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**MARRIED WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND THE PROBABILITY
OF FIRST UNION DISSOLUTION. THE VENEZUELAN CASE.**

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I explore the effect of married women work on their probabilities of first union dissolution for the Venezuelan case. It is important to mention here that not just this specific problem, but the more general patterns of marriage and divorce in Venezuela are basically an unexplored area; this is due to the scarcity of pertinent data and the underdevelopment of demographic studies in that country.

The studies about the effects of wives' employment on the probability of divorce/separation are not conclusive about the existence of a definite relationship between the two (Greenstein, 1990; Spitze and South, 1985; Booth et al, 1984). Basically, the analysis of data has not provided consistent empirical evidence supporting such a relationship.

Revising the relationship between wive's employment and divorce does not mean necessarily, in my opinion, an intention to trace a direct causal relation between them. The complexity of situations and elements that can propitiate a divorce or separation is too great. And, if some connection exists between married women's employment and the risk of divorce, it could only be understood by conditioning it to the many elements and circumstances that mediate such a connection, and that ultimately define the sense of that relationship.

In other words, I do not pretend to assert a direct connection between work and probability of divorce for all married women. Only under some specific conditions, would it exists. And a big problem in formulating what those conditions are, is that many of them are resistant to any kind of instrumentalization, which might facilitate their inclusion in analyses like the one developed in this paper. We could hardly

incorporate good indicators of some aspects like quality of the marital relationship, level of solidarity, attraction, companionship or simply love, that evidently play a major role in marital stability.

However, this situation, far from being discouraging, heightens the challenge and the necessity of continuing to explore the possible linkages between work and conjugal stability, as well as suggesting new ways of approximation to the problem. Particularly in a time in which employment is more and more extended for married women.

2. THEORETICAL DISCUSSION AND ANTECEDENTS

In most Western countries, the rate of female participation in the labor market, and particularly that corresponding to married women, has experienced an unusual growth during the last four decades (Rogers, S.1996; Blau and Ferber, 1988; García y de Oliveira, 1994). Since, simultaneously in many of these countries divorce has reached very high levels, the paid employment of married women has been seen as a factor that could be responsible, in some measure, for the increase in divorce rates (Spitze and South, 1985; Edwards, et al, 1984; Greenstein, 1995).

But what are the evidences that support such connection? Is the simultaneity of the acceleration of both processes enough to draw a connection between them? or is there also empirical evidence that support it?

Let's review briefly first the theorical arguments that point out a relation between married women's employment and the probability of marital disruption and some empirical evidences that provide (or not) support to them. Because most of the theorical formulations and empirical studies about this topic have focused on the United States experience, we inevitably will be referring to them, but in no way does this mean we are

assuming that the experience of that country could be generalizable to other countries.

The possible effects of women's employment on marriage that have been formulated and analized in empirical research previously, are not restricted to the possibilities of marital disruption. There have been suggested also some other negative effects. For instance, that it could be delaying marriages and increasing (or decreasing) women's desire to marry. Women's employment could decrease women's motivation to marry, by providing alternative sources of fulfillment and financial support. And it also could affect their timing and slightly decrease their ultimate probability of marrying.

Authors like Parsons (1949) affirmed that the play of different and complementary roles by husbands and wives is the foundation of marital solidarity. Therefore, in situations where the wife is working outside the home, her own salary could become a threat to the marital stability, and particularly in the cases when she could earn an equal or higher salary or has a job with higher prestige than that corresponding to her husband (Greenstein, 1990). In these cases spousal's employment could create status competition that would damage a marriage, according to Parsons (Spitze, 1988). Parson's recommendation was then that wives should remain unemployed or employed in low-level occupations, that would not be felt as threatening for their husbands and help to avoid competition inside the marriage. This idea that spouses can derive more satisfaction when they are in a complementary role, rather than parallel, was also sustained from an economic logic by authors like Gary Becker (1981).

However, Oppenheimer (1977) supported that a wife with a job that is non-complementary to her husband's job could threaten the marriage were it much higher in status, but in the same way could threaten the family status if it were too low. Additionally it has been suggested that wives and husbands who share similar

job positions are in similar structural positions, which helps to increase understanding, sympathy and marital happiness (Simpson and England, 1981).

As Greenstein (1990) summarized, three major elements regarding wives' employment have been connected to the probability of marital dissolution: 1) **wife's income**, 2) **wife's earnings relative to husband's earnings** and, 3) **the effect of the absence of the wife** (while she is working) from the home (Greenstein, 1990). The quantitative studies existing about the problem refer invariably to one or some of these three factors.

With regard to the **effect of wives' income**, Greenstein (1990) refers to two contradictory hypothesis that have been formulated. The first one refers to an effect of independence. That is, by experiencing their own salary, women are more able to be sure that they could support themselves without the help of their husbands. In cases in which they consider divorce, their economic independence would facilitate this decision, or at least, economic dependence would not act as an obstacle. The second hypothesis formulated about the effect of wives' income establishes a connection in the opposite direction: as the wife's earning will contribute to an increase in the marriage's capital, the marriage by itself and the permanence in it will be more desirable.

The empirical studies related to the independence effect have arrived at contradictory results. Booth, Johnson, White and Edwards (1984) and Spitze and South (1985) estimated a significant positive effect of wives' earnings on divorce, while Moot and Moore (1979) and d'Amico (1983) did not find such a relationship.

About the **wives' relative earnings effect**, it has also been suggested that it has a negative effect on the stability of the marriage. On one hand, the wives' relatively higher income would introduce stress and conflict in the marriage, mainly by breaking out the husband's traditional role as the main breadwinner. On

the other hand, the utility of staying married may be lower for those wives earning more money than their husbands. Here the empirical findings are also confusing. While some authors have found some evidence that actual or potential earnings ratio affects thoughts and probabilities of divorce (Cherlin 1979; Moore and Waite, 1981; Becker, Landes and Michael, 1979), other authors have not found evidence to support this connection (d'Amico, 1983; Huber and Spitze, 1981; Spitze and South, 1985). Some of these studies suggest that what is more decisive, regarding the potential decision of finishing a marriage, is not the actual wage of the wife, but her potential earning ratio.

Finally, the third aspect that has been formulated and tested by the quantitative studies is the **absence effect**. It has been suggested that the time spent working outside the home by married women is directly translated into a diminution of the time devoted to the home responsibilities. It would mean the introduction of tensions and conflicts in the marriage, possibly by decreasing the husband's marital satisfaction and increasing the wife's stress.

On one hand, traditional husbands could feel that their wives are not being responsible for their housework, or are making it poorly, while the non-traditional husbands, that would assume some of the household tasks in compensation, could feel more stress for the extra work or could feel uncomfortable doing some of the 'new' tasks. On the other hand, as Spitze and South formulated (1985), a wife's employment would lead to potential perception of inequity surrounding household labor. Since numerous studies have reported that husbands of working wives do not do significantly more housework than other husbands (Gauger and Walker, 1980; Walker and Woods, 1976), working wives would end up working more hours per day, doing both kind oflabor, and they will likely feel resentful.

Whether these interpretations are correct or not, the empirical findings related to the absence effect are much more consistent than the evidence existing for the other reviewed effects. The absence effect has been empirically tested investigating whether the wife participated or not some time in the labor force, looking at the average number of hours per week worked by the wife and/or looking at the proportion of weeks in a year in which she worked. Diverse studies have reported a positive relationship between hours worked and marital instability, particularly in the case of those women that work full-time (Greenstein, 1990; Spitze and South, 1985; Spitze and South, 1986; Booth et al, 1984; Huber and Spitze, 1980), although Moot and Moore (1979) did not find such relationship (Edwards, et al,1993).

3. EMPIRICAL REVISION OF FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AND FIRST UNION DISSOLUTION. THE VENEZUELAN CASE.

In this second part of the paper, we explore quantitatively the relationship between married women's work, specifically the absence-effect, and their probabilities of becoming divorced or separated, in the Venezuelan case, through a log-linear analysis.

We limit our analysis to the absence-effect of wive's employment. Basically because, unfortunately, the data used do not include information about wive's income nor husband's or family's income, information that is necessary to test the effect of wive's income and the effect of wive's relative earnings.

Before showing and commenting the results of our quantitative exercise, we consider it necessary to give the reader some basic information about the nupciality and labor patterns of women in Venezuela. Without that, the log-linear analysis could appear as a methodological and statistic abstraction, lacking a concrete meaning, for those who are not

familiar with the Venezuelan case. Therefore, we present first two brief sub-sections, with the current marital and labor patterns of the Venezuelan women and, after that, the quantitative analysis.

3.1 Recent Marital Patterns in Venezuela.

A first approximation to the marital patterns can be made by looking at the distribution of the population by marital status (table 1). Although the information provided in Table 1 is quite broad, it is possible to note that the married and cohabiting women represent a little more than the 50% of the women 15 and over. A small but sustained reduction of these two groups is observable, expressed in a change from 54.9% to 51.2 % of women in any kind of union, from 1961 to 1990. This trend is ratified by the data from table 2 and figure 1. From 1975 to 1985 the crude marriage rate went down in 1.4 points, which is a substantial reduction of the number of marriages relative to the total population.

TABLE 1.
**VENEZUELA. FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER BY MARITAL STATUS.**
1961-1991.

	1961	1971	1981	1991
Total	2010941	2985174	4396751	5770342
Single	36.8	39.5	34.5	33.3
Cohabiting	20.5	16.7	17.3	17.1
Married	34.4	36.6	35.2	34.1
Widows	6.3	5.5	5.1	5.7
Divorced	0.9	1.2	1.7	2.9
Separated	*	*	4.6	5.1
Unknown	1.1	0.5	1.6	1.2

Source: Venezuela, OCEI, General Census 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1990.
* Before 1981 *Separated* was not a category.

Table 2, Figure 1.
Venezuela. marriages for 1000 habitants, 1977-1986.

Year	Marriages
1977	7.1
1978	7.1
1979	7
1980	6.7
1981	5.9
1982	5.7
1983	5.7
1984	5.5
1985	5.4
1986	5.6

Venezuela. Nupciality Rates
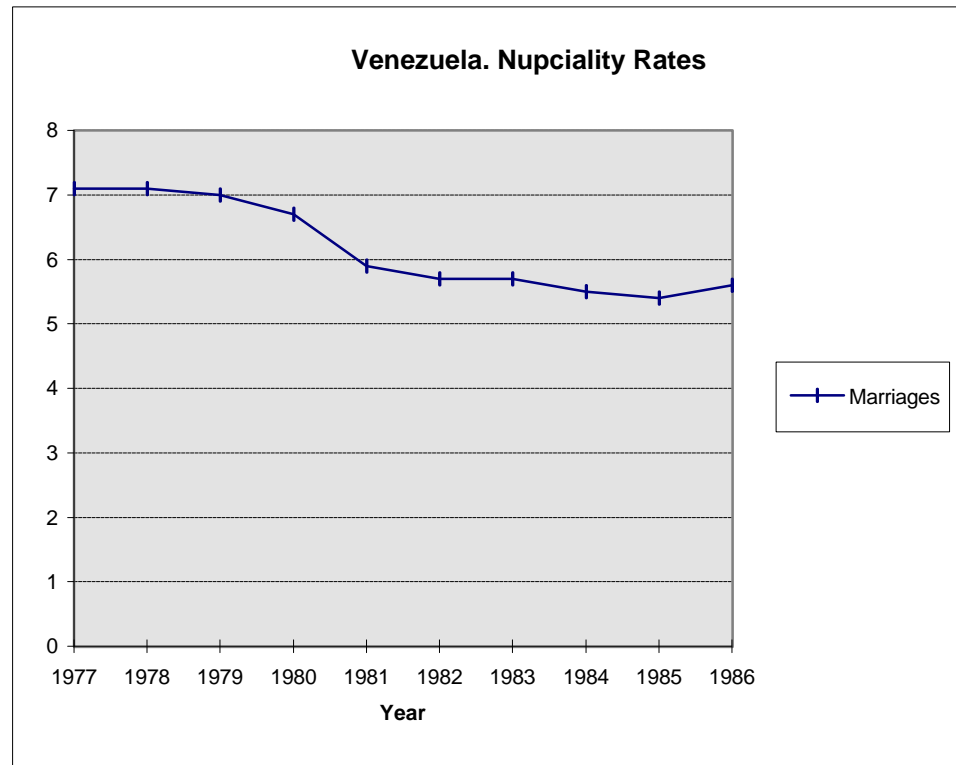
Source: Venezuela. CORDIPLAN (Office for Design and Planification)

At the same time, a small but sustained growth of the group of divorced (and eventually of the separated) women occurred, according to table 1. Additionally, this table shows that more than one third of the unions are not legal unions. A high proportion of consensual unions has been characteristic in Venezuela, and it is more extended among the rural regions and in the low-income groups, possibly reflecting a differentiated socialization, regarding marriage, of women according to regions and socioeconomic status.

The divorce rate in Venezuela traditionally has remained at low levels, although high in the context of South America. This situation cannot be dissociated from the fact that Venezuela is a predominantly catholic country: a 90% of the population declares itself catholic, and there is a strong relationship between the State and the Catholic Church, that is reflected in the legal procedures for getting a divorce. After the first application, it usually takes one year to legalize the divorce.

Nonetheless, figure 2 points out a drastic rise in the number of divorces, and therefore the Crude Divorce Rate, after 1984. According to this data, by 1985 the number of divorces had been more than 2.5 times larger than what it was in 1984. We tend to believe that, at least some part of this sharp change could respond to a partial reform of the Venezuelan Civil Code that took place in 1982, which modified the status of married women and modified the grounds for divorce. For instance, the new civil code considers as grounds for divorce a husband's adultery, as well as when the spouses have in fact lived separately for more than five years (Esparza, 1991). But certainly, a more accurate revision and explanation of these changes is a pending task. In any case, these data point to a recent increase in the magnitude of divorce in Venezuela, which demands more attention to its causes and effects.

3.2 Recent changes in the Employment of married women in Venezuela.

In the case of Venezuelan women, like in most Latin American countries, their participation in the labor market has been increasing significantly over the last thirty years.

Table 3
LATIN AMERICA AND VENEZUELA. GLOBAL PARTICIPATION RATES BY SEX, 1960-1980.

	1960			1970			1980		
REGION	Tot.	Male	Fem	Tot.	Male	Fem.	Tot.	Male	Fem
Lat. America	47.5	77.0	17.8	45.4	71.7	19.2	45.6	70.5	20.6
Venezuela	47.4	75.8	17.5	43.4	67.9	18.4	44.6	68.2	21.3

Source: PREALC-OIT 1982.

To explain this massive incorporation of women into the labor market during those years, diverse causes have been suggested. In fact, this ongoing process is not the result of **one** cause, but, of many factors which, directly or indirectly, have contributed to the resulting integration. It is important to mention that most of the time, curiously, this process has not been the outcome of explicit politics oriented to improve women's participation in the benefits of development, but the result of exogenous processes.

The most commonly mentioned causes of this increased incorporation of women into the labor market in Latin America are: 1) the process of urbanization; 2) the technological change, which has allowed women to develop domestic labor for the labor market; 3) a generalized process of education that has had a major influence in the better training of women, and consequently, in the opportunity to get better jobs; 4) the growing economic necessity of additional incomes in most of the households; and, 5) the increasing number of households headed by a woman (López, C. and Pollack, M., 1992)

All these elements have definitely contributed to the definition of what we could call a new pattern of participation

in the labor market of Venezuelan women, but we certainly believe that, since the beginning of the eighties, the economic crisis has had a major effect, pressing women to work outside of the home, in order to maintain the family income.

An important characteristic of the recent process of women's incorporation into the labor market in Venezuela, has been the incorporation of women that traditionally were excluded from paid employment, mainly middle-aged and married women.

In Venezuela, until the late 1970's women younger than 25 had the highest rate of participation. However, according to some studies, between 1971 and 1976 the activity rate of women 24-44 years old changed from 26% to 44% (Van Roy, 1980). This trend continued during the eighties, while simultaneously there was a decline in the participation of women younger than 25.

Table 4.
CAPITAL REGION OF VENEZUELA. PARTICIPATION RATES IN LABOR MARKET BY AGE GROUPS AND SEX, 1980 AND 1990.

AGE GROUPS	1980		1990	
	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN
15-19	17.84	32.69	17.39	29.12
20-24	43.99	72.10	41.60	71.12
25-34	48.02	90.68	52.98	86.17
35-44	46.03	95.24	55.52	91.08
45-54	36.88	92.21	43.27	88..58
55-64	20.40	80.25	22.37	74.08
65+	7.22	45.39	8.06	42.18

Source: Venezuela. Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática, Encuesta de Hogares por Muestreo, 1980 and 1990, second semester**.**

By 1990, the rates of participation of women younger than 25 decreased, in comparison with 1980, probably because of extended period of education. At the same time, the participation

rate increased in the rest of the age groups, particularly for women whose ages were between 35 and 44 years. Since most women these ages are married and with children, these changes reflect that today, the marriage and/or the births of children are not - as in previous years- necessarily a direct cause of being outside of the labor market.

Now, let us confirm that the increased incorporation of middle-aged women can be understood as an increased participation of married women. Until very few years ago, women working in Venezuela were basically single women. By 1971, 60% of working women were single women. Although by 1990 (see table 5) the group of single women still has the highest rate of participation, there is a very important participation of married and cohabiting women (not legally married), and in general, the participation of married and cohabiting women is not so far from the participation of single women.[1]

Table 5.
CAPITAL REGION OF VENEZUELA. PARTICIPATION RATES IN LABOR MARKET BY MARITAL STATUS AND SEX, 1990.

MARITAL STATUS	WOMEN	MEN
Single	54.10	54.77
Married (husband living in home)	34.99	87.58
Married (husband not living in home)	46.98	81.58
Cohabiting (partner living in home)	32.25	88.32
Cohabiting (partner not living in home)	53.33	73.28
Widow	34.83	52.17
Divorced	55.74	76.03

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[1] Unfortunately, I could not find any data of women's participation by marital status for 1980 (or a previous year) that could be compared to the information for 1990.

Particularly notorious are the participation rates of those women who, albeit married or cohabiting do not live with their partners. They have higher rates of participation than the "conventional" group of married women. At the same time, these differences (between those married or cohabiting women who share a household with their partners and those who do not) point out that, although the participation of married women has increased substantially in recent years, the stable presence of a husband in the household is still linked to a lower participation of their wives in the labor market.

Summarizing this section, the data point out that working wives are a significant and growing group in Venezuela. The implications and changes related to this, like new family strategies to cope with the household responsibilities as well as the introduction of new situations and elements in the couple's relationship, are numerous and deserve our attention.

3.3. Method

The data used in the analysis come from the Fertility Survey of the Capital Region of Venezuela, undertaken by the Department of Demographic Studies of the Catholic University in 1991. The sample design was probabilistic and sistematic, and the selection of the sample included three stages: the selection of the sectors, the selection of the households and the selection of the women.

The sample includes data of 1096 households and life histories of 948 women (in the urban area), that were residing in those households (and present at the moment of the interview), in groups of 25-29 and 45-54 years old. Of them, a total of 803 women at the time of the survey had marital experience, and 248 of them had dissolved their first union by divorce or separation. The survey includes retrospective information on nupciality,

Table 6

DISTRIBUTION OF MAIN CHARACTERISTICS IN DIVORCED/SEPARATED AND NO DIVORCED WOMEN .
Capital Region of Venezuela, 1991.   (Part I)

	Divorced (n= 248)	No Divorced (n= 555)	Total (n= 803)
Level of Education			
None	2.8	4.9	4.2
Primary	43.5	41.4	42.1
High-School	43.1	39.6	40.7
University	10.5	14.1	13.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age at first union			
Less than 19	64.1	49.2	53.8
20 - 24	27.8	36.6	33.9
25 +	8.1	14.2	12.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Duration of first union			
Less than 5 years	39.9	10.5	19.6
5 to 9	28.6	23.1	24.8
10 to 19	22.2	20.6	21.0
20 to 29	8.1	21.8	17.6
30 to 40	1.2	24.0	17.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Ever had a child			
No	6.1	7.4	7.0
Yes	93.9	92.6	93.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age at first child			
No had a child	6.0	7.4	7.0
Less than 19	43.2	31.4	35.0
20 to 24	35.1	41.4	39.5
25 and more	15.7	19.8	18.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Child before 1st. union			
No	77.4	78.0	77.8
Yes	22.6	22.0	22.2
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Fertility Survey in the Capital Region of Venezuela, 1991.
        Calculations by the author.

fertility, employment, and schooling from the women's histories.
Unfortunately, it does not include information on women's wages
nor family income, which precluded the testing of the hipothesis
about wife's income and wife's relative earning effects.

The analysis technique employed is a log-linear logit model.
This technique is apropiated to explain dichotomus dependent
variables, like is divorce/no-divorce. Since this analysis
assumes a constant effect for each regressor on the dependent
variable (independently of time passed), a more sophisticated
analysis could be developed using other methods like hazard
models. In that sense, we interpret our analysis as a first
approximation to the problem.

Hypothesis and variables

According to what has been argued and tested in past years
(summarized in the first part of this paper), we believe wive's
employment would reduce the time that women could spend on
household tasks and children's care. The anxiety of sharing their
time between the house and the job would introduce stress and
tension in their marital relations, when their husbands do no act
in solidarity with themand/or they together cannot implement new
strategies to cope with the new situation.

This kind of tension is not experienced by traditional
couples, where just the husband has a paid employment and the
wife assumes the household tasks. In that sense, it could be
expected that in certain cases wive's employment would propitiate
or facilitate the disruption of a marital union.

Hypothesis One: *Women who work during their marriage or
union, have greater probabilities of experiencing a marital
disruption than women who do not work after marriage*.

During the period of time when there are young children at
home, the household tasks are more numerous and more time

consuming. Additionally, the main responsibility of children's care has been traditionally assumed by women. Therefore, in that period of time wives' employment could be even more conflictive for the couple. In Venezuela, the period of a family's reproduction typically follows the marriage or union very closely, with most of the couples having their first child during the first 5 years of union.

Furthermore, we believe that it is particularly during the first years of marital union when each couple negotiates and delineates the authority and power of each partner in the marriage (a process that obviously is not enterely private, but is heavily influenced by the societal norms and costumes), and the specific roles and responsabilities of each partner. For those more traditionally oriented couples, where the authority and the role of breadwinner are male attributes, the incorporation of the wife into the labor market could be more disruptive of the union's stablity.

Hypothesis Two: *Women who work during the first five years of the union have higher probabilities of divorce/ separation than those women who do not work during that period of time*.

Dependent variable. The dependent variable of this study is a dichotomous one, expressing whether the first union ended by divorce/separation or not. We do not distinguish, for the purposes of this exercise, between married and cohabiting women, hence, between divorce or separation. Women that do not experienced a first union were truncated from the data.

Independent variables. Since our primary focus is on absence-effect of wive's employment, and given the fact that the data does not include information neither on hours per week worked nor wive's income, we created two dummy-variables indicating whether or not the women ever worked after the beginning of the union, and whether or not they worked at some

point during the first 5 years of the union. For this last variable, we consider that a woman worked sometime during the first 5 years of union if, during that period, she worked at least one year.

These two variables, **work after union** and **work during the first five years**, were included in the model separately, understanding that the second one is a sub-specification of the first one.

Control variables. In the models were included the following variables:

Age at the first union. Includes 3 categories: less than 19, 20 to 24, and 25 or more.

Duration of the first union. Consider 5 categories: less than 5 years, 5 to 9 years, 10 to 19 years, 20 to 29 years, and 30 to 40 years, being this last the maximum duration registered in the sample (by the time of interview).

Age at the first job. This variable includes 5 categories: never worked, 10 to 14 years, 15 to 19 years, 20 to 24 years, and 25 or more. First job ocurred for some woemn before marriage but for others after marriage.

Others variables were also considered to be included as control variables, but for absence of a significant effect on the probability of divorce/separation, they were not included in the final models. Such variables are:

Level of Education. Four categories are distinguished: None, Primary (one or more years of Primary), High-School (one or more years of High-School), and University (one or more years of University). The reason why this indicator has not shown to be significant could be that it is a very broad one; the way that this information was collected does not allow differentiations in terms of years passed in each of the levels distinguished.

Table 7.
Search for significant effects explaining divorce

Variable	Delta G2	Delta d.f.	Significance
Level of Education	4.2675	3	
Cohorte	2.3045	1	
Age at first child	10.4070	3	**
Children (ever)	0.4659	1	
Children before 1st. union	0.0355	1	
Children 1st. five years union	0.0047	1	
Number of Children	3.5959	3	
Age at first union	16.6260	2	**
Duration of first union	168.7088	4	**
Work before first union	0.1565	1	
Work during first union	4.4329	1	*
Work during first 5 years of union	20.6746	1	**
Age at first job	25.6887	4	**

*   Significant at p< 0.05
** Significant at p< 0.01

Significant effects:

Age at first child
Age at first union
Duration of first union
Work during first union
Work during the first 5 years of union
Age at first job

Cohort. It is a dichotomus variable, coded 1 for those women in the group of 25 to 29 years, and 2 for the women in the group of 45 to 54 years.

Four operationalizations of children were analyzed:

Children. A dummy variable indicating whether or not the women ever had a child.

Children before the first union. A dummy variable, coded 0 for women who never had a child, and 1 for women who had 1 or more children before their first union.

Number of Children. This variable considers 4 categories: none, 1 to 2 children, 3 to 4 children, and 5 or more children. It does not discriminate between children born previous the first union and those born after the first union.

Children during the first 5 years of the union. A dummy variable, indicating whether or not the woman had one or more children during the first 5 years of the union. The formulation of this variable obeys a personal hypothesis that the absence-effect of working wives is larger when there are small children in the household. The birth of the first child typically occurs during the first five years of union, in the Venezuelan case.

Work experience before the first union. A dummy variable distinguishing whether the woman ever had ever worked before the union or not. Surprisingly, this variable which has been found as relevant in previous research, did not show a significant effect in our tests.

3.4 Results.

In a first step, we compared the distribution of the variables considered in divorced/ non-divorced women. Table 6 presents, separately for divorced (or separated) and non-divorced women and for the total sample, the women's distribution for variables analyzed. Some important differences between divorced

and non-divorced women can be observed in this table. For divorced women, the category of women married at 19 or less years (64%) is larger than for non-divorced women (49%), although for both groups this is the largest category. In the same way, the percentage of women that had their first child before age 19 is larger for the group of divorce/ separated (43%) than for the group of non-divorced (31%).

Another evident difference is that the percentage of women that never worked is just 10% in the group of divorced/separated, while 24% of non-divorced women never worked. Related to this, it is also observable that the percentage of women that worked during the first 5 years of marriage substantially larger in the group of divorced/separated (54%) than in the group of non-divorced (36%).

The second step was to test which of all the variables considered has a significant effect in explaining divorce/ separation. This test consisted in the inclusion of just one variable at the time as an independent variable explaining divorce and checking whether or not there is a significant improvement in comparison to the null model, where there is no predictor. The results are presented in table 7.

In our sample just six of the variables considered had a significant effect: age at first child, age at marriage, duration of marriage, age at the first job, work after marriage, and work during the first 5 years of union. Since work after marriage and work during the first 5 years of marriage cannot be included simultaneously in a model, our maximum number of explanatory variables in each model would be five. We believe that the small size of our sample might have contributed to the lack of significance of some variables, which have been found significant in previous studies, like the presence of children in the marriage or wife's education.

Table 8
EFFECT OF WIFE'S WORK VARIABLES AND CONTROL VARIABLES ON THE PROBABILITY OF DIVORCE/SEPARATION. (Estimated Odds).

Variable	Model 1 (n=803)		Model 2 (n=645)		Model 3 (n=645)		Model 4 (n=645)		Model 5 (n=645)	
Age1child										
No child (10 - 19)	0.1139	*	0.3667							
20 - 24	0.4785		0.3946							
25 +	1.0002		3.0496							
Age at union (<=19)										
20 - 24	0.2235	**	0.2552	*	0.2382	**	0.2234	**		
25 +	0.0242	**	0.1096	*	0.3054		0.2712			
Age first job										
Never worked (10 - 14)	0.0857	**	0.0559	**	0.0563	**			0.0561	**
15 - 19	0.2555	*	0.1370	**	0.1421	**			0.1385	**
20 - 24	0.1350	**	0.1458	**	0.1555	**			0.1414	**
25 +	0.1326	**	0.1237	*	0.1305	*			0.1372	*
Work during union (No)										
Yes	2.2484									
Work first 5 years union (No)										
Yes			3.9322	*	3.9322	**	3.8590	**	3.8931	**
Duration of union (less than 5)										
(5 - 9)	0.0325	**								
10 19	0.0142	**	0.4335		0.0109		0.6821		0.7755	
20 - 29	0.0019	**	0.0581	**	0.0770	**	0.1276	**	0.0679	**
30 - 40	0.0000	**	0.0009	**	0.0013	**	0.0016	**	0.0018	**
Likelihood	275.5154		164.5443		83.1364		43.5032		27.7865	
d.f.	192		157		73		15		27	

Table 8 presents five logit models that we developed. The first model includes all the women ever married (N=803), while in the other 4 models were included just those women whose first union's duration was 5 years or more, since in those models there was included work during the first five years of union, which meant a reduction of the sample to N=645, and a change of the reference category of this variable.

The coefficients represent the odds of getting a divorce of a woman in a given category compared to the reference category for that variable. To avoid tedium, we will only comment the meaning of these coefficients for one of the better models obtained (model 5).

The basic difference between model 1 and model 2 is the substitution of work after marriage by work during the first five years of union. Since in the first model the independent variable, work after marriage was not significant, model 2 used work during the first 5 years of union as predictor. Not only was this variable significant, but the value of the likelihood ratio Chi-Square was reduced, although it is still large.

Model 3 does not include age at the first child, a variable that was not significant in model 2. The elimination of such a variable from the model lead to a significant improvement of this. Although model 3 is statistically acceptable, and all the variables included were of significance, I still tried to improve (reduce) the value of the Chi-Square, by eliminating from the model, alternatively, age at first job, and age at marriage, in model 4 and model 5, respectively. In fact, model 4 resulted in a statistically significant improvement of model 3, as model 5 is for model 4. In this way, I consider model 5 the best one, because among the acceptable models, it is the simplest one, although models 3 and 4 are also statistically adequate.

The coefficients of model 5 for age at the first job tell us that the probability of divorce/separation of those women who

never worked is 95% less than the probability corresponding to the women who started their first job between 10 and 14 years old (reference category). The probability of divorce for women who initiate their first job in any of the other 3 categories, that is after age 15, is basically the same, 86% less than the reference category. Given the values of these coefficients, we could deduce that the probability of divorce is highest for women who began their fist job very early, before age 15.

The experience of work during the first 5 years of union means a probability of divorce/separation almost four times greater than the probability of those women who didn't work during that period of time. This result confirms our hypothesis 2, suggesting that certainly the effect of work after the union has a different meaning in different stages of the union, and is particularly significant, for this sample, in the first stage of the union.

Regarding the duration of the union, the values of the odds suggest that the probability of divorce decrease with an increase in the length of the duration of the union; women with marriage durations between 10 and 19 years have a probability of divorce/ separation 22% less than women with 5 to 9 years of marriage, while those women in marriages with durations of 20-29 years are 93% less likely to divorce, and those in marriages of more than 30 years are 98% less likely to end in divorce.

In this exercise we havejust tested the main effects of those variables that showed, by themselves, a significant effect explaining divorce/ separation. The inclusion of some interactions among some of the regressor would probably improve the models.

CONCLUSION

This study has estimated the effect of some indicators of wive's employment on the probability of first union dissolution. The results obtained in the logit analysis confirm clearly our second hypothesis: a positive effect of the indicator of absence-effect --work during the first five years of marriage-- on the probability of divorce/ separation for women in the Capital Region of Venezuela. But this effect cannot be extended, in the Venezuelan case, to any work experience during the marriage, independently of the specific marriage's stage. The more general indicator of work experience during the union was not significant (model 1), and therefore, we cannot confirm our hypothesis one, which in fact is a more general expression of the second one.

The apparent effect of married women's work on divorce/separation seems to be mediated by other factors, as age of women at first job and duration of marriage. The age at first job effect obtained indicates that the probability of divorce is larger for women who initiated their work activity before age 15, and is more or less the same for women who started their first job at any age older than 15. Although the interaction between this factor and work in the first 5 years of the union was not tested, presumably the absence-effect would be larger for women who have had a very early experience of work. Contrarily, given that the results show a reduction of probability of divorce as duration of marriage increases, we could assume that the absence-effect is particularly strong in earlier stages of the marriages and less important in later stages.

The implications of these results are significant. On one hand, since the more general hypothesis of absence-effect was not confirmed for our sample, it could be suggesting a more particular effect of wive's employment on divorce, apparently more tied in the Venezuelan case to particular stages of the

marriage, while for instance, in the case of the United States, the findings do not show this effect restricted to certain periods of the marriage. On the other hand, further research on the Venezuelan case would help to confirm or refine the findings of this exercise, still an incipient approximation to the problem in the Venezuelan context.

At the moment, the particularities of our findings prevent us from formulating generalizations about the effect of work of married women on probabilities of divorce without considering more carefully the specific circumstances (such aslike the particular cultural context) and the necessity of developing further analysis including a time perspective analysis.

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