Try for the First?! Analysis of Partnership First-Parity Fertility in Spain, 1999-2019

1. INTRODUCTION

Some people will believe they have detected a grammatical error in the title of this paper "*Try for the First?!*", as a phrase cannot end with a question and an exclamation marks altogether. However, the error is deliberate since the article is concerned with the path taken by a couple from the interrogative suggestion of having a first child through to the exclamatory pleasure of the baby's arrival.

Curiously, in both the 2006 Spanish Fertility and Values survey and the 2011 Spanish population census, the birth-rate is seen as an exclusively female matter, since the sample used in the former wholly consists of women and, in the latter, only women are asked about the number of children they have. Fortunately, in the 2018 Fertility Survey some men have been interviewed: 2,619 males in front of 14, 556 women. It seems that men always play the role of extra, that is if they have any part at all in the family portrait. This study asks, among other questions, whether it is possible to keep on ignoring the male characteristics of first-order fertility among couples in Spain in the newly inaugurated twenty-first century.

In order to be able to respond satisfactorily to this question it is necessary to have a data source which allows observation of the characteristics of males involved in the phenomenon of fertility. This must also be a source in which one can see not only women faced with their personal circumstances but also some of the gender relations established between a woman who is ready to be a mother for the first time and another person who is very probably involved in this decision: the person with whom this woman cohabits. Moreover, the source must be longitudinal in such a way that it enables to compare the moments in which the couple has a child with those in which they remain childless and to determine the difference between the two statuses.

Although it is not perfect, the Spanish Labour Force Survey (SLFS) answers a good part of these requirements since it follows, from one quarter to the next, a random selection of households, recording the characteristics of all their members. These have included, after 1999, the parentage and couple relationships established therein. To sum up, young

couples will be followed, using the SLFS in its panel version, in order to analyse what variables among couples are linked with their primo-fertility.

A multivariable analysis is carried out by means of a logistic regression for panel data controlling for the period of observation and the age of the members of the couple and then revealing which gender patterns with regard to education, labour activity and place of origin most favour primo-fertility. It starts out from the hypothesis that the homogamic, endogamic pattern results in a greater probability of primo-fertility than the heterogamic, exogamic pattern.

The strength of this design lies in the combination of its longitudinal perspective and a theoretical focus which gives priority to gender patterns in couples. This latter aspect is of the utmost importance since the paradigm for explaining differential fertility in the contemporary western world is focused on gender equality in the different societies, in such a way that those in which a model of gender balance in family formation and in labour dynamics has been achieved are the ones that show higher fertility levels. These are homogamic couples with identical characteristics with regard to their educational level and relation with the job market.

2. BACKGROUND

In a now-classic essay, Malthus (1798) suggested that modernity entailed the step from cyclical evolution of the population to a new epoch where fertility would be regulated by cultural strategy. Previously an abundant population meant an overly large workforce and, accordingly, lower wages. This implied extreme control of fertility which led to small cohorts with a consequent scarcity of workers and a rise in salaries. This prosperity then engendered a new spike in the birth-rate … And back to square one again: A classic vicious circle. However, in Malthus' times and in the British cultural sphere —so Malthus believed— by means of a model of good practice through late marriage and high levels of definitive bachelorhood and spinsterhood, fertility could be kept at *appropriate* levels, neither so low as to endanger the society's demographic sustainability, nor so high as to bring about another crisis. This model of (late, restricted) marriage was described by Hajnal (1965) for a considerable part of Europe located to the west of a line then going from Leningrad (now St Petersburg) to Trieste (with the exception of some zones of

southern Europe) and it was also mapped in the book edited by Coale and Cotts (1986) with population censuses carried out in around 1900.

Trends appeared throughout the recently concluded twentieth century suggesting that fertility had stayed with its cyclical evolution and that the new epoch of which Malthus dreamed was more desideratum than empirical reality. Hence, notable examples are the fertility crisis which occurred after the 1929 stock market crash, the baby boom after the Second World War (Festy 1971) and the fertility crisis which came in the wake of the economic crisis of the mid-1970s (Gauthier 1993), from which many countries have not yet recovered. These cycles were also apparent in all the old states of the Soviet bloc in the centre and east of Europe, which went from being the region with the highest fertility rates in the 1950s to being among the countries with the lowest in the early 1970s, back to being among the highest in the 1980s and, once again, the lowest in the early years of the twenty-first century (Frejka and Sobotka 2008).

From a historical perspective, the evolution of fertility in Spain, or at least that registered in the last hundred years, situates the phenomenon in a clearly cyclical framework (in the Malthusian sense), the last phase of which shows a predomination of numerous generations of baby boomers of low fertility which have not recovered, not even in the years of prosperity at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This pattern presently situates Spain in an area consisting of Germany and Austria, plus southern and eastern parts of Europe, with figures below 1.5 children per woman (Kohler et al., 2002). In effect, for the past thirty-five years, Spain's fertility has been meagre, which has delimited the definitive descent pattern of cohorts born during the baby boom of the 1960s and first half of the 1970s (Miret-Gamundi, 2015): to be more specific, the generation born in 1972 shows a definitive fertility of 1.43 children per woman with an infertility figure of 21.4% (European Fertility Datasheet 2015). In contrast, fertility has notably increased in Western Europe and the Nordic countries of Europe, excluding the German-speaking countries (Frejka and Sobotka 2008) and, thus, Ireland, Great Britain, France and the Scandinavian countries of Europe show figures of close to two children per woman.

The first theory seeking to explain these contrasts between areas that are so close geographically and culturally speaking appeared in a paper by McDonald (2002) in which he showed that higher fertility in the industrialized countries occurs in places where children are seen not so much as a private pleasure but a social good, with policies

encouraging and helping to achieve gender equality in social institutions like the school and workplace as well as in couple relationships. This theory was upheld by the studies of Myrskylä et al. (2011) establishing that fertility is recovered if high levels of economic development and gender equality in the couple are attained.

The present study fits within this paradigm, suggesting in a first hypothesis that fertility has been recovered in Spain only among couples with a gender balance in education levels and in the relation of both partners with the job market. This should be reflected, first of all, at least during the economic boom which occurred at the end of the twentieth century and early years of the twenty-first, when the couples which were most likely to have children were those combining stable jobs and a high educational level for both members, thus showing that gender equality is the greatest stimulus to the recovery of fertility in western countries.

Nevertheless, in this area research does not usually use gender variables but, rather, dealt with men and women separately. Hence, there are studies which sustain that job insecurity is what reduces fertility since it poses a serious obstacle for the family strategy (Baizán 2005), most especially in the south of Europe, as has been shown for Spain (Adsera 2006; Bonet et al. 2013) or for Italy (Módena et al. 2011). In this regard, the second hypothesis presented in the present study fits the framework from the counterfactual position: if unemployment levels had not been so high, fertility would have kept on with the upwards trend that began at the end of the twentieth century and came to an end with the onset of the crisis.

A further factor linked with fertility is education, expressed in the fact that higher qualifications mean a delay in the calendar (Rindfuss et al. 1996; Martin 2000; Lappegard and Ronsen 2005) and fewer children in the end (Skirbekk 2008). The adjournment in fertility patterns has been a characteristic of Europe as a whole (Frejka and Sobotka 2008), but —as just noted— a drop in definitive intensity has not. Nonetheless, in recent years an inversion of the education effect has appeared in some societies, indicating that it is precisely among women with higher levels of education where greater fertility is registered (Mencarini and Tanturri 2006; Kravdal and Rindfuss 2008). To be more specific, everything would seem to indicate that the effect of educational level on the probability of not having children is being eroded in the Scandinavian countries, although it is reinforced in the rest of Europe (Bellani and Esping-Andersen 2013). Indeed, this

association has become entrenched in Spain, where infertility is four times greater among women with higher educational levels (Noguera et al. 2002). This gives rise to the third hypothesis to be tested, this time taking the classic form of the null hypothesis and its alternative: the former states that education and first-order fertility are not related and, therefore, neither the hypothesis of greater fertility among women with lower educational levels nor its contrary are sustained, while the alternative holds that Spain remains fixed in a model of gender differences, since better education for women has an impact in the form of lower fertility of couples.

Finally, the immigration hypothesis will also be tested, although the fact that the recovery of fertility appears among both the native population and that born outside the frontiers of the country suggests that the "cultural" distance should not be such a key explanatory factor (Dunnell 2007; Héran and Pison 2007). Accordingly, in the case of Spain, the contribution of immigration to fertility is modest and the differences in patterns among native- and foreign-born women have even diminished in recent years (Roig and Castro 2007).

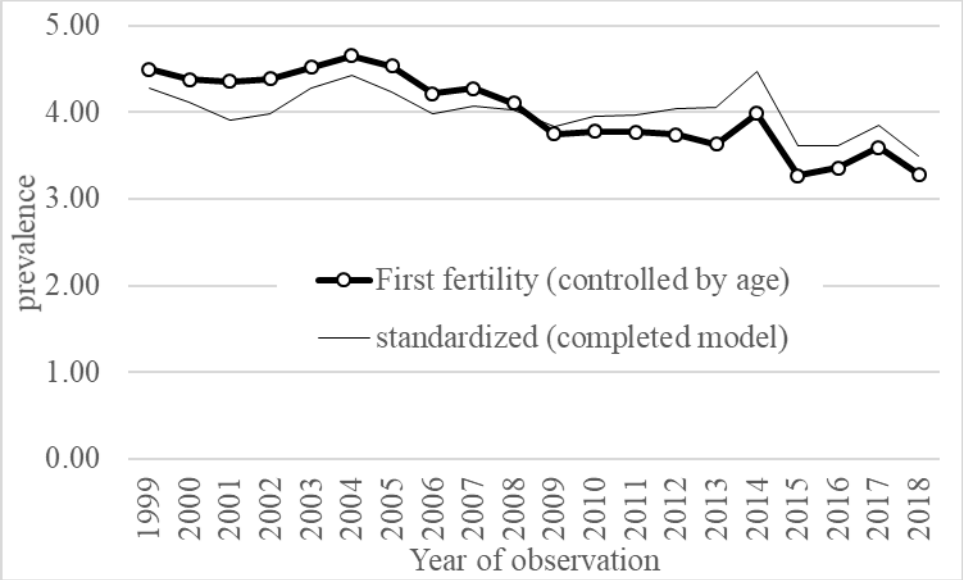
3. METHODOLOGY

The information analysed is from the SLFS, in which each household is interviewed on several occasions, up to a maximum of six consecutive three-monthly observations. The subsample consists of cohabiting, childless, heterosexual couples in which the woman is aged between eighteen and forty-five years, who have been interviewed on at least two occasions in which either they are still childless (coded *0*) or they have had their first child (coded *1*). A childless couple is therefore followed up to a maximum of five jumps between one quarter and the next, or until their first child is born, the couple separates or the female partner turns forty-six. The reason for this age range is due to the fact that the birth-rate among women aged under eighteen or over forty-five is negligible, and the exclusive selection of heterosexual couples has been opted for because this makes it possible to reveal gender-related factors which encourage or obstruct first-order fertility.

In sum, this is a portrait of 57,605 couples followed up on 187,045 occasions in which either they remained in the same situation (childless) from one quarter to the next, or they ceased to be a purely conjugal nucleus to become a two-parent family after the birth of their first child. Since this is the dichotomic variable (the couple is childless or has had

the first child), the appropriate technique is logistic regression for panel data. We will compute probabilities using average marginal effect (Mood, 2010).

Graph 1. Probability of first-order fertility according to the year of observation



Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of Spanish Labour Force, panel version, 1999-2018
Note: control in the bivariable is by age of the members of the couple, and in the multivariable also by educational level, birthplace and the relationship with employment activity.

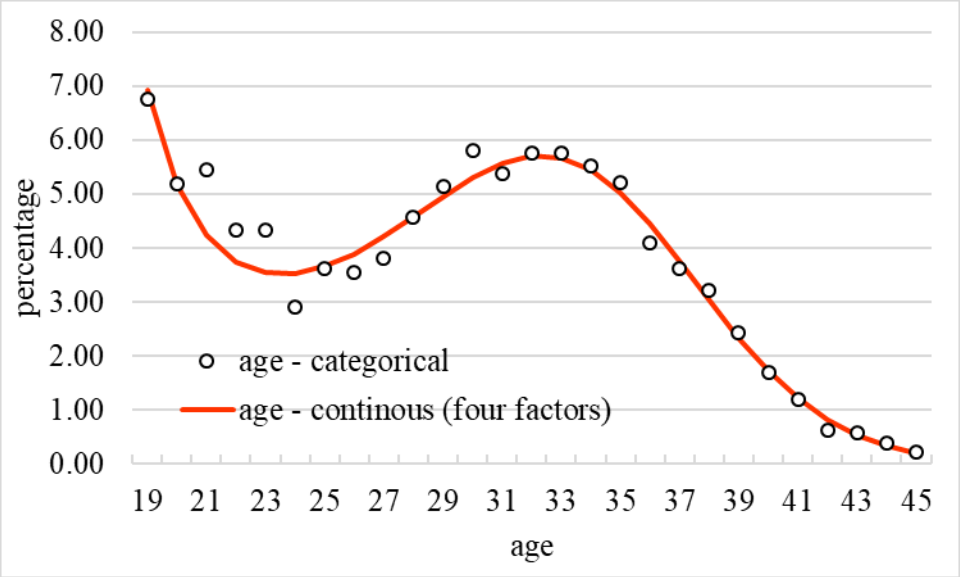
4. FIRST PARITY: PREVALENCE AND TIMING

The first question raised is the extent to which an evolution has occurred in the prevalence of fertility in Spain, independently of changes in structure by age of the members of the couple, their educational level, place of origin or relationship with labour activity. In this regard, Graph 1 shows the influence of the year under observation on the probability of primo-fertility, opposing the basic model (controlled only by age of the members of the couple) with the multivariable, with all the explanatory factors combined. In the bivariable with control for age, two periods without internal difference are framed, namely what happened between 1999 and 2007 and what occurred between 2008 and 2018, the latter period with a significantly lower possibility than the previous one of having a first child. Analysis of the effect of the moment of observation of first-parity fertility allows a first conclusion to appear: this decline between the periods 1999-2007 and 2008-2018 totally disappears when adding the situation of their employment activity (Graph 1, standardized model). In brief, the smaller possibility of couples having their

first child between 2008 and 2018 by comparison with the period 1999-2007 is completely due to a change in the situation of the employment activity of the couples, in a direction which will be described below.

Hence, the final explanatory model (Table 1) with all the effective factors involved in primo-fertility of couples does not contemplate the year of observation since its effect is abduced by the employment situation of the female member of the couple.

Graph 2. Probability of having the first child by age of the woman

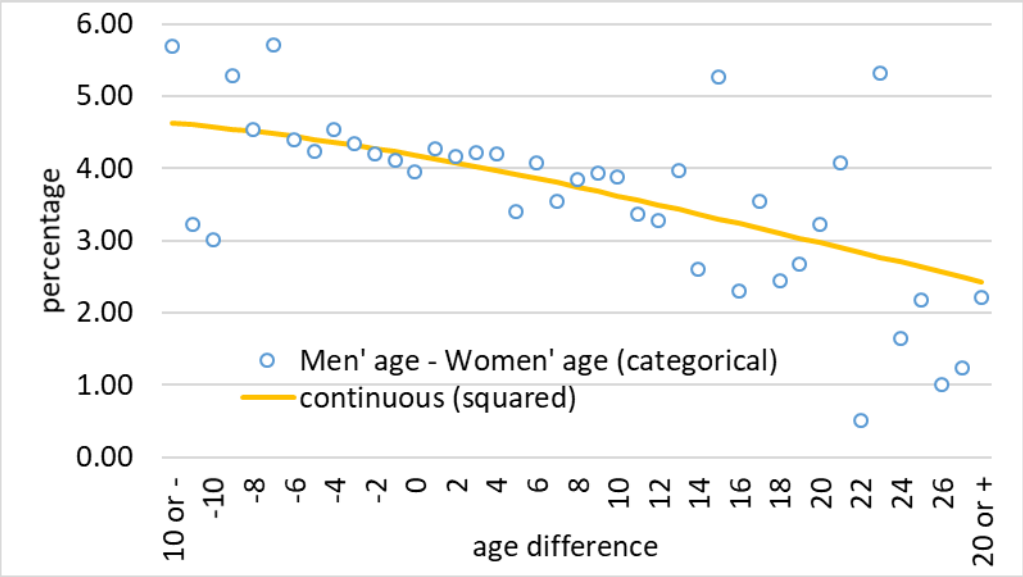


Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of Spanish Labour Force, panel version, 1999-2018.
Note: indicator controlled by difference of age between partners, educational attainment, place of birth and employment status of both members of the couple.

Considering from the standpoint of women who live in a heterosexual relationship, the probability of first-order fertility presents the sinuous distribution shown in Graph 2. The phenomenon has its maximum dimension among women of 18 years of age living with a partner (a very minority group), which is to say that the first child among younger women living with a male partner appears with high frequency, although it involves a small volume of population. The high first maternity rates dwindle progressively up to 24 years and, after this age, show a quite statistically normal distribution. The probability of having a first child rises fast until reaching a maximum level at 30 years, remaining at this high intensity until 33 years. So, the range 29-34 years combines a tremendous potentiality (with a huge number of childless couples reaching this age) with extraordinary

effectiveness in the first maternity. After 35, the greater the age the fewer the chances of having a child, up to the final threshold of 45 years, after which it can be stated that first maternity is insignificant.

Graph 3. Probability of having a first child according to age difference between partners



Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of Spanish Labour Force Survey, panel version, 1999-2018.
Note: indicator controlled by age of woman, educational level, place of birth and activity relationship in the couple.

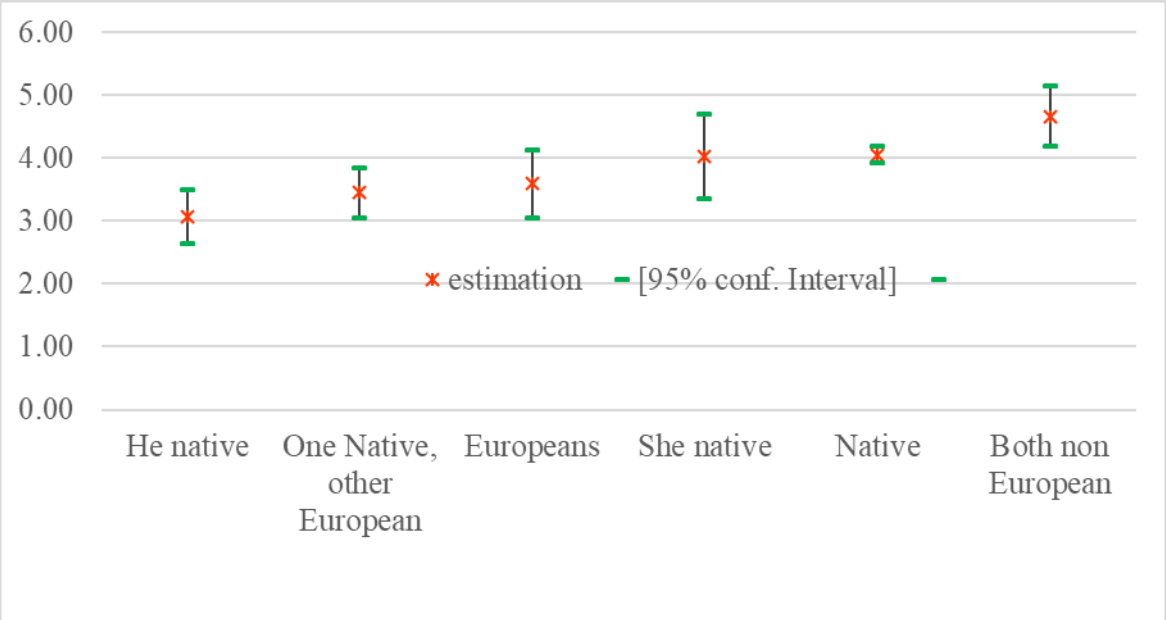
Moreover, the distribution of probabilities of having a first child in accordance with the distance in age between partners should be analysed. This indicator is offered in Graph 3. The general effect outlined here presents a pattern in which the younger the man is with regard to the woman, the more likely the couple's primo-fertility. From the female perspective, the older the woman is with respect to the man, the greater the probability of having a first child, which might be an effect of the fact that the biological time for having a baby diminishes as the age of the woman rises.

5. ENDOGAMY AND HOMOGAMY

While endogamy refers to a union between people of the same ethnic or social group, homogamy indicates a union between people of similar characteristics. In this research, the place of birth of both partners of the couple is used as a characteristic for measuring

the degree of endogamy (those born in Spain, in the rest of Europe or in another country beyond Europe) and the educational level is used for evaluating their homogamy. In considering this latter aspect, the member of reference is the female partner. In other words, in categorizing the couple the educational level of the woman is situated and detail is given of whether the male's level is the same (homogamic couple), lower (hipogamic) or higher (hypergamic).

Graph 4. Primo-fertility according to place of birth of partners



Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of Spanish Labour Force Survey, panel version, 1999-2018
Note 1: indicator controlled by period of observation, age of woman, difference in age between partners, educational level and employment relationship.
Note 2: interval represents the statistically significant parameters with a confidence level of 99%.

In the analysis of primo-fertility in Spain key importance is given to immigration, to the extent that it has even come to be considered the main cause of the recovery of this phenomenon which occurred in the early years of the twenty-first century. Consequently, it is necessary to focus attention on the differential probability of primo-fertility. The result of this is shown in Graph 4. The statistical conclusion is that the probability of having a child does not vary significantly among couples of Spanish-born partners, where both members are born in Europe and those in which the male partner is born outside Spain. Only in the cases of couples in which both partners were born outside Europe does

first-order fertility present as being significantly higher than in the other couples. On contrast, if the female partner was born outside Spain or one member of the partnership is native and the other European does first-order fertility present as being significantly lower than in the other couples.

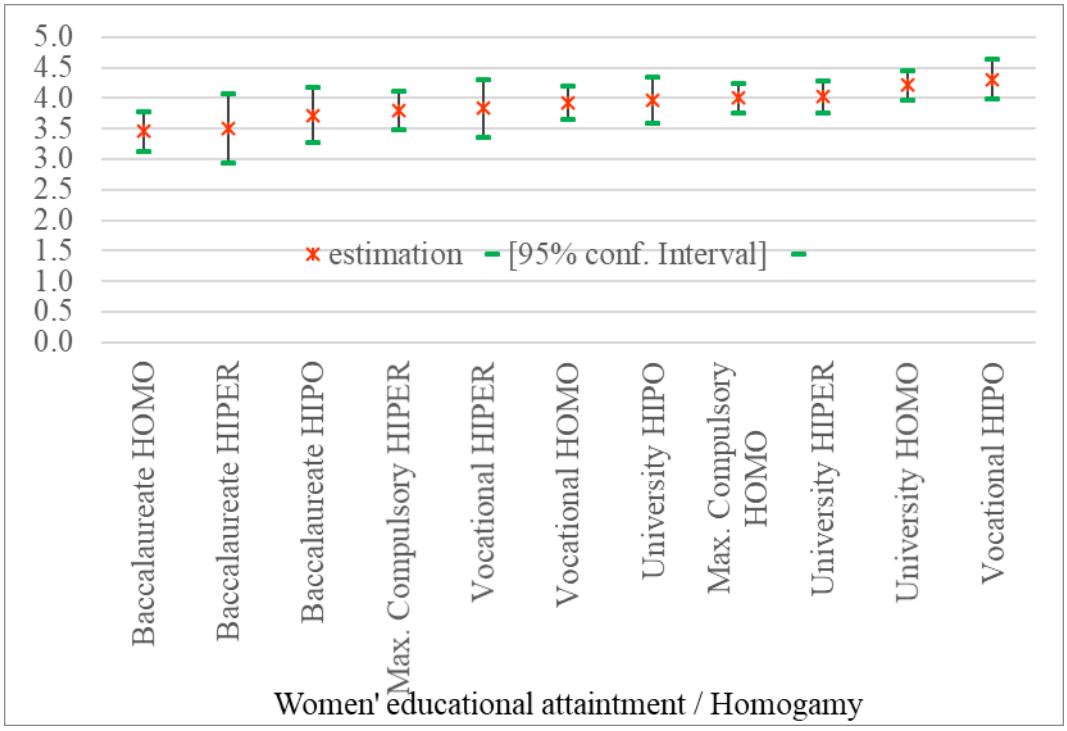
To sum up, the conclusion with the variable pertaining to immigration indicates that while primo-fertility among endogamic couples, whether autochthonous or from another country, is not significantly different, while that of mixed couples in which the woman was born outside Spain is the only one which is markedly lower. Accordingly, in the general model (Table 2) the variable referring to place of birth of each member of the couple has been changed for that of couples in which the female partner has been born outside Spain, since these women have a significantly lower fertility.

Once the effect on primo-fertility of the degree of endogamy of the couple has been presented, it is now necessary to fit into the picture another piece to which a key role is usually assigned. We refer to educational level. Here, the effect of homogamy according to educational level is offered within a multivariable model and, as a result, it has been standardized by the relationship of economic activity between both members of the couple with the net effect being shown in Graph 5. It became necessary in this step to restrict the age range since the sample does not include anyone with a university education who was younger than 23 years (too young to have reached this level of education) or any childless couple in which the male partner of over 60 had completed tertiary studies (the men of these generations in our sample do not have university degrees). In consequence, a selection is made of couples in which both are 23 years old and over, and the male partner is 60 years old at the most.

The first element which attracts attention in the graph is the scant significance this variable turns out to have when establishing differences in the probability of having the first child. In effect, it might be stated as a conclusion that, in relation with educational level, the probability that homogamic couples will have their first child is similar to that of heterogamic couples, whether they are hypergamic (where the male has a higher educational level) or hypogamic (the woman has a higher educational level). Indeed, only in the case in which the woman has obtained the European baccalaureate certificate (completed high school studies) without completing a university degree (in case of having started one), was the couple's primo-fertility significantly lower than that appearing for

other educational patterns. In short, it is not shown either that, on the one hand, with a higher level of education (especially in the case of the female member of the couple) the probability of having a first child is lower or, on the other hand, that couples where the partners are more equal in their educational level (especially if this includes university studies) show a higher probability of moving towards first-time parenthood.

Graph 5. Primo-fertility according to the couple's educational level



Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of Spanish Labour Force Survey, panel version, 1999-2019.
Note 1: indicator controlled by period of observation, age of woman, age difference between partners, place of origin, and employment relationship.
Note 2: interval represents the statistically significant parameters with a confidence level of 99%.

Although the educational structure of couples (with the exception of women who have completed high school) who are possible first-time parents is of no use in explaining primo-fertility, this distribution is interesting since it offers an insight into how Spanish society is changing. During the transition to the new century, in a quarter of the couples both members had, at most, the compulsory level of education, a proportion which began to diminish by the end of 2000 so that, at present, it is twenty percentage points lower than it was at the turn of the century: as of 2011, in 13% of the couples both partners had

a maximum of the compulsory level of education. This change of model has shown a rise in the number of homogamic, university-educated couples and couples in which the female partner is university-educated but not the male (hypogamic university). Both types of couple show a presence of 20% today, with an increase of five percentage points in both cases over the period observed.

The other categories confirm the rest of the models, but the only one with an effect on primo-fertility—as has just been demonstrated—is that in which the female partner has completed upper secondary school (though their intensity was less), which is why they are also represented in Graph 9: this model of couple remained stable throughout the period 1999-2012 (at around 15%) and only after that did its presence diminish slightly (a fact which favours primo-fertility). In short, young childless couples in which the female partner has completed secondary education have not influenced the evolution of first-order primo-fertility, since they have always been present to the same extent.

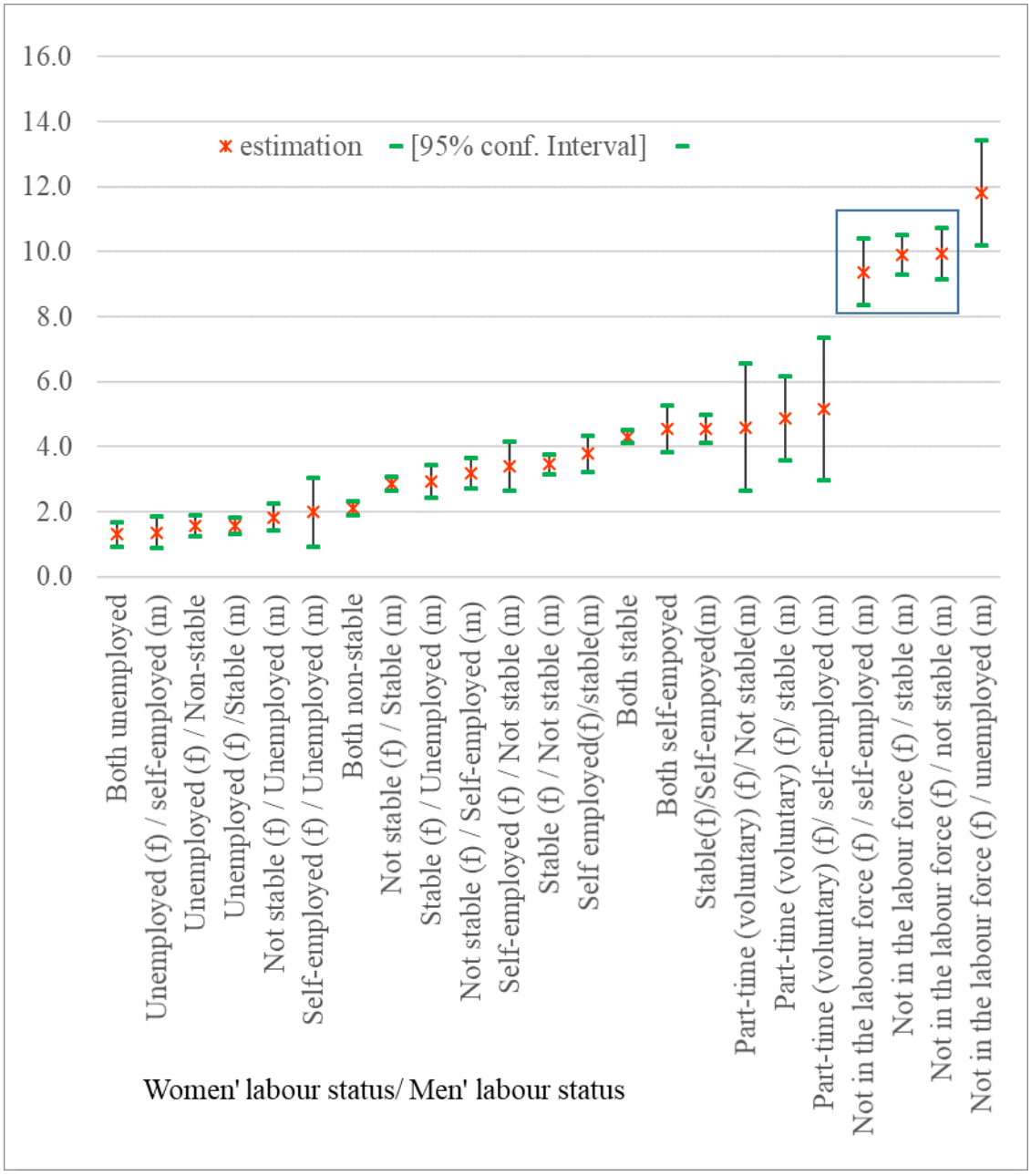
In view of the above, the whole age range, from 18 to 45, is recovered for the general model since we only need to take into account the specific effect on primo-fertility of women who have completed upper secondary education (Table 1).

5. THE GENDER MODEL IN RELATION WITH THE LABOR MARKET

The category of reference for this variable consists of couples in which both members have full-time paid employment with permanent contracts (which comes under the heading of "stable job").

Graph 6 shows the whole scale of probabilities of having a first child in accordance with the employment relationship of the members of the couple (ordered from least to most), controlling for all the other variables. Opening out the twenty-three categories of the variable is highly informative, with two clearly defined poles on this scale: the highest probability of having the first child occurs in couples with women who state that they are not in the job market, in other words, she is a full-time housewife. This was to be expected: if the woman does not have a job, is not looking for work and is living with a partner, it is not surprising that she is ready to become a mother provided that her husband has paid employment (although it is striking that the highest probability appears with couples in which the female partner is not in paid employment and the male partner's is unemployed).

Graph 6. Probability of primo-fertility in accordance with employment activity of both members of the couple (woman as opposed to man)



Source: Compiled by the author on basis of Spanish Labour Force, panel version, 1999-2015.
Note 1: Indicator controlled over period of observation, age of woman, age difference between partners of couple, place of origin, and educational level.
Note 2: interval represents the statistically significant parameters with a confidence level of 99%.

The highest first-fertility for young couples in which the female partner is outside the job market indicates that the complementary values in fertility patterns continue to be clearly anchored in Spanish society. This fact contradicts the hypothesis that balance between

couples in relation with the job market (employment homogamy) would be an incentive for having a first child but, rather, suggests that primo-fertility is still within the framework of couples with complementary roles.

However, what does contribute new information about the phenomenon is the opposite pole, that of the lowest probability of having a first child, which is associated with involuntary exclusion from the job market, since women who are looking for work without achieving it are the ones who are least likely to have a child. This does not suggest a desire to speculate about how many women say they are not working when maternity is imminent, or because of dispiritedness over not finding a job, but the women who remain unsuccessful in this endeavour and keep trying to find work are also those who show the least susceptibility to parenthood (and this also applies to their male partners). This data rebuts, to a large extent, conjecture that women might be using unemployment benefits as a kind of publicly funded support for maternity because, if this were so, the probability of becoming mothers for unemployed women would not be so markedly lower than it is among couples where both members have stable jobs.

Moreover, first-order fertility is minimal among unemployed women whatever the situation of their partners: regardless if they are self-employed, with a permanent contract and full-time work, or any other kind of employment. Indeed, among the categories in which the female partner is unemployed there is no significant difference, which means that one can state that couples in which the woman is looking for work were the least likely to have a first child (as shown in Table 1).

Second place in the ranking of lowest primo-fertility is occupied by couples where both partners are affected by job insecurity, for example when the female partner has precarious employment and the male is not working, or when both have temporary contracts or only part-time work. All of these situations are among those that least favour first-time parenthood for a childless young couple. Thus, it is confirmed that job insecurity and unemployment constitute the main factor in the low probability of a couple's having their first child and, very particularly, when this employment situation affects potential mothers.

In terms of these trends and their influence on first-order fertility, nothing would seem to suggest that there will be any change in this phenomenon in the short term.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this study it has been shown that males, even when they are cohabiting, have a truly small effect on the couple's chances of having a first child: neither their employment situation, nor educational level, nor place of origin, nor even age has much influence here.

As a summary, Table 1 sets out the significant effects in primo-fertility of partnerships in which women is 45 years in Spain over the first fifteen years of the twenty-first century. Once the age of the woman (by means of four factors: simple, quadratic triple and cubic age) and the age difference between the members of the couple (considered numerically squared) are controlled, and knowing that their educational level and origin are variables that should not be pondered excessively, the key factor turns out to be the employment relationship. Moreover, it should be recalled that when controlled by their employment relationship, the period observed loses all its explanatory power (expansion versus economic crisis), which is almost totally yielded to the variable relative to the job market (which is why it does appear just the period 2015-18 in Table 1).

The age range in which first-order fertility is highest is between 29 and 34 years for the female member of the couple, since this range contains a large number of childless couples with good chances of having a first child. In 2015 the generations in this age range were women born between 1981 and 1986, which was the onset in Spain of a period of falling birth-rate. In other words, these are empty cohorts with a tiny number of members. If the cyclical theory is correct, a sustained recovery of fertility should soon be observed.

In relation with the marriage market or age difference between the members of the couple, it has been shown that the effect on primo-fertility in the period analysed has been slight since age homogamy in the couple during the phase of establishing a family entailed by having a first child, is a constant which has consolidated over time.

Access to education of the younger generations, especially for women, clearly appears in the structure around the educational level of couples: there are fewer and fewer cases in which both partners have at most completed primary schooling, and there are more in which both are university educated or where only the female partner has this level of education. The effect of educational level does not have the expected result either since the hypothesis was that couples with a higher educational level would be more likely to

have a first child, as fruit of a new cultural model, but nothing has appeared to support this. Indeed, the conclusion is there is nothing to oppose accepting the fact that primo-fertility is similar whatever the relative educational levels of the members of the couple might be.

Table 1 Model based on probability of having a first child

	Partnerships	Observations	Coefficient	Sig.	Marginal (%)	[95% Confidence interval]	
WOMEN' AGE							
Simple age			-5.6494	***			
Squared age			0.2562	***			
Triple age			-0.0048	***			
Quadruple			0.0000	***			
Men' age - Women' age			-0.0004	***			
EDUCATIONAL ATAINMENT	**58,275**	**187,045**					
Both with baccalaureate	2,716	7,219	-0.21	***	3.33	2.90	3.76
Other	55,559	179,826	0.00	reference	4.04	3.93	4.15
BIRTH PLACE	**57,675**	**187,045**					
Native, European or She native	49,154	162,440	0.00	reference			
She native & he European, or he native	5,228	16,209	-0.24	***			
Both non European	3,293	8,396	0.15	***			
PERIOD	**59,211**	**187,045**					
1999-2014	47,520	152,507	0.00	reference	4.10	3.98	4.22
2015-2019	11,691	34,538	-0.15	***	3.57	3.35	3.78
LABOUR SITUATION	**84,841**	**187,045**					
Male labour precariourness	696	755	-2.86	***	0.26	----	0.63
Female not-stable	906	982	-1.42	***	1.10	0.46	1.75
Female unemployment	11,372	21,978	-1.10	***	1.51	1.34	1.67
Non-stable (f) / Unemployment (m)	2,649	4,226	-0.91	***	1.83	1.42	2.24
Self employment (f) /unemployment (m)	376	717	-0.82	***	1.99	0.92	3.06
Both not-stable	8,132	15,962	-0.76	***	2.11	1.89	2.33
Stability of one member	12,818	28,382	-0.44	***	2.88	2.69	3.08
Male self-employment	4,319	7,740	-0.34	***	3.15	2.76	3.55
Male inestability	7,385	16,624	-0.25	***	3.45	3.17	3.73
Self employment (f) /stable (m)	1,742	4,540	-0.15	*	3.78	3.22	4.34
Both stable	20,349	58,823	0.00	reference	4.37	4.19	4.55
Voluntary female part-time	1,407	2,011	0.12	ns.	4.87	3.90	5.84
Female inactivity	11,376	22,487	0.89	***	9.83	9.36	10.30
Self-employment (f) / unemployment (m)	1,290	1,791	1.11	***	11.87	10.25	13.48
Female inestabiltiy	24	27	1.21	**	12.98	1.19	24.77

Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of Spanish Labour Force, panel version, 1999-2015
Note: ns. not significant; * significance level 90%; ** significance level 95%; *** significance level 99%.

The sense of the importance of the employment relationship is clearly shown in Table 1 because, while the greatest chances of primo-fertility occur in the model where the women is non-employed or outside the job market, the least chances appear in that in couples where the unemployed woman cannot find work. The effect of this latter variable reinforces the hypothesis that the chief cause of low fertility rates among couples in Spain over the fifteen years under observation has been failure in the social sphere to provide

remunerated work (and, if possible, with a certain degree of stability) for young people and, in particular, women.

To sum up, the first hypothesis formulated here, stating that homogamy in couples with a high educational level and stable relationship with the job market means highest fertility rates has been refuted. On the contrary, the women who show the highest fertility rates are those who maintain a difference in gender roles in relation with the sphere of remunerated work. She is not part of it and is wholly devoted to family concerns while he provides economic support for the family unit with resources gained in the job market. Nonetheless, as was shown in the early years of the twentieth century, when the fertility rate did not exceed 1.5 children per woman, there are not enough couples with differential gender roles to bring about a recovery.

When attention is focused on the couple as the fount of fertility, the importance of the migration variable dwindles to the point where it is almost negligible. There is nothing that argues against accepting that native and immigrant endogamic couples have similar chances of having a first child. In brief, if it is observed that fertility rates are higher among immigrants than among natives, this is most probably due to the different pattern of partnership formation, which occurs earlier and more intensely among the former. Another hypothesis, that stating that endogamy favours fertility, is therefore refuted.

The voluminous generations resulting from Spain's baby boom in the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s have in no way recovered fertility or, in other words, they have not overcome their original sin of being born numerous. If cohorts born after the 1980s show increased fertility in the near future, the hypothesis of cyclical behaviour will be definitively endorsed.

It has not been possible to refute the hypothesis relating fertility with gender equality and public acceptance of the responsibilities of having children (and not just private acceptance in the bosom of the family) in the case of Spain. This country has not recovered its fertility, while its model of raising children remains firmly in the private family domain.

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