

**Analysis of the inequalities at  
the beginning of the stable working life**

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The following paper extends the study of changes in time and inequalities by gender and socioeconomic status at the moment when three cohorts of Mexican men and women got their first stable job. A statistical analysis that allows specifying the relationship of these three axes: cohorts, gender and socioeconomically status with the transition to the first job had not been done until this paper. Moreover, this text analyses the socio demographic factors associated to this transition. The present research indicates that over the other axes, gender had a fundamental position in this transition.

**Theoretical orientation**

We approach the problem through the life course perspective using the concept of transitions. Transitions involve the occurrence of critical events in the live of people that are created and recognize by society. They often involve changes in status or identity, both personally and socially, and thus open up opportunities for behavioral change. Early transitions in life may also have lifelong implications for trajectories, by shaping later events, experiences and transitions (Elder, Kirkpatrick and Crosnoe, 2003).

In this research this transition was called as the first stable job because the survey that was used only quantified transitions that had lasted for at least one year. This was a limitation to measure those jobs with least lasting, for example, the temporary jobs.

## **Data**

The database used is the urban subsample of the Retrospective Demographic Survey (Eder) 1998, which collects information about person-years of the life histories of a representative sample for both sexes, three cohorts (1936-1938, 1951-1953 and 1966-1968) and two populations groups (one with less than 15,000 inhabitants and other with 15,000 and more) (Coubès, Zavala de Cosio and Zenteno, 2005).

## **Methods**

We done an analysis of the first job's calendar in women and men using life tables, after that, these calendars were contrasted in sexes, three cohorts and two socioeconomic levels. Then, two models of event history analysis are presented in order to establish how these three axes, with another factors and variables, were articulated at the beginning of the working life of these populations groups.

## **Results**

At the start of working life it can be appreciated a different calendar by gender, for women who made this transitions it was later than men, and it was earlier for the almost all men. While a significant percentage of women did not do extra domestic work during youth, they probably played traditional roles assigned to women, both in their roles as daughters, wives and mothers. These factors could have hindered this transition.

Also, there were gender differences in the economic activities in which both were involved for the first time. In women the most common activities were the domestic service and jobs as secretaries and trade. Meanwhile men were inserted in farming activities or worked in the machinery and metal manufacturing as helpers, also they worked as dispatchers, clerks or in cleaning services. In all cases, this population was involved in jobs that required almost none education or training. All these jobs are

underpaid and misrecognized by society from the point of view of economic and status; all this indicates an unsuccessful start in the job world.

The entrance to the working life was not affected by the socio economic level because men of both strata had similar risks at the time of getting their first job. This means men could not postpone their entrance to the labor market indefinitely.

For women the socioeconomic level and the cohort did not make any difference at the time of incorporation to the labor market. This means that beyond the social, economical and ideological changes occurred in the country, the gender norms continued ruling the forms and times in which each person and social group were able to access to adulthood. The male incorporation to the labor market was almost universal, meanwhile, in women this transition was not standardized as part of its first trajectory of life.

Although differences between men and women by socioeconomic level were not presented, this paper shows that gender inequalities conjugated with socioeconomic differences were disadvantages for certain groups. Throughout these three cohorts, women of the lowest status that entered in the labor market were the last ones incorporated to the labor life. While their male counterpart located in the same socioeconomic status, were the first ones in making this transition in terms of median ages. It might be because this population, apart from having few economic entrances, adjusted their life expectations to their own social class that is marked by a traditional division of labor.

In contrast, men of the middle strata of each cohort delayed their entrance to the labor life, possibly seeking a major educational level, because they were the ones who more retarded their exit of the educational system. Women of the middle strata

presented median ages of this transition closer to the median ages of men of the same socioeconomic levels.

## **References**

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