

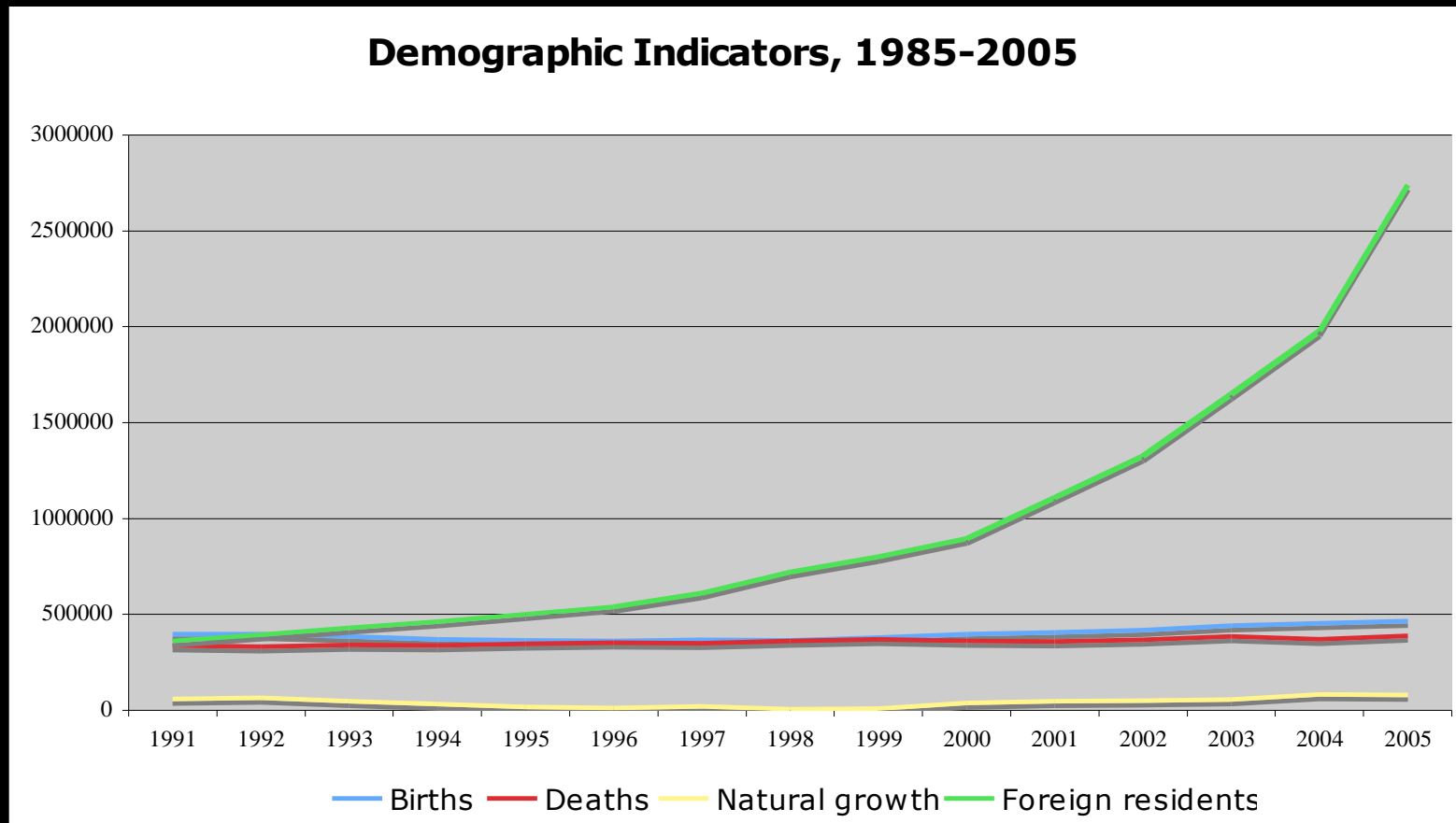
# Swept under the carpet: Latin American immigrant women in the Spanish domestic service.

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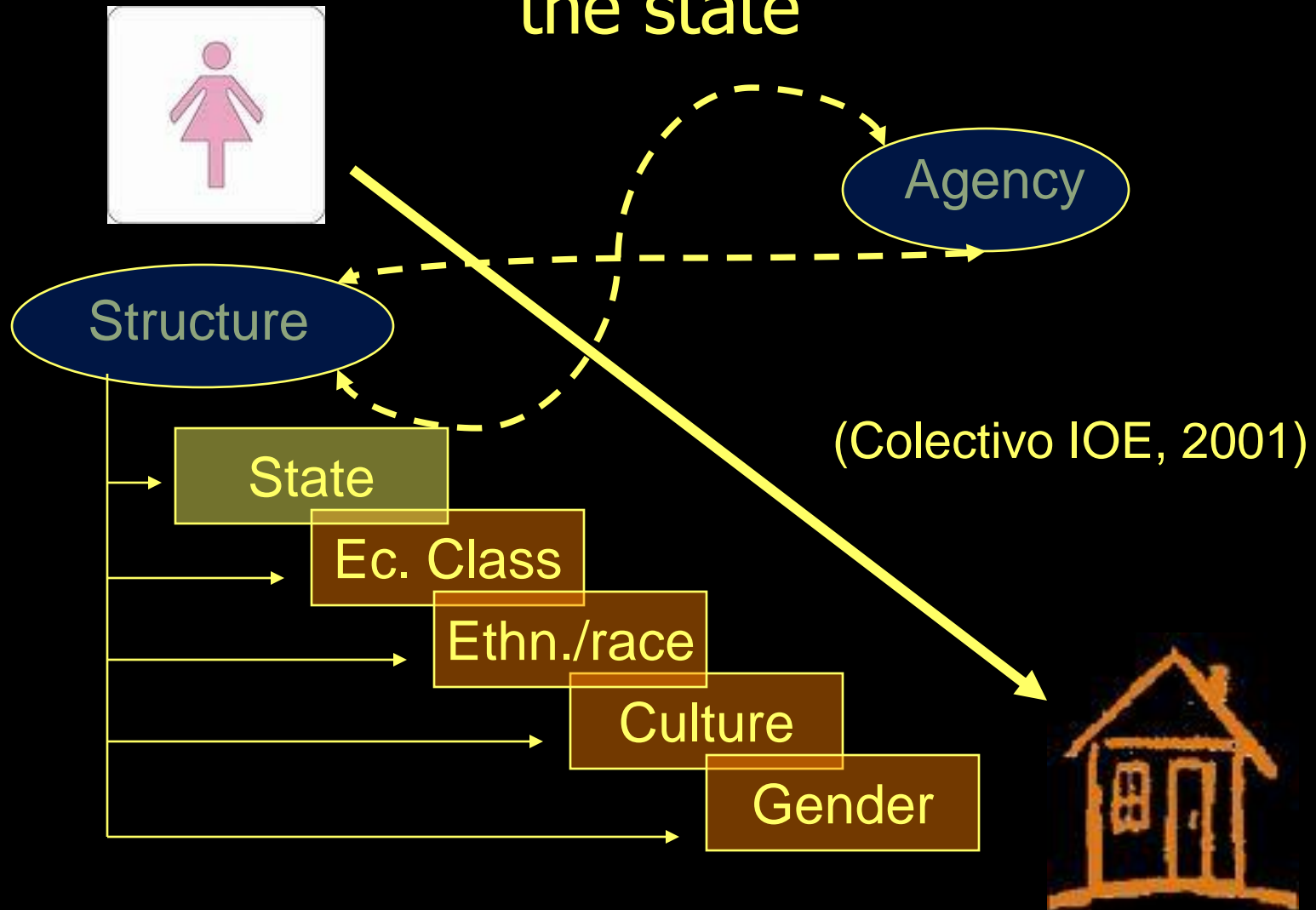
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Luna Vives, Geography UBC  
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# Immigration in Spain



# Latin American women and the Domestic Service Sector: the role of the state



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- How many women Latin American women work in the domestic service?
    - More than 2/3 of domestic work in Spain: underground.
    - Between 70 and 90 percent of undocumented immigrant women are employed in this sector.

# The state's role funneling Latin American women into DW

## 1. Immigration laws:

- § Very few channels for legal migration.
- § Visa waiver agreements.

## Employment opportunities:

- § Dependency / informal economy.
  - Self employment often not an option.
  - No professional orientation.
  - Segmented labour market.

## 2. DW legislation.

# Domestic work in the law


[T]he labour relations that the head of a household establishes as an employer of people who, as paid workers hired by him [sic] will perform paid services within the family home that fall under the label 'domestic tasks,' such as the care of the home, care of the members of the family or other persons who live in the home, also including childcare, gardening, the driving of vehicles and other similar tasks, as far as they are considered within the realm of domestic work.

R.D. 1424/85.

# Implications: a trade off?

- On the one hand:
  - Mismatch between qualifications / experience and current employment --> frustration.
  - Vulnerability --> stress.
  - Isolation --> depression, lack of opportunities.
  - “Transference of inequality among women” (Gil Araujo, 2004).
- On the other: DW makes migration possible to many.

...



*I work in a house: 12 hours, 3 hours 4 times a week. (...) [M]y employer usually doesn't tell me what to do, so when I leave in the morning I think what I'll do for the day. (...) Then I can work at the bar at night, and spend the weekends with the youngest two of my six children. (...) I organize myself, and actually have time for another house. And it's good money.*

Noelia, former University Professor,  
employed as a domestic worker and waitress; undocumented.

# Opportunities: policy

- Address the problem of undocumented labour: employers.
- Update the DW legislation and grant domestic workers the same rights as workers in other sectors.
- Professionalize at least some areas of domestic work (e.g. care of elders).



Thank you!  
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