in terms of seeking further interviewees and of deciding when to draw the interviews to a close. Thirdly, the accessibility or availability criterion determined possibilities to access a higher or lower number of subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Interviews were conducted with 52 non-European Union immigrant women², lasting for an average of 67 minutes (range between 40 and 90 minutes). All the information was recorded with the prior knowledge and consent of participants. Field work took place during 2008 and 2009. To recruit our subjects, we enlisted the help of

²Immigrants from a European Union member state (i.e Germany, United Kingdom or France) are very different both in terms of social, economic and labour characteristics and as regards their entrepreneurial profile from the Latin American, African, Eastern European or Asian immigrants we have studied.

associations, non-governmental organisations and other bodies working in the field of immigration. All these organisations have helped us to contact individuals in the target group.

(Insert table 1)

As we have seen, the women taking part in this study can be characterised as self-employed and are included in the professional activities register as such. Most are young, married, with few children. In their vast majority, they come from Latin American and Maghreb countries³, and have average to high education and training. Most have only started entrepreneurship recently in small, services sector companies, with few employees and minimum financial profit, barely making enough to keep their business going. In general terms, this profile is typical of women immigrant entrepreneurs seen in Spain.

We conducted an analysis of interviewees' statements focusing on semantic content rather than on linguistic aspects such as syntax, style of discourse and/or rhetorical resources. In particular, our goal was to identify and interpret the reasons leading migrant women to set up business, to describe this process and to highlight the individual, social and gender-related consequences that stem from their entrepreneurial behaviour.

Using verbatim transcripts of the statements, we classified and coded participants' narrations depending on the topics addressed. We then categorised these thematic units based on the specific objectives of our research (reasons, profiles and strategies, consequences). Lastly, we present our results based on the most important topics emerging in the statements and have added paragraphs or verbatim excerpts of the material used to illustrate and, to some extent, justify our interpretations and ultimate conclusions (Chasteen, 1984).

In order to guarantee rigour, credibility, transferability, consistency and neutrality of our analyses and conclusions, a number of control measures were adopted such as coding, categorisation and interpretation of results being performed independently by four members of the research group. The group then discussed jointly to agree on the criterion for choices and decisions adopted. Some of the preliminary results were reviewed and discussed. Our conclusions were compared with those drawn in other studies addressing similar phenomena.

Entrepreneurial behaviour among female immigrants in Spain

***“Pushed and pulled”*: Reasons for entrepreneurship**

The biographies of most of the women in this study show that the seed of self-employment is sown by experiences of exclusion or discrimination in a two-way, segmented labour market where women face added obstacles besides having to

³ The westernised countries of the Arab world in North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) are grouped under the name “The Maghreb”, while those countries to the East of Libya are named “The Mashreq.”

overcome the hurdles arising from their immigrant status. These experiences serve to trigger entrepreneurial behaviour (Kreide, 2003).

In this regard, setting up a business may be a basic protection mechanism and self-defence strategy used by migrant women when faced with labour market exclusion and disadvantage (Light, 2007). It is also a way to attain social mobility and leave behind the classic job sectors reserved to female immigrants in many Spanish cities such as home help, providing care for dependents (children, the elderly and sick), catering, textiles, or prostitution, which entail even greater precariousness, labour exploitation and gender inequality (Anderson, 2007). In these cases, setting up a business or becoming self-employed generally occurs at the end of a long path in which working as home help is an unavoidable landmark.

I had to wait more than two years to get my self-employment permit and in the meantime I worked illegally as a house maid; no contract, no health insurance, no papers, nothing... that's all there was... I was so sick and tired of working as a maid. (Michaela, Romania)

There has been no fall in the demand for foreign female labour to work as househelpers and caregivers as a result of the collapse of the traditional family model in Spain since the transition to democracy after Franco's authoritarian regime (1939-1975). Indeed, Spanish women have joined the labour market in a context where, as a result of the Mediterranean gender mindset, males take little co-responsibility in sharing domestic-family tasks (Ribas-Mateo, 2004). Spain also has a fragile welfare state, with few policies to ensure work-family life balance and with no genuinely effective and universal services for families.

Likewise, some (albeit a minority) of the migrant women interviewed opted for self-employment because they were eager to continue working in the trade they were engaged in back home. For instance, many women from Eastern European countries like Poland, Ukraine, Russia and Romania are highly qualified but unable to capitalise on their skills in Spain because all they find are low-paid, low-skilled jobs as domestic helpers or caregivers for children, the elderly and infirm (Coyle, 2007). Natalia and Maimouna described this as follows:

In my country I worked in healthcare but I couldn't find anything similar here, so I decided to open a centre delivering comprehensive assistance for the elderly. (Natalia, Ukraine)

I have a job I like, a job I can do well, ..., although I went to University in my own country, I am a graduate, it is of no value here because we come from another place, no value at all, there aren't many opportunities here for immigrants unless you create the opportunity yourself. (Maimouna, Nigeria)

Thus, in accordance with the arguments of the classical Pull and Push migratory theory (Ravensteins, 1885), and with more recent and specific theories on ethnic segmentation and gender segregation in the labour market (Schrover, Van der Leun and Quispel, 2007), scant and precarious job opportunities force some migrant women into self-employment. However, some interviewees' statements also indicate a desire to become their own boss and to gain certain degrees of freedom and autonomy that will enable them to manage their own life experience.

To enjoy more freedom, a safe job, because if you are self-employed your job is safe, no-one can make you redundant, tell you off, throw you out, control you... you can do as you please, ..., you aren't afraid that your contract will end and you'll be out of work tomorrow. Also, it's an opportunity to show what you can really do. (Andrea, Poland)

Despite the fact that they decided to set up business to flee from exploitation as domestic workers, and in pursuit of the freedom and autonomy that they could enjoy as businesswomen, many currently are working in conditions of self-exploitation given that they work very long hours, almost every day of the year. These comments from Katerina and María point to this issue.

I wanted to quit my job and do something better and what I fancied most was becoming self-employed. I was sick of being exploited, at the end of my tether! I wanted to be my own boss and enjoy more flexible hours. The fact is I have nothing of the sort because being self-employed in catering is pure slavery. (Katerina, Russia)

I'm going to do my best to ensure that my children don't lead the life I do. I constantly encourage them to study, to go to university and get a stable, well-paid job so that they can lead a decent life. (María, Dominican Republic)

Under these circumstances, setting up business for women is not so much about opportunity as about necessity when faced with unemployment, under-employment or job insecurity. Some respondents' lack of a purely intrinsic entrepreneurial motivation becomes apparent in that they abandon the business world as soon as there is a chance to join the labour market as wage-earners. Moreover, many - like Maria- emphasise their desire to enhance their children's human capital so that they may access white collar, well-paid professional work in the future.

Although some of the motives of female immigrants are also common to men, purely entrepreneurial motives are most salient in the male discourse. Some such motives of male entrepreneurs are material in nature - such as the urge to make money, to prosper on the social ladder or to acquire control and power over other people - while others are intrinsic, such as excelling and personal fulfilment (Lewis, 2006). To a certain degree, one could say that women are pushed with greater force than men towards business, but that men are more attracted to business than women.

So the male role as the family bread-winner provides men with motivation to set up in business. This motivation may be reinforced by the great value and recognition that, in some immigrants' cultures of origin, is attached to males who migrate to Europe or North America to work and do business. These men return home as heroes, making their families and the entire community proud, while many women aspire to marry one of these successful men (Schmidt and Blion, 2000).

In contrast, the communal female role pushes immigrant women towards self-employment since it provides them with the flexibility - time and space - they need to juggle work and family. This is one of the factors most valued by self-employed women in general, which clearly distinguishes them from men (Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000). In many of the cases examined, the idea of setting up business and keeping it afloat is determined by their reproductive life and their obligations to care for dependent family

members. Being a businesswoman plus mother/spouse/daughter/housewife entails taking on a myriad of responsibilities, none of which are even partly met by husbands/partners. Carmen described this as follows:

*Thanks to being self-employed I can look after the business with my kids, I have to close if any are sick, and devote less time to the business because I have to take care of my father or husband when they are ill, and make the most of any free time to do family shopping.
(Carmen, Colombia)*

In many cultures, the maternal role of women is glorified and the family is idolised as an institution playing a predominant role in all aspects of women's lives, including of course self-employment (Dreby, 2006). So in the discourse of 18 out of 52 interviewees, especially those from Latin America, the impact of their roles as mothers, spouses, daughters and housewives on their choice to pursue a business project is especially explicit. These roles are learned and assimilated via gender socialisation in their communities of origin and their host countries.

I have three children and I wanted to devote time to them, not have to stick to a time-table; I wanted to plan things differently to have more time together: take them to school, pick them up, have lunch together instead of at school, make sure they do their homework and all that. In that respect things have turned out well because if I had a regular job I'd be miserable because I wouldn't be able to take such good care of my family. (Rosa, Peru)

So, the desire to ensure wellbeing for children and family and provide a promising future for them appears in the discourse as the schematic gender justification that helps women mitigate the tough conditions of migrating abroad, while giving them a reason to resist and persevere with their business project.

Since I opened the store, my quality of life is worse, but my son's is far better and that makes me happy. (Li, China)

Here is where the female head of the household emerges as a character opting for setting up business as a strategy to keep the home going, in the face of the sexist lack of responsibility sometimes shown by their male partners when it comes to bringing up the children and doing the housework. In this respect, women maintaining transnational families face especially difficult pressures. These are single mothers, separated, widowed, divorced or married women who have left their families, husbands and children behind in hopes of providing their children with a better life (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ávila, 1997). For these lone women, family responsibilities in their country of origin can sometimes lead their business project to capsize. The need to send home cash remittances also limits their ability to save up for start-up business capital, as we can see in Paola's words:

My parents stayed behind with my three children while we emigrated. We send them money to cover their needs so it's hard to save money to start a business. (Paola, Ecuador)

At least 13 of the women interviewed provide for close dependents, mostly their children, in their countries of origin. Even though these women embarked on their migration and entrepreneurial projects in order to ensure a better life for their families left behind, they suffer under the pressure of the stereotype of being a "good mother", i.e. mothers must maintain close ties with their children, both in terms of space and

time. Unlike the standard duties of transnational fatherhood, those of transnational maternity go beyond sending remittances to relatives; the immigrant women entrepreneurs interviewed all feel a strong moral and emotional responsibility towards those left behind. Indeed, these women make great efforts to keep the family together by calling home, writing emails and letters, preparing the family reunions during vacations, visiting relatives and/or bringing the family together again (Zontini, 2004). Also, at least 7 of the interviewees are responsible both for managing their husband and children in the host country and for their parents or elderly or sick relatives in their countries of origin.

***“I help my husband in the family business”*: Characteristics and conditioning factors for entrepreneurship**

A quarter of the migrant women interviewed here match the profile of so-called “traditional family businesses”; i.e. family businesses where the husband takes centre stage in the business initiative and women, albeit co-owners, take on a secondary role, providing help in the business as any other family member and submitting to their husband’s decisions and authority.

My husband became self-employed using his own resources but also with my help. We’ve had to help each other, naturally, I’ve had to help him as his wife that I am. (Milena, Bolivia)

The term “family business” is a gender-neutral euphemism for businesses in which, in truth, the role of women and other family members is typically crucial (Grasmuck and Espinal, 2000; Rangaswamy, 2007). The success stories of certain groups of migrant entrepreneurs, which emphasise the role of the “family business” while boosting the myth of the self-made-man, obscure the efforts and contributions of the entire family, especially women, and thus risk over-homogenising the reality for immigrant families. Fatou and Xiaomei describe their role in family businesses, both pre- and post-migration, as follows:

In my country, women work harder than men. Sometimes a woman has to look after her husband and eight or nine children and they get on with it. That’s why I feel good here and I’m quite all right with helping out in the shop and taking care of the kids, the house, my husband. (Fatou, Senegal)

At home, my dad had a shop and some of my brothers worked for him. Me too, and another girl, we were always at the store. (Xiaomei, China)

As highlighted by Anthias and Mehta (2003, p. 112), women are yet another resource available to men; cheap or unpaid housework, associated with traditionally female skills like sewing or cooking, which are harnessed to the aims of the business project. However, women can rarely be sure they will gain the support of their ethnic group, because their traditional roles are incompatible with that of a self-employed woman. And as indicated by Kontos (2003, p. 187), men do not fit well into the role of subordinates helping out in a woman’s business. Some authors (Ganguly-Scrase and Julian, 1998) argue that the main barriers to female business success stem from

conservative chauvinism and the fact that immigration intensifies gender oppression. This comment by Gracia helps us interpret this issue:

Here men from over there are far more chauvinistic, they don't like women to have their own business, in fact I didn't work when my child was little and it was only when I separated (from my husband) that I could start to work and I set up my business. (Gracia, Peru)

Half of our North African and Asian interviewees match this profile of the family businesswoman (Song, 1995; Rangaswamy, 2007). These women have to juggle their pace and strategies in both work and family life in such a way that roles, timing, business and domestic areas overlap and merge. This makes husbands, fathers, and offspring - and, as a result of gender socialisation, even themselves – happy, as we can deduce from this comment by Rachida.

As well as a business, the store is the only chance I have to continue to be a Muslim wife and mother, something I don't want to give up. (Rachida, Morocco)

Religion is one of the main modulating factors in the business experience – and hence in the migratory project - of women from the North African Maghreb region, since conservative Muslim morality restricts female employment activities in the public domain (Desrues and Nieto, 2009). Under these circumstances, female immigrants must manage the discord and ambivalence that stems from their status as businesswomen. The conflict of traditional culture and religion with Western modernity places these women in an awkward position in which psychosocial gender beliefs exert significant pressure on their self-employment migratory projects (Essers, Benschop and Doorewaard, 2008; Kirmani, 2009).

Along these lines, Fatima's description of her role in the business as “*I help my husband*” (Fatima, Western Sahara) may exemplify a justification constructed by women and tolerated by men, one which allows women to transcend religious or cultural restrictions on their participation in the workplace and the public domain.

While migrant businessmen are capable of overcoming class disadvantages by using resources from their ethnic group, women resort to other strategies clearly marked by their condition as females (Yetim, 2008). In this regard, we have seen how some relatives (grandmothers, sisters and daughters) respond to the call of immigrant businesswomen to take care of their children and/or manage the home, i.e. merely an extension of female carer links across borders (Salaff and Grevent, 2004).

My husband brought my sister over to look after our children. (Malika, Algeria)

Luckily I was able to bring my mother to help me out at home and with the kids. (Katerina, Russia)

My sister used to say: “if you want to come to Spain we'll be together, you know how lonely I feel here, sometimes I am scared and feel bad” and “we'll find you a job and set you up!” And, well, that's why I decided to move here. (Natalia, Ukraine)

Another gendered feature of women's business strategies is that joining forces with a male, whether a life or business partner – especially if he is a national of the host

country - makes it easier to set up the business, even though it does create a certain degree of dependence on the man. Andrea, Maimouna and Aminata all mentioned the role of male partners in enabling their business projects.

I've taken over my partner's business. He had it all set up. (Andrea, Poland)

I started dating a guy who helped me find work as a cleaner. With that contract I was able to get my papers in order. He then lent me money to set up the business, ..., my boyfriend is the only person who has helped me. I got the deposit thanks to him. At the time, he paid for the rent of the premises with his own salary and all I could pay was electricity and telephone bills, he paid for the rest, ..., some of my Spanish suppliers are married to black women so they know more or less how hairdressers for Afro-Europeans work, ..., we also buy products from a Nigerian woman but she's married to a Spaniard. (Maimouna, Nigeria)

He passed away, ..., his name was Juan and he used to say: "if you don't have papers, I'll give you a contract, I'll pay your social security and you can start working!" But he died in August, ..., he helped me a lot to learn Spanish, he'd encouraged me to "go do courses!" He was an older man, almost sixty, and he was the person who most helped me to get into the community when I arrived here alone with my daughter. (Aminata, Senegal)

The assistance of a male partner can help a woman access the necessary funding to cover the initial business investment and overcome the administrative hurdles migrant women face to set up a business, as well as promoting acceptance by the host community, thus enhancing integration.

The women's views of their business projects are sometimes marked by gender-based self-stereotyping. For instance, sometimes they call their business "my baby" (Oumou, Nigeria), or refer to creating the business in maternal terms: "it has been a lone pregnancy and delivery" (Sonia, Ecuador). In this and other respects, they base part of their business strategy on personal qualities that fit in with the traditional female social role. For instance, they emphasise the importance of providing friendly and empathic assistance to their customers; of cleanliness and tidiness in their shops; or of the perseverance, persistence, patience, sacrifice, and self-abnegation necessary for business success (Anderson and Hughes, 2009). The quotes from Lorena and Fatou are significant pointers on this topic.

A lot of people say to me "Lorena, you are so sweet", ..., I am really affectionate with elderly people, I always call them granny, grandpa, sir, hello beautiful how are you today?. I try to be helpful. (Lorena, Colombia)

I am always really nice to my customers, it's the most important thing. I think that's why I have made so many new ones. I am always affectionate and patient with Spaniards. (Fatou, Senegal)

In addition to ethnic segmentation of the labour market, which affects the entire community of immigrant men and women, our research indicates a certain degree of gender segregation: 24 out of the 52 business profiles of our female interviewees are related to sectors and activities linked to traditional female skills and social reproduction – sewing, cooking, cleaning, caring for dependents, fashion, beauty. This is not surprising since, according to Spanish Mediterranean culture, the assumption is that women have a natural gift for these tasks (Solé, Ribas, Berballi and Parella, 1998).

The women in these fields tend to be former waged workers, like Andrea or Ana, who have gathered the necessary knowledge, information, funding and contacts for their eventual businesses during their time as wage-earners.

I worked as a waitress, seamstress, ironing clothes, as a cook, publicity rep, reporter for the local TV station, and for an elderly lady with Alzheimer's amongst many other jobs. (Andrea, Poland)

I met a lady who said, go for it, set up your own shop! You really know how to sew, so you can mend garments in your own business! I loved the idea and since then it's been two years now, working in the trade. (Ana, Bolivia)

As Light mentions (2007, p. 544), entrepreneurial immigrants show a clear tendency to hire other immigrants as their employees capitalising precisely on what these people find are serious hurdles that hinder them from entering the ordinary labour market. So migrant businessmen do not exercise ethnic-racial discrimination towards individuals with whom they share language, social networks, cultural cues and so on. In addition, they are able to assess and value the productivity that stems from a potential employee's education and training, and from the professional skills acquired in his or her country of origin, without having to pay for such productivity at the normal cost in the dominant labour market. Likewise, the same author (Light, 2007, p. 546) highlights that female employers also prefer to hire other women, thus recognising and valuing their productivity while contributing to curbing the social, labour and economic disparities that exist between men and women. Immigrant businesswomen belong to both of the two groups mentioned above, so one may infer that they also prefer to hire other migrant women. While this may help offset the class and gender-based disadvantages that they suffer in the mainstream labour market, it does not contribute to reducing ethnic and gender-based segregation given that their business activity, as we have just shown, pertains to feminised social, economic and labour sectors. In fact, Schrover, Van der Leun and Quispel (2007, p. 535) believe that women's participation in a labour niche as workers and businesswomen strengthens the feminisation of certain economic-labour industries where low status and low salaries are associated with female workers.

Consequences: Personal identity, gender empowerment and social mobility

Through self-employment, migrant women sometimes find themselves immersed in empowerment strategies that lead them to overcome some of the disadvantages of their female condition in a patriarchal culture in which their lives are controlled by fathers and brothers within the family home, and later by husbands and sons in their own home. Through self-employment they seek to elude gender-based social, class and ethnic control:

I didn't want to depend on others to work, least of all my husband's family. I wanted to be self-sufficient, to survive and have my own family, ..., being self-employed is basic, ..., to have your own business, to run it. (Juana, Argentine)

In this regard, given that the feminisation of poverty has become a widespread phenomenon in many parts of the world, and in the face of a deep social, economic and employment crisis, it is quite common to see women embarking on the adventure of

migration to flee social pressure from and dependency on the group they belong to in their countries of origin (Kofman and Sales, 1998). Migration will provide them with a degree of social and economic independence that they need in order to assert themselves as individuals and women. In fact, a heightened sense of their female status – so devalued in their cultures of origin – is one of the main explicit consequences of female migrant entrepreneurship for 2 out of the 4 women in our study who come from Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Nigeria and Senegal). Aminata, for instance, explained the impact on her self-esteem of her experience as an African female migrant capable of setting her own business up in Spain:

I like to do my own thing, I want to be myself, because I know there is a lot in me. (Aminata, Senegal)

Michaela also refers to this:

With your own business you feel much better, more relaxed, more confident, you feel proud of what you're doing. (Michaela, Romania)

So the migratory business project affects not only women's self-perception, but also their gender-based family relations. Female entrepreneurial migration becomes a process of individualisation through which women – while still being and seeing themselves as members of a family core – acquire awareness that they are also individuals with their own needs and requirements, and so they tend to adopt a new position within the family. This quote from Yamina shows this change clearly:

Since I opened the store I feel more respected, especially by my compatriots, ..., my husband is also very proud of me. (Yamina, Morocco)

Analysing the statements of our interviewees, it also becomes apparent that their business process has allowed them to improve their social relations, to strengthen ties of friendship with many of their co-nationals and, in general, to acquire greater public acknowledgement and heightened social status. As argued by Kontos (2003, p. 197), a successful female immigrant is someone who also manages to maintain and broaden her social networks. This clearly occurred for Monika:

In a business you deal with a lot of people, you see so many new faces. Someone comes in today, someone else tomorrow and so forth, so you get to know a lot of people, ..., you make friends with some, others offer to help out in so many things, see what I mean? Then, because you are the owner, they treat you differently. There must be some kind of racism whereby people are nice to the owner and treat employees differently. Being self-employed, with your own business, helps a lot to lead a better life here, you know. And as an immigrant too, because you also become part of the community much faster. You become better integrated, you are treated differently. (Monika, Russia)

Nevertheless, we agree with Harvey (2005, p.111) that the change in family and gender status among entrepreneurial females can also backfire as they may be seen to be calling into question the patriarchal order, once freed from the social and family control exercised by males.

According to what I have heard, some people from my country also living in this district, don't like me (as a woman) to spend so long working in the shop, ..., in my country,

González-González, J.M., Bretones, F. D., Zarco, V. y Rodríguez, A. (2011). Women, immigration and entrepreneurship in Spain. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34, 360-370. DOI:10.1016/j.wsif.2011.05.007.

women don't do things like this, they tend to spend more time at home with the kids and so on,..., the worst thing is that their wives also criticise me,..., all these comments really affect my husband but I try not to pay too much attention to them. (Khadija, Morocco)

In contrast, the effect of entrepreneurship on immigrant men's social identity tends to be positive, as it enables them to go beyond others' perceptions of them as members of a disadvantaged social category (immigrants) to another category with more prestige and social status (businessmen).

Another of the differentiating gender-based consequences of female entrepreneurship has to do with gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes that are most dominant in the European Mediterranean region (Anthias and Mehta, 2003; Ribas-Mateos, 2004). In the world of business, women often continue to work behind the scenes, while males work with the public:

I run the business with my husband. He waits tables and deals with customers and I work in the kitchen preparing "tapas" and doing the washing up. (Milena, Bolivia)

This is tantamount to the traditional division between the public-male domain and the private-female domain. Rangaswamy (2007, p. 680) describes some common dynamics of this kind of labour division:

Husband and wife worked as joint owners, with the wife usually playing the role of trusted and watchful accountant manager. Amongst employees, there was some demarcation between 'men's work' and 'women's work', with the distinctions being maintained more clearly in some areas, such as the kitchen, than in others such as front counter and general clean-up. If the women were the wives of store-owners, they had a privileged position but also a more vested interest in working as hard as they could. According to some owners, if their wives had not rolled up their sleeves and worked long hours, or continued to manage and oversee store operations while they themselves were talking to bankers or scouting new locations, the men would never have achieved the successes they did.

Suppliers, customers, and funding providers tend to want to speak to the husband or male employees, as if they were at the helm of the business:

Many thought I was an employee for a long time after I opened the business. (Ivanka, Russia)

Finally, women seeking loans sometimes have to be accompanied by males acting also as guarantors because bankers see them as needy, uncertain and lacking self-confidence.

Due to all of the above, migrant businesswomen - unlike men - may feel that they do not belong or are not taken seriously in business (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004), and this may lead them to experience low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority. This in turn can affect their entrepreneurial performance as a self-fulfilling prophecy, through the threat and pressure that this negative female gender stereotype exerts on their assessment of their own business competencies and ability (Steele, 1997).

It was risky and I feared that things would go wrong. At the start I was a bag of nerves. This affected me, I couldn't even do the maths, I'd go blank. (Teresa, Argentine)

The most important thing is to have psychological support. You need it to not go under.
(Aicha, Morocco)

Expansive entrepreneurship entails certain financial risks, full-time dedication, accumulating human capital, work experience and/or contacts which are at odds with the gendered life-orientation received by many of the women studied here. The comments from Monika and Fatou clearly reflect the fear of risk seen among many female immigrant entrepreneurs.

If I'd opened the bakery in a busier area, with more people, I'd have been more successful. But rentals in the city centre are really expensive and I can't afford them. And then there was the risk, ..., just imagine, setting up a business which means money, to pay rent, which is really expensive, and then no-one comes in, they don't want to, don't like it. What do you do then? So I thought: "let's start with a small business, an affordable rent... and see what happens." (Monika, Russia)

It's really scary to set up a business because you don't really know what you're up against, ..., you have to go really slowly to be sure. (Fatou, Senegal)

So migrant businesswomen tend to avoid openly challenging the status quo, instead adopting more cautious, gradual, undistruptive, non-aggressive strategies that are less likely to yield successful businesses. The unintended outcome is that there are few migrant businesswomen who can serve as role models to others, to help them gain more confidence, thus perpetuating the prevailing male business model. Also, it is quite common in male discourse to see statements justifying risk-taking as part of their entrepreneurial strategy. From our point of view, this is a result of traditional male gender socialisation; the stereotype of the male entrepreneur is linked with the ability of men to take risks courageously, almost heroically, even sometimes boasting about their enormous self-confidence.

Conclusions

From the statements made by female migrants in the course of our interviews we see how the entire entrepreneurial process (motives, strategies and consequences) is affected and shaped by their female gender. Entrepreneurial activity helps women to overcome the labour and gender-based segregation that they are subject to on account of their two-fold condition as women and migrants, as well as sometimes enabling them to adjust to the requirements and demands placed on their traditional gender role. Entrepreneurship is also a source of self-esteem and personal identity, gender empowerment and social mobility.

For migrant women, setting up business combats their exclusion from and segregation within the social/labour market, while also often forcing them to accept conditions of self-exploitation and precariousness within their businesses. Despite these challenges, however, entrepreneurship is often seen as a route to greater autonomy and professional independence, heightened personal value, social prestige and, consequently, increased gender parity.

The testimonials of interviewees clearly reflect that, for many, self-employment is a strategy to reconcile family, professional and personal life within the boundaries of the religious, ethical and female gender models imposed on them by their traditional patriarchal cultures. These models typically lead them to put their roles as mothers, spouses, daughters and/or housewives first, ahead of their role as businesswomen. In fact, often women are the hidden face of the success stories of migrant entrepreneurship because, as human capital, they are invisible.

In the social, economic and political context of Southern Spain, social and labour segmentation are extremely marked, constricting immigrants to the underground economy, where the work they can engage in is unstable, precarious and carries little social recognition. In addition, Spanish Mediterranean culture leads the labour market to be strongly gender-segregated, restricting women's professional activities - whether as employees or businesswomen - to sectors such as domestic help, sewing, and providing assistance to the elderly, the infirm or to children. So for immigrant women, setting up a business is one of the very few options available for them to attain a certain degree of social mobility and gender empowerment.

We have pinpointed certain differentiating factors regarding the influence of the geographical areas of origin on female migrants' business projects among the women studied here, albeit far fewer than one would initially expect to find given the broad ethnic, cultural, social and economic diversity of their countries of origin. Without wishing to generalise and bearing in mind that making such distinctions was not the primary goal of the study, we believe it is worth pointing out that for many of the Latin American women in our study, their family duties and maternal role have a clear impact on their business projects. Among some North African women who were interviewed, adopting a family-business profile allows them to comply with major religious and moral norms. A similar pattern was found among some of the Asian businesswomen, although here the norms are more cultural than religious. Finally, many Eastern European women envisage setting up a business as a way to further their professional career and/or gain social/labour mobility.

Finally, we conclude that migrant businesswomen may be seen as models who are breaking away from stereotypes and prejudices (both of gender and social group). As entrepreneurs, they help to overcome the notion, widely held in Spain, that immigrants are a problem, a notion that has been socially constructed through pre-conceived images of poverty, marginalisation and ethnic conflict. At the same time, these women are contributing to the gradual development of a positive social representation of female entrepreneurs, one that challenges traditional, sexist Mediterranean perceptions of women as conformist and lacking in initiative and ambition.

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Annexes

Table 1. Participants

<i>Origin</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Business Activity</i>	<i>Duration</i>
Latin America 24	Average 36.9	Secondary 28	Fashion, lingerie, brides 9	Average 32 mths
Maghreb Region 10	Range 21-58	Higher 12	Bars, restaurants 8	Range 6-62 mths
Asia 7		Primary 8	Bazaars, gifts 6	
Eastern Europe 7	<i>Civil Status</i>	No formal	Phone booths, Cyber-cafe 6	<i>Employees</i>
Sub-Saharan Africa 4	Married 33	education 4	Hairdressing, beauty 5	Average 0.8
	Single 10		Seamstress 4	Range 0-5
	Divorced 9		Food 4	
	<i>Children</i>		Kindergartens, old people’s homes 4	
	Average 1.95		Arts & Crafts 2	<i>Income</i>
			Cleaning 2	Cover costs 32
			Professionals 2	Profit 14
				Losses 8