



Fertility in an urban context. A complex phenomenon

fertility of in-migrants from the South of Italy. On the other hand they emphasise the increasing importance of the groups of foreigners, which in the last decade seem to show a relatively high fertility (see Chapter 3).

Coming back to the main question, we notice that while for 1971 and 1981 there are no differences among women with a low educational level and other women, in 1991 women with a high educational level show a higher probability of progressing to second parity. Our data does not reveal if this is due to an income effect (they may have a higher wage), to a higher compatibility between two roles of mother and worker (we did not check the current working position), or if it is simply the indirect consequence of an analogous characteristic of the husband (the income effect would be male related). The latter hypothesis emphasises the importance of male characteristics, knowing that husband and wives often share the same education (in this respect, Del Boca, 1999a, found for the Italian context strong evidence of the so called *assortative mating*: husband and wives share the same characteristics in terms of educational attainment and employment status).

Moreover, again only for 1991, women who consider themselves as housewives at the time of the census (*i.e.* in some moment in time between marriage and the conception of the first child) show the lowest propensity in having the second child, while the highest is associated to employed women and students. This may be the result of the relatively negative attitude of housewives and unemployed women toward fertility, or to a relatively positive attitude of employed women and students. If we consider that over time the importance of having a double income and therefore of disposing of high economic resources to afford a new birth has strongly increased, we would explain the attitudes of housewives, unemployed and employed women. The positive attitudes of students toward fertility are somehow less clear, but we may consider that the information refers to a period between marriage and the first child, and that therefore women probably married while studying. In other words, these women broke the social norm requiring that the end of the study precedes entering an union (decision which even respects an economic reasoning), emphasising their positive attitude toward family formation or to the fact that a job for them is not necessary. Nevertheless, the proportion of women they represent is quite limited, reaching 10% in 1991.

What does it happen when we include information on the husband? In other words: has the new condition of women actually changed the link between fertility and socioeconomic characteristics or does this change reflect the effects of the husband's characteristics?

Table 11 shows the new estimates of the parameters associated to socioeconomic characteristics when we insert information on the educational level of the husband¹⁴, while in Table 12 we focus our attention on their social class (determined by combining various information and available only for 1981 and 1991 censuses).

14. When we also considered the employment status of the husband we had very wide confidence intervals, since almost everybody is working at the time of the census, and unemployed conditions may refer to a temporary situation soon modified.