

The Marriage Market in Spain. Analysis of the Structure of Opportunity in Mixed Marriages

Ángeles Arjona Garrido¹– Juan Carlos Checa Olmos²

Departamento de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Universidad de Almería, Almería, España

Departamento de Historia, Geografía e Historia del Arte, Universidad de Almería, Almería, España

The Marriage Market in Spain. Analysis of the Structure of Opportunity in Mixed Marriages. The dual purpose of this article is to find out the importance and characteristics of marriages between foreigners and Spaniards and to study the opinions of the Spanish population on the possibility of their children having affective relationships with foreigners, since this is becoming an important element in the definition of the marriage market opportunity structure. For the first goal, data were acquired from the *Movimiento Natural de Población* (Vital Statistics) statistical source. For the second, data were taken from the national survey on attitudes of the Spanish population toward immigrants taken by the ASEP Company. The results show, firstly, that there is a gradual increase in mixed marriages, although there are differentiated patterns between men and women. Secondly, Spaniards are against one of their family members marrying a foreigner. *Sociología* 2014, Vol. 46 (No. 3: 300-319)

Key words: *intermarriage; immigration; marriage market; family; preferences*

Introduction

In just a few decades, Spain has gone from a society with an emigrating population to become a host country. According to data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) there were 542,314 foreigners in the mid-nineties, at the beginning of the millennium there were 1,370,657 and at the present time, according to the latest data published by the Padrón Municipal de Población (Municipal census) (January 2012), there are 5,711,040 foreigners, or 12.1% of the population. This is the largest increase in foreign population in the entire European Union.

In the beginning, this phenomenon responded almost exclusively to the arrival of a young population, especially Moroccans, in search of work, and flows of sun and sand tourists and highly qualified professionals from Europe (Izquierdo 1996; Pedreño 2009). However, current migrant flows and existing populations of foreigners have led to a complicated mix of origins (from all continents), sex (more females) and ages (including children and retired migrants). For example, Romania, Morocco, Ecuador, the United Kingdom and

¹ Address: Prof. Ángeles Arjona Garrido, Departamento de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Universidad de Almería, España. La Cañada de San Urbano, 04120, Almería, España. Telf. 950-015437, e-mail: arjona@ual.es

² Address: Prof. Juan Carlos Checa Olmos, Departamento de Historia, Geografía e Historia del Arte, Universidad de Almería, La Cañada de San Urbano, 04120, Almería (España). Telf. 950-015407, e-mail: jcheca@ual.es

Colombia are currently the countries with the largest populations residing in Spain. Of the total foreigners 47.5% are women, 15.4% are under 16 years of age, and 5.4% are over 65.

However, both the increase and diversity of migratory flows have in turn generated a considerable diversity of demographic and social dynamics. One of these is mixed national-foreigner marriages. In 1994, only 4.7% of marriages were mixed, in 2007 were 13% and by 2011, the figure had risen to 23%. In this context, the patterns of composition of couples reveal essential social dynamics in matters as diverse as reproduction of social structures and social distance among ethnic groups. More specifically, interethnic marriages are considered a key indicator for evaluating social integration of immigrants in the host society (Gordon 1964; Meng – Gregory 2005; Nielsen et al. 2007; Kalmijn 1998, 2010; Quian – Lichter 2007). The reason is justified by its potential consequences, since marriage is an intimate, often lasting relationship, which eliminates borders or ethnic and racial distances (Davis 1991), avoiding identity conflicts and helping eliminate prejudice (Xie et al. 2003). Mixed marriages often even lead to a rise in socioeconomic position. (Meng – Gregory 2005; Rosenfeld 2005). In other words, it is a sign of acceptance of equality by members of different groups and contributes to social integration.

Opportunities for contact, which are mainly determined by the size of the group, the age of its members, the sex ratio, residential segregation and position in the labor market, on one hand, and the preferences for certain groups on the other, make them essential elements for establishing these relationships.

The specialized literature has given the role of the opportunity structure and the consequences of marriage special attention (see e.g. Alotta 2000; Cahill 1997; Camarero 2010; Danielsen 2009; Gil 2010; Gonsoulin – Fu 2010; Iceland – Nelson, 2010; Kalmijn 1998, 2010; Kalmijn – Van Tubergen 2006; Cortina et al. 2008; González 2006; Oppenheimer 1997; Sánchez-Domínguez et al. 2011), but there are fewer studies analyzing the influence of the attitude toward marriage to foreigners, or certain groups, by nationals in contact with them (Huijnk et al. 2010; Kalmijn 1998; 2010, Setién – Vicente 2007).

Therefore, the dual purpose of this article is first, to quantify the incidence of foreigners in the Spanish marriage market and describe intermarriage by sex and origin. And second, find out the attitude of the Spanish population concerning mixed marriages.

Theoretical background

The theoretical framework of the phenomenon of mixed marriages is structured around two themes, the patterns and/or factors in choice of mate and the consequences of those marriages.

It is true that in modern societies the choice of partner is based on love, through rose-tinted glasses. Bodoque and Sorononellas (2010), Sánchez-Domínguez (2011), and Niedomysl, Östh and van Ham (2010) explain how international engagements can begin out of love by letter or e-mail without the couple ever having met. However, while recognizing the role love plays in the choice, it is not completely at liberty in the process. As suggested by Carabaña (1983) we move through networks that define our relationships, and we marry people not too close to us, but not very far away either. Thus the choice of a partner follows strategies induced by social and economic considerations (Rodríguez 2004). Research has therefore looked for other reasons that explain these decisions.

In the first place, the choice of the partner is made once the costs and benefits have been assessed (*Rational Choice*) (Becker 1974). In other words, marriage is an exchange between two individuals with resources that have been perfectly assessed, and therefore, criteria based on available information are applied to the choice of partner to maximize results. Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) argue that mixed marriages are mainly based on tangible exchanges, such as socioeconomic condition, rather than intangible psychoemotional effects.

More recently, Blossfeld and Timm (2003) discussed limited rationality, since the time the search takes and the information found are both limited, which leads to comparison of candidates not always being possible, and of course, the choice does not depend only on an individual's decision.

The marriage market concept, understood as the physical and symbolic meeting space in which persons wishing to get married find each other, appears as a result of this perspective (Cabré 1994; McDonald 1995). It is called a market because in this exchange place, just as in other markets, there are operating rules based on offer and demand and subject to the conditions of more or less free competition, although the mechanisms activated to find the balance are not price, but factors such as age, sex, singleness, etc. Therefore, later theoretical work has been concerned with marriage market regulation.

Among the elements that make it work in the configuration of mixed marriages are preferences for certain characteristics, especially socioeconomic and cultural, of the potential spouses. Socioeconomic resources refer to the possibility of improving social position. The theory of exchange holds that subjects belonging to ethnic minorities who marry into the majority group improve their social position (Heer 1974; Monahan 1976; Shoen – Wooldredge 1989; Wirth – Goldhamer 1944). Therefore, natives with better levels of education, higher income and prestigious jobs are the most attractive candidates in the marriage market (Nakosteen – Zimmer 2001), and there is no dearth of literature finding a positive correlation between mixed marriages and

the man's income or higher education (Nakosteen – Zimmer 1987; Korenman – Neumark 1991).

Cultural resources include values, opinions, life styles or views of the world, and mastery of the language. Thus the main candidates are those who share similar cultural patterns (Kalmijn 1998) and better linguistic competence, since they increase opportunities for contact and communication with the native population. As a result, over time and generations, immigrants assimilate values and language, resulting in intergroup marriage (Gordon 1964). In other words, intermarriage increases with passing generations (Giorgas – Jones 2002; Lieberman – Waters 1988; Lievens 1998). More recently, in the United States, as a result of acculturation of Latins and Asians, which differentiated them from the first European immigrants, especially English and German, the theory of segmented assimilation has appeared as an alternative proposal to classic assimilation³. This thesis argues that not all groups undergo the same assimilation process. That is, marriages are formed differently depending on the group (Portes – Rumbaut 2006). Therefore, the behavior of endogamic marriages in some groups of immigrants may be attributed to family influence (Hurtado 1995; Hwang et al. 1997; Qian et al. 2001) or to cultural “distance” between groups.

Another of the theoretical elements that explain intergroup marriages is opportunity, understood as the likelihood of meeting members of the outgroup. Therefore, the probability of meeting a potential partner from the same ethnic group is higher, and endogamy would be more expected than intermarriage. The factors that provide opportunities for contact are defined mainly by group size (Anderson – Saenz 1994; Hwang et al. 1997; Lievens 1998), since this influences the opportunity of meeting members of one's own group. Thus endogamy is stronger in heavily represented groups. In the second place, and closely related to the above, residential patterns (Iceland – Nelson 2010; Massey – Denton 1993), because when segregation rates are high, endogamy is stronger, due to the lower probability of contacting with members of other groups. In the third place, the sex ratio (Anderson – Saenz 1994; Hwang et al. 1997; Pagnini – Morgan 1990). With the coming of modern migrations, the first to arrive are usually young men (Castles – Miller 2003), limiting the possibilities of marriage between native men and foreign women.

Finally, in the explanation of mixed marriages, State, religion and family, play an outstanding role in regulating the phenomenon. The first defines and

³ Portes (1995) proposed the *segmented assimilation theory*, based on empirical studies of second and third generation immigrants. It maintains that there are three possible paths of adaptation. The first involves a process of acculturation and integration into the country's middle class, which coincides with the classical concept of assimilation. The second goes in the opposite direction, that is, a situation of permanent poverty and assimilation with the underclass. In the third, despite possible economic progress, they choose to deliberately preserve their own values of origin through community social networks and support of in-group solidarity (*selective acculturation*).

identifies different groups, even attributes them a certain legal status, and regulates marriage requirements and how they may take place. While it is still a minority phenomenon, in Spain, authorities attempt to make sure that international marriages are based on love and are not for getting the papers that legalize the foreigner's status. For example, in 2009, police discovered a network that had arranged over a hundred marriages, requiring the foreign spouse to pay 10,000€ in advance for the marriage. (El País 2009, October 28, 2009). More recently, women have been discovered who had been married to several different foreigners and received 2,500€ for each (El País 2011, October 4, 2011). However, this does not mean that love and legalizing immigration status are incompatible.

The second defines people's lines of socialization and the structure of their identification with their own group. Most Africans residing in Spain are Muslims, and this religion prohibits them from marrying non-Muslims, especially women (Hooghiemstra 2003; Kulzycki – Lobo 2002). The family is the main agent of socialization, where the transmission of norms and values which can inhibit exogamy are consolidated.

Several theoretical arguments explain the role of the family in establishing relations with the outgroup. According to the theory of equality, people seek persons who are like themselves, especially, insofar as occupation, education, religion or language. That is, homogamy, in which social networks have a fundamental role, as they regulate the norms and sanction behavior which does not follow them. So endogamy is emphasized by groups which want or need to maintain group cohesion, and home values and traditions (Clark-Ibañez – Felmler 2004; Sniderman – Hagendoorn 2007; Huijnk et al. 2010). In the second, families that emphasize conservative values are more likely to have prejudiced and negative attitudes toward the outgroup (Lambert – Chasteen 1997), and they therefore understand homogamic marriage as a value in itself. The third argument sustains that people who perceive themselves to be threatened by otherness find security in family and friends. Finding trust only in the nearest family, residential and work settings encourages endogamy. In any case, the role of family in establishing the type of marriage is reduced for the above arguments with higher education and/or second-generation immigrants, (Kalmijn 1998; 2010; Klzycki – Lobo 2002; Lievens 1998).

The choice of spouse and the formation of mixed marriages is definitely a multi-dimensional process determined by interrelated factors, which can be summarized as individual preference in the choice of partner, social group influence and the limitations or possibilities of the marriage market.

Sources and data

There are several sources in Spain reporting on marriages between Spaniards and foreigners: The 1991 and 2001 censuses, the *Movimiento Natural de Población* (MNP) (Vital Statistics), prepared by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) and the Surveys on Active Population (EPA), Fertility (EF), Households in the European Union and National Survey of Immigrants (INE). It may be deduced that each deals with a different type of information, stocks, flow records or data from samples. In no case, as pointed out by Surra et al. (2007), is there a source that quantifies the diversification of couples.

Therefore, although transnational and international marriages are excluded, the MNP is used for the purpose of this study, since it offers annual information on marriages in Spain up to 2010, and also provides information on certain characteristics of the spouses, such as nationality, sex and age. Because the diversity of nationalities of the spouses is so great, the data on origin is illustrated graphically by continent under Results below, although the comments refer to the countries that provide the most spouses.

For the second objective, the data were taken from a statistically significant national survey on the attitudes toward foreigners (1995 – 2007) of the Spanish population over 18 years of age done by the Análisis Sociológicos, Económicos y Políticos company (ASEP). The database has information on 13,292 individuals. The sample was created using random sampling and is stratified proportionally by sex and region.

However, keeping in mind that the two goals are interrelated, several methodological decisions were made concerning the participants. In the first place, as the second goal deals with finding out the role of the family in the configuration of mixed marriages, and the source that provides these data only goes up to 2007, the evolution and characteristics of marriages in the MNP are analysed only up to that date. And in the second place, and also to study second goal, the sample was reduced to the population over 18 years of age, married and with children. This left us with 3.177 participants.

Instrument and variables

To find out the opinion that families have on mixed marriages, the Index of Preference for Mixed Marriages (IPMX) was built up from the responses to the following question: What would your reaction be if a child of yours fell in love with an African or Sub-Saharan? This question was repeated for a Maghrebi, European and Latin American. Those who answered that they should do whatever they wanted scored 1, the rest of the choices scored 0: Forbid it to continue, advise him/her to break up, tell him/her about the differences that exist, and that he/she should keep in mind the reaction of other family and

friends. The index thus varies from 0 to 4, where 4 means total acceptance of mixed marriages.

To check the reliability of the index we performed two tests: the first through the technique of test and re-test, in which the Pearson r coefficient reached 0.68. For the second test we performed the Kuder Richardson 20, with a coefficient of 0.60. However, future studies are needed and should be applied elsewhere to determine the degree of validity of the index.

Table 1: Definition for the variables included in the analysis

Question	Variable	Definition
Sex	Sex	-Men =1 -Woman
How old are you?	Age	In years
What is your level of education?	Education	-University=1 -Secondary -Primary -No education
What is your employment status?	Employment Status	-Employment -Unemployed =1
What is your ideology?	Ideology	- Right =1 - Center -Left
What effect immigrants have on employment?	Perception of the consequences of immigration in Spain: Influence on employment	- Decreases =1 - Increases - No effect
What effect immigrants have on crime?	Perception of the consequences of immigration in Spain: Influence on delinquency	- Increases =1 - Decreases - No effect
What effect immigrants have in culture?	Perception of the consequences of immigration in Spain: Influence in culture	- Loss of identity = 1 -Enrichment of identity - No effect
What do you think about the number of immigrants living in Spain?	Perceived threat	- Too many immigrants in Spain=1 - There are not many immigrants in Spain - Only immigrants who are required

Finally, we wanted to know which variables explained changes in the index. A multivariate analysis was done with the following independent variables: first, socio-demographic: sex (1=men), age, education (1=university), employment (1=unemployed), ideology (1=right). Second, evaluation of potential partner by region of origin: Eastern Europe and the European Union of the fifteen country⁴, Sub-Saharan and Maghreb, Latin America and Asia

⁴ Until 2004 the European Union consisted of fifteen countries. In 2004 and 2007 it was enlarged by Eastern European countries that previously had been part of the Warsaw Pact (1955). However, in this study we distinguish them from other EU countries, because they have lower socioeconomic indicators, causing them to export labor to the rest of European countries, mainly on the lowest levels of the labor market. Therefore, they do not enjoy the same economic and social privileges as skilled workers and tourists from other EU countries do. In fact, they appear divided this way in the survey done by ASEP which we used as our main source of analysis.

(reference). Third, perception of the consequences of immigration in Spain: Influence on employment (1=decreases), on delinquency (1=increases) and on culture (1=loss of identity). Finally, perceived threat (Too many immigrants in Spain=1).

Results

This section is grouped in two analytical blocks. First the phenomenon of mixed marriages in Spain is quantified, with special attention to the origin and sex of spouses, and second, the attitude that Spanish families have toward mixed marriages is described.

Intermarriage opportunities

Entry of new candidates into the marriage market is reflected in the increase in marriages in which at least one of the two spouses is not Spanish. Marriages registered show that the proportion in which at least one of the spouses is foreign has gone from 3.2 in 1989 to 4.2% in 1997 to 13% in 2007.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of marriages by combination of spouse's citizenship in Spain (1989 – 2007)*

Year	Both Spanish	Spanish man- Foreign woman	Foreign man- Spanish woman	Both foreign	Total
1989	96.0	1.4	1.8	0.8	221,470
1990	96.1	1.5	2.0	0.3	220,533
1991	95.8	1.7	2.1	0.4	218,121
1992	95.8	1.8	2.0	0.5	217,512
1993	95.1	2.0	2.3	0.5	201,463
1994	95.2	1.9	2.4	0.5	199,731
1995	95.5	1.8	2.3	0.5	200,688
1996	95.3	1.8	2.3	0.6	194,084
1997	95.4	1.9	2.3	0.5	196,499
1998	95.0	2.2	2.3	0.6	207,041
1999	94.6	2.5	2.4	0.6	208,129
2000	94.6	2.5	2.3	0.7	216,451
2001	93.2	3.1	2.5	1.1	208,057
2002	91.3	3.9	2.9	1.9	211,522
2003	87.7	5.3	3.6	3.3	212,300
2004	85.7	6.3	4.2	3.8	216,149
2005	85.8	6.6	4.2	3.5	208,146
2006	84.3	7.1	4.6	3.9	203,453
2007	83.1	7.6	5.3	4.0	201,579

*Note: Same-sex marriages excluded from 2005.

Source: Movimiento Natural de Población, INE. By author.

This increase is in both Spanish men and women, but at different rates. From 1999 to date, there have been more marriages of Spanish men and foreign women than of Spanish women and foreign men. However, in the decade from

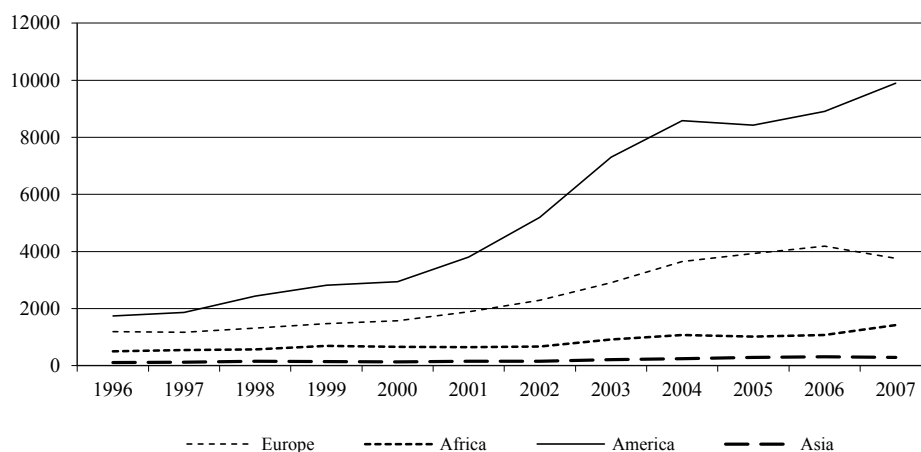
1989 to 1998, mixed marriages of Spanish women to foreign men were more common than for Spanish men to foreign women. In any case, from 1989 to 2001 differences are very small in both types of marriages. After 2002 there are more differences but never over 2.5%.

The statistics show that the nationality of the foreign spouse differs by sex, and that it is not always necessarily the majority nationalities in the country that are the main suppliers of spouses. Thus examining the data more closely, as reflected in Graph 1, among Spanish men married to foreigners, Americans are observed to be especially predominant, followed by Europeans, Africans, and lastly Asians.

However, these figures hide important information. In the first place, at the beginning of the phenomenon of mixed marriages in Spain, there were no important differences in origin, except for Asians. It is only in the year 2000 that Americans, and to a lesser extent Europeans, have become enormously differentiated from the rest. In the second place, over time, the nationalities have varied greatly, except Africans and Asians. While in absolute numbers, the most foreign women married to Spaniards were from Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Romania or Argentina, in the beginning it was Moroccan women who were chosen the most and, at present, Brazilians, even though Brazil is not among the countries contributing the largest populations to Spain.

In any case, what stands out in the case of Americans, especially Latin Americans, is the higher number of women as the bridgehead of the migratory process (Oso 1998) compared to women of other origins (for example, African women) who arrive mainly through family unification.

Graph 1: **Men married to foreigners by origin (1996 – 2007)**

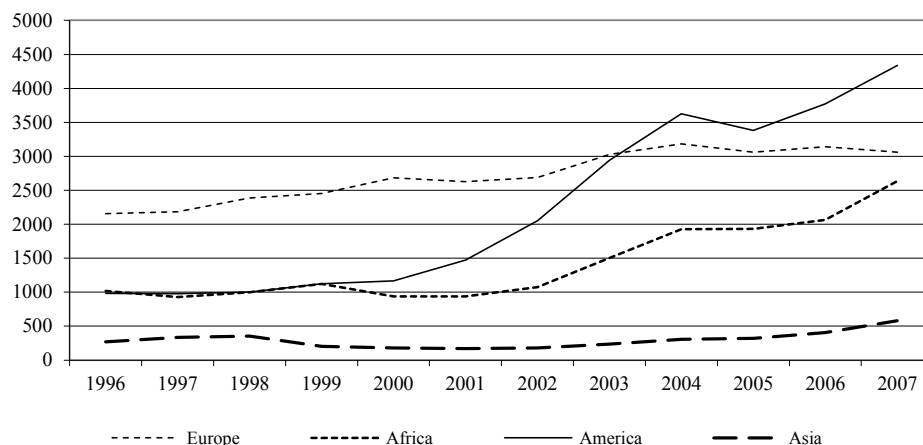


Source: Movimiento Natural de la Población. By author.

For their part, foreigners in the marriage market who marry Spanish women differentiate from those who marry Spanish men in origin and evolution of their numbers. In the beginning, women mostly chose Europeans, especially Italians, Germans and British; although the most preferred nationality was Moroccan, as still is the case. But with the arrival of the new millennium, marriages to Americans and Africans are much more common, to the point where Latinos are now the group chosen most, especially Argentines and Colombians, ahead of Europeans and Africans (see Graph 2), who are almost catching up to the number of Europeans, because of the gradual increase in Moroccans and Nigerians and more recently Algerians, while marriage to Europeans shows a stabilizing and even downward trend.

As above, there is not always an absolute correlation between the choice of spouse and the offer, as exemplified by the Moroccans who are the majority foreign nationality in Spain, while Argentines and Nigerians are not.

Graph 2: **Women married to foreigners by origin (1996 – 2007)**



Source: Movimiento Natural de la Población. By author.

Moreover, at present, among the nationalities with the heaviest presence in Spain, the percentage of endogamy varies by country and sex. Thus British and Moroccan male residents in Spain who marry at destination marry out more than Ecuadorians who are clearly more endogamic, and to a lesser degree, Colombians and Romanians. Women, regardless of their origin, marry out more, especially Moroccans.

Table 3: **Composition of marriages by sex and nationality (1996 – 2007)**

		Same nationality	Spanish-foreign	Both foreign, different nationalities
Men	Great Britain	13.8	78.1	8.1
	Romania	49.1	46.8	4.2
	Morocco	9.5	86.1	4.4
	Colombia	49.8	47	3.2
	Ecuador	71.1	23.8	5.1
	Other	16.1	74.3	9.6
Women	Great Britain	24.5	62.7	12.8
	Romania	44.8	51.9	3.3
	Morocco	13	81.5	5.5
	Colombia	24.5	71.7	3.9
	Ecuador	47.7	47.3	5
	Other	16.7	74	9.3

Source: Movimiento Natural de la Población. By author.

Marriage opportunities also depend on other variables in addition to origin and sex. We examined the relationship between intermarriage and age, occupation, education and marital status.

Among the basic variables explaining any marriage is the age of the spouses. MNP data show that the mean age of Spanish spouses is 37.5 compared to 31.7 for the foreigner spouse. Marriage is also considered an important factor in social mobility. With regard to occupation, 28% of blue collar immigrants marry white collar workers. The second indicator considered in measuring social mobility through marriage is education. In this case, there is less mobility, as only 3.6% of illiterate foreigners married Spaniards with a university education and 10.8% with a secondary education. Finally, the marital status of the foreign spouse is predominantly single. Specifically, 52.3% of foreigners who were separated and 12.1% widows marry single Spaniards.

Intermarriage attitudes

Having examined the evolution of marriage patterns in Spain by sex and origin, the next step is to find out the preferences of Spaniards with children concerning them.

First, the groups most rejected by the Spanish to their children establish a relationship are African (Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africans) and to a lesser extent Latinos and Europeans.

As shown in Graph 3, the index (IPMX) never reaches the mean on the scale. In 1998 alone the figure was 1.89, a figure which over time has fallen reaching its low point in 2006, when the index was 1.12. Moreover, the mean for the entire period is 1.5. In other words, Spaniards do not show a very positive attitude toward mixed marriages of their children.

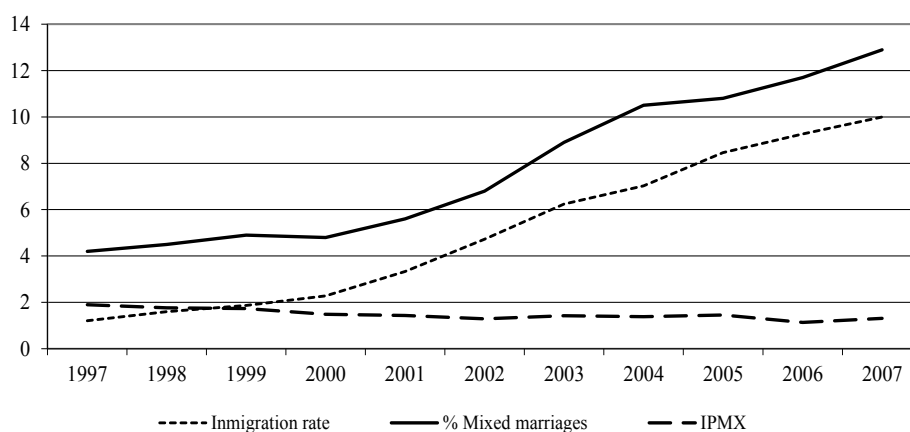
Table 4: Reaction if your son falls in love with an immigrant (%)

	Maghrebi	Sub-Saharan	Latin American	European
They should do whatever they wanted	34.6	35.3	43.6	58.5
Tell him/her about the differences that exist	37.3	37.2	34.4	21.8
He/she should keep in mind the reaction of other family and friends	7.6	8.2	7.5	6.6
Advise him/her to break up	13.6	12.7	9.8	9.7
Forbid it to continue	6.8	6.5	4.6	3.2
Another	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Movimiento Natural de la Población. By author.

As Graph 3 shows, these opinions do not correspond to the real trend to marry foreigners or the strong growth in the foreigner population, showing that family influence encouraging or forbidding marriage with persons from other countries is today very low or unimportant in Spain. On the contrary, evolution of mixed marriages is more in agreement with the immigration rate.

Graph 3. The IPMX mean, rate of foreigners and percentage of mixed marriages in Spain (1997 – 2007)



Source: Movimiento Natural de la Población, Padrón Municipal de Habitantes and ASEP. By author.

In the first model, Europeans from the European Union and Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharans appear with positive statistical significance. In other words, the more highly valued these groups are, the more favorable the opinion on mixed marriages is. In the second model, the variables valuing foreigners by origin with statistical significance have less weight in explaining the variation in the index, and the variables corresponding to the influence of immigration in

Spain are all negative. That is, Spanish families who think immigrants contribute to the loss of national identity, take jobs and contribute to an increase in delinquency will be less likely to allow their children to marry foreigners. Finally, among the socio-demographic variables with positive statistical significance is sex, place of residence and negatively, ideology and employment status. Thus men, persons residing in an urban area, and the employed tend to be more tolerant with respect to intermarriage. Persons who identify themselves with the left would allow their children to marry whoever they wanted.

Table 5: Coefficients of the linear regression on the IPMX

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
Valuing of Eastern European	.054	.001	.043	.008	.045	.006
Valuing of Europeans of the Union (15)	.109	.000	.068	.000	.067	.000
Valuing of South Americans	-.016	.236	-.006	.643	-.007	.616
Valuing of Maghrebis	.032	.145	.008	.629	.012	.426
Valuing of Sub-Saharan	.115	.000	.094	.000	.089	.000
Perceived threat			-.049	.000	-.044	.000
Influence on loss of identity			-.072	.000	-.068	.000
Influence on unemployment			-.047	.000	-.043	.000
Influence on delinquency			-.098	.000	-.096	.000
Sex (men)					.046	.000
Political ideology (right)					-.052	.000
Place of residence (urban)					.019	.003
Employment status (unemployed)					-.038	.000
Education (University)					.011	.230
Income (low)					-.004	.669
R ²	0.27		0.32		0.33	

Source: Movimiento Natural de la Población. By author.

Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this article is to quantify the phenomenon of mixed marriages in Spain, and family opinions about them. The first thing the data show is that endogamy is higher among Spaniards, as in 83.1% of marriages in Spain in 2007, both spouses were Spanish. However, over time, exogamy is becoming more frequent, as in 1989 it represented 3.2% and in 2007 it was almost 13%. Nevertheless, the IPMX based on the opinion of Spanish families on mixed marriages, was very low (1.5 mean).

As a result, if the opinion of the family is contrary to mixed marriages, but they are gradually undergoing an increase in spite of this, the explanation must be rather in other individual and structural matters.

In the first place, the socio-demographic composition of foreigners is different from Spaniards, a situation which could impact on the likelihood of their marrying (Cortina et al. 2008; Rodríguez 2004). Foreigners are younger,

which is a determining element in the higher proportions of cohabitation observed among foreigners, as well as the imbalance in size and age.

The data show a positive relationship between the imbalance in numbers by sex and the difference in endogamy levels between men and women in each group. That is, the higher the relative excess of women (the case of Latin American women in Spain), the more endogamic men are than women. This is why the groups with the most representation are those who marry a compatriot (Ecuadorians, Colombians, Romanians), while the smaller groups tend to marry out into another nationality (mainly Spaniards), although some groups escape from this direct relationship, specifically Morocco. Even though the Moroccans represent the most numerous group, the proportion of endogamy is similar to small groups such as Germans or Cubans. However, it should be recalled that the presence of North Africans in Spain has deeper roots than the Latin American migration, which has only become stronger in this century.

Thus the higher the deficit of men is, the more endogamic men are than women. This is especially the case of the Colombians, but also of most of the Latin American groups, since when women are in excess they cannot all marry into their own group. This also explains why Brazilians are currently the group most chosen by Spaniards and vice versa. On the contrary, in groups with the most males, such as the Algerians and some Europeans, such as Italians or British, the proportion of endogamy in women is higher than in men, since men are in excess.

In other words, the composition of mixed marriages in Spain is explained in large part by the size and imbalance of the numbers of men and/or women, where endogamy increases in the sex with fewer numbers.

Age is also more disparate in mixed couples. In over 50% of marriages between Spanish men and foreign women, the man is at least three years older than the woman (Cortina et al. 2009). The main reasons behind this change have to do with the new position of the woman in the couple and in the marriage. This implies a change in selection criteria. The increase in homogamy by age is one of the results of the change in position and in choices of women and is associated with a growing equality of gender in the couple

Theoretical marriage models have in turn explained the fall in the number of marriages and the delay, attributing them to changes in the position of women and their independence in society and in the labor market, which leads to reconsideration of the possibility of entering into a relationship (Oppenheimer 1988). This change of attitude not only reduces the possibilities of forming complementary couples, it can also change the nature of relationships already established. In this particular context, the model of the complementary partner has been replaced by a double income model, in which the distribution between the spouses is more equalitarian. As Oppenheimer (1997) states, this skill

appears as the first choice in a labor market in which stability is limited. In Spain, most foreign women migrated for economic reasons, regardless of whether they came through family unification or as the migratory bridgehead. In other words, the economic responsibility does not fall exclusively on the male, which favors her economic and affective independence.

This tactic also helps explain why Spanish men choose mainly Latin Americans, since they are employed mostly in proximity services, domestic service or caring for the elderly or children, where direct daily contact is more frequent than with groups integrated in other labor niches. Therefore, as Blossfeld and Timm argue (2003) in their proposal of limited rationality, there is more time for choosing and the information acquired is greater with Latin women.

Two more elements which are valid for both men and women would have to be added to the above: Cultural proximity and residential segregation. Mastery of the language of the destination is a huge facilitator for contact, which is absolutely the case of the Latin Americans and very nearly so for other countries with common linguistic roots: Romanian, Italian and French, among others. On the other hand, as shown in the specialized literature, the severest residential segregation is undergone by Africans and to a lesser extent by Eastern Europeans and Latin Americans (Checa 2007; Echazarra 2010; Musterd – Fullaondo 2008), a situation which reduces the probability of establishing lasting relationships. Although it is true that for these last factors there is one exception in marriages between Spanish women and Moroccans, which in addition to being the largest group and the one which has resided in Spain the longest, is less segregated than the rest of the Africans, and in their destination their cultural patterns, essentially religious, are much more relaxed, and the extent of conversion to Islam among women (Bramon 2009) facilitates interaction enormously.

Also, as shown in a study of the conditions for homogamy in Spain by Cortina et al (2009), there is a trend toward lowering the differences in age and education between spouses, illustrating the loss of importance of the classic patterns in marriage. Couples in which the woman has a lower education than the man are now less frequent than 20 years ago. Moreover, the classic marriage between a woman with a low education and a man with a good economic position is no longer the predominant model. On the contrary, the behavior of data on younger women and higher education shows a change toward establishing more equalitarian couples.

Finally, the family has a insignificant role in mixed marriages. As shown by the IPMX, a downward trend has not varied very much over the years. In fact, there is a negative correlation between Spaniards who think immigrants influence delinquency, unemployment or loss of identity, and predisposition to

a mixed marriage for their children. That is also why there is a negative correlation with unemployment, since they do not see any opportunity in such a marriage, and also with conservative Spaniards who are preferentially endogamic.

However, according to the results, even though the index has a downward trend, mixed marriages are increasing, which shows that the role of the family in the choice of spouse has a limited weight in Spain. Nevertheless, this does not imply a hypothesis, that this type of marriage could increase if the levels of acceptance of mixed marriages by the Spanish family increased.

In conclusion, although marital behavior patterns common to foreigners and between Spaniards and foreigners are appearing, there is no real assimilation, but rather, segmented assimilation, which as a hypothesis for future work, would become more patent with passing generations (Sassler 2005), especially when the migratory phenomenon and mixed marriages have become more consolidated in Spain and the role of certain demographic variables in establishing preferences for certain groups is completed with the role of the family in particular and the society in general.

Ángeles Arjona Garrido is a professor in Social Anthropology, Geografía, Historia y Humanidades Department, Almería University (Spain). Doctor by Almería University (2004). She is the author of the books Los colores del escaparate (2006), Jóvenes inmigrados y educación en España (2008). She is the author of various articles in the following reviews: Sociología, Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Sociología del Trabajo, Migraciones Internacionales, Revista Internacional de Sociología, Convergencia, Polish Sociological Review, etc.

Juan Carlos Checa Olmos is a professor in Sociology, Geografía, Historia y Humanidades Department, Almería University (Spain). Doctor by Almería University (2004). He is author of the books Viviendo Juntos Aparte (2007), Sin trabajo y sin esparto (2007), co-editor of the books Convivencias entre culturas (2001), La integración social de los inmigrados: modelos y experiencias (2003) e Inmigración y derechos humanos (2004). He is the author of various articles in the following reviews: Sociología, Anthropologica, Revue Européenne Migrations Internationales, Papers, Ciudad y Territorio, Revista de Estudios Geográficos, Kinesiology, etc.

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