

# Women Migration: A New Structural Paradigm or an Alternative Change Development to a Financial Crisis? (From a Theoretical Perspective to a Local Case in Mexico)

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## 1. Women Migration a Paradigm Theory in Change

From a dominant economic theoretical perspective, women's massive incorporation into the productive process obeys to the accumulation process expansion. According to the theoretical-methodological traditional pattern, women have improved their development and their social environment when incorporating into the labor market.

Taking into consideration Geetha Krishnan's work in India and South Eastern countries, women that emigrate from one city to another, or from one country to another, do not necessarily improve their life conditions or their empowerment.

## 2. What is there beyond the mainstream economic theoretical paradigm?

Economic crises together with structural changes have not only expelled labor from the traditional sectors to new sectors, but they have reorganized the labor market in a different way.

The productive process technological change has strongly affected feminine participation.

Nonetheless, the society's values and tradition that accompany women hinder their active improvement and their positioning for decision-making.

## Examples

In the case of the underdeveloped countries, Thailand achieves the highest number of working women with 63.9 per cent of the total economically active population.

It is worth mentioning that in the Southeastern countries the ones with the highest work force percentage are China, Viet Nam 55.8; Korea 48.4; Malaysia 45.2; Bangladesh 44.7; India 43.6; Hong Kong 47.0; Taiwan, 44.7. One could wonder if this participation has brought about better life conditions to the families. One should not forget that women's

savage exploitation in the maquila is very much associated to the women's condition in the Asian countries.

Due to structural changes during the last decades, the Latin American countries have increased feminine work participation without achieving the Asian countries participation level. In Mexico, feminine participation increased from 19% in 1970 to 37.5 percent in the year 2000.

Nonetheless, precariousness of this feminine participation provokes women to look for better-paid work out of their countries. This is a phenomenon observed in the urban and the rural population.

### 3. The Latin American paradigm: Mexico

Dominant economic theory has allowed the Latin American and the Asian countries insertion to the global model quickly.

But, the Asian and Latin American models are far from being the same and far from improving the feminine work market. Let us consider the Mexican case in the following charts.

### 4. What kind of women immigrates to the United States?

#### Antecedents

Up to the nineties, almost all women emigrated to rejoin their husbands, father or brothers. The border crossing was realized according to the labor market and to the existence of social and family links. Most migrant women had rural origin. Few single women emigrated.

### 5. Changes in feminine migration.

Single women in search of better job opportunities increased. Sixty three per cent of women sent back by the United States were young and single. Many of these women do not have family links to help them and they do not have transportation links, so they become into a very vulnerable sector. Most of them started working informally at the maquila or in prostitution, and then they crossed the border.

Higher education level of migrant women in contrast to men (See chart)

The economic factor is becoming into the main cause for feminine migration.

### 6. Migration changes (continuation)

A higher percentage of women (93%) in contrast to men (85%) find job in US. Among the women who are sent back, the ones that emigrated for the first time represent the highest rate. Women earn less in contrast to men. For example, from 1992 to 1997 they earned 600 dollars in average, men earned 931 dollars. Most women work in the services sector or in the textile industry. Most women migrate to the

city. Women save a higher percentage of their wages because they have the purpose to help their families, to purchase or to improve housing or to start a business.

## 7. Consequences of feminine migration

### Family

Feminine behavior changes. There is a tendency to reinforce independence and power due to economic improvement and social prestige. They reduce fecundity in contrast to the ones that do not migrate. They have a child less. They improve their condition within the family, they do not accept violence and they participate in decision-making. They stop depending on mothers in law and the husband's family. Even more, women migrate to alleviate family conflicts and for adventure.

The establishment of feminine support webs is different from men's.

The difference is that they are supported during the run, up to the final destination in the city.

## 8. Consequences of migration (continuation)

### Community

Strong links are held with the origin community, they contribute with their town festivities, infrastructure improvement, etc. Links among the families in Mexico and United States are held, presenting the so called "transnational migratory circle", a phenomenon that transcends the local to be expressed in the political and religious life and within family relationships and married and domestic life.

With urban women migration whose community links are less strong, how is the "transnational migratory circle" going to be changed?

The appearance of a new culture that takes the North American and the Mexican kind of culture. Links with the origin country are not completely abandoned.