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*Early Parenthood and Inequalities in Family and Work Trajectories. Experiences of women and men in urban Mexico*

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## **Early Parenthood and Inequalities in Family and Work Trajectories.**

### **Experiences of women and men in urban Mexico**

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#### **Extended abstract**

During the second half of the twentieth century, the expansion of the educational system in Mexico has achieved an important goal: children and youth increasingly attend and remain in school. Gender inequalities in school attendance and attainment have disappeared but inequalities between socioeconomic sectors remain. Most students only attain low middle education and access to higher levels continues to be restricted to higher socioeconomic sectors.

Growing education levels and a rapid urbanization process are related to an important increase in female labor force participation. However, female participation remains relatively low and labor markets have been growingly unstable, precarious and segmented, and better job opportunities greatly differ by education levels.

At the same time, the fertility transition has taken place in Mexico. Family size has been notably reduced. In spite of this and other profound transformations related to family values, patterns during the first stages of family formation have shown only minor changes in the population as a whole. Most women enter a conjugal union and have the first child at relatively early ages. Only a minority of women delay their marriage and childbearing period. These different behaviors are strongly associated to education inequalities and unequal labor perspectives.

Early ages at birth of first child are associated to economic and social disadvantages. Maternity at early ages is related to low education and participation in

the labor market. When young mothers work, they have more precarious jobs and lower incomes than older mothers. Early timing of fertility can act as a trigger of accumulation of disadvantages in later stages of life. At the same time, having an early birth might be a consequence of poverty because of previous disadvantages young women face before becoming pregnant (Cavenaghy y Rodríguez, 2014). It has been pointed out that the opportunities of Mexican women who become pregnant as teenagers to receive education and progress toward rewarding and fulfilling jobs are limited, regardless of their fertility decisions.

However, most studies on teenage fertility that show the association with economic and social disadvantages are cross-sectional or follow ups for short periods of time. In Mexico, it is unknown if early mothers catch up later on in other spheres of their lives and end having similar life paths as those of women of the same social sector who started their childbearing period at latter ages.

Mexican males' reproductive patterns have been scarcely studied and early fatherhood has not been a matter of concern. However, given the male bread winner traditional role, adopting the responsibility of a child and a family at early ages might also affect their family and work life paths.

In this paper, our objective is to study family and work trajectories of individuals and determine if early transitions to parenthood are associated to adverse consequences in later stages of life, in the sense that previous socioeconomic inequalities would be exacerbated with an early parenthood, and early mothers and fathers would end up in less successful life paths. We study women's as well as men's life paths, given our interest in both experiences and in gender inequalities.

The main contributions of the paper are the use of a life course perspective to observe long term trends; the simultaneous analysis of the interwoven school, work, marital and reproductive trajectories during a period deep social transformations; the inclusion of men's as well as female's experiences.

### ***1.1 Methodology and data source***

A Multichannel Sequence Analysis (additive) is applied in order to simultaneously study the trajectories in the family and work domains. A distances matrix is calculated by applying optimal matching analysis with constant costs. In order to group

the life paths, an agglomerative hierarchical clustering of the distances matrix data is computed; the Average Silhouette Width is used to define the number of groups.

We analyze school, work, marital and reproductive dimensions. States are in school and out of school for the first dimension. Work states are at home, non-manual high qualification, non-manual low qualification, informal commerce, manual high qualification and manual low qualification. In the marriage dimension, states are previously married, single, in first, second and third or more marital union (marriage or cohabitation). In the reproductive dimension states are the number of children ever born that goes from zero to 5 or more.

To explore the social composition of the life paths groups defined by the cluster analysis, logistic regressions models are estimated. Cluster group is the dependent variable, and birth cohort, social strata and having had an early birth and their interactions are the explanatory variables.

The data source is the Retrospective Demographic Survey (Eder 2011), carried out in urban areas of Mexico. We use annual data on school, work, and family life histories from ages 12 to 41 of 888 women and 851 men of two birth cohorts born in 1951-1953 and 1966-1969.

An indicator of the social strata is created with data on education and economic features of parents of the interviewees at age 15. This variable is particularly relevant given the profound social inequalities that characterize de Mexican society; it reflects the parent's education and the economic conditions of the family household when the individual was about to start his family and work trajectories.

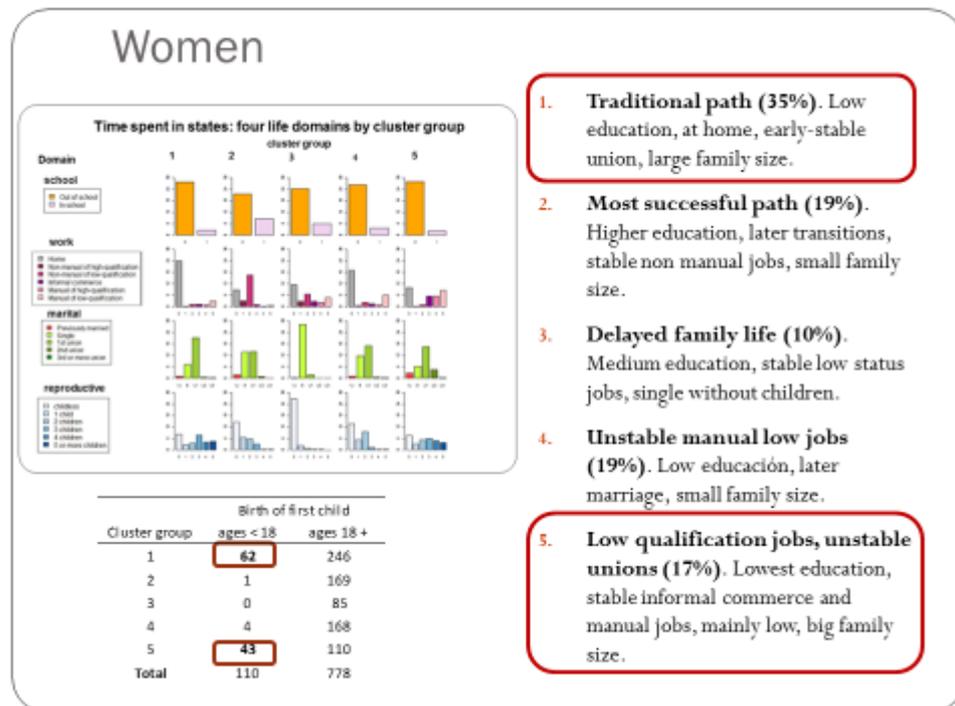
Because of the prevalence of the traditional gender roles, women and men's work and family experiences are analyzed separately. Besides, nuptiality and fertility timing among men take place at later ages than among women and we are especially interested in the effects of the social timing. We consider an early motherhood when occurred before age 18 and an early fatherhood when occurred before age 20. At age 18, young people attain the age of majority, are supposed to finish the upper secondary school which is compulsory, and are legally able to have full time jobs. As mean differences by sex in age at first marriage and first birth are around two years, we suppose that it is an early fatherhood when it occurs before age 20.

## MAIN RESULTS

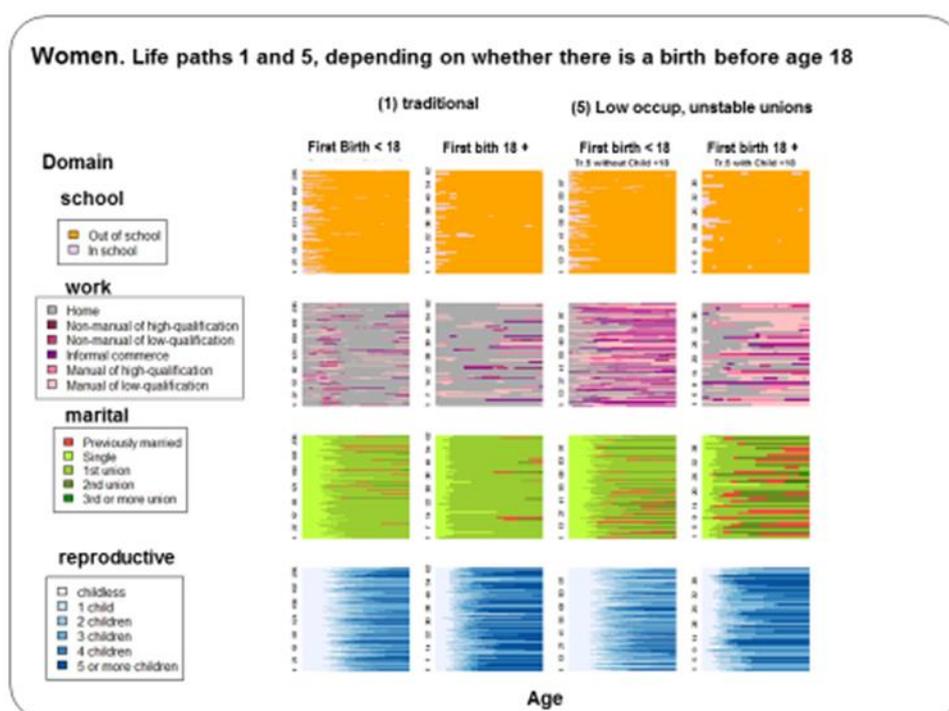
Women. For theoretical as well as for statistical reasons, we chose the five group cluster which suggests the existence of five well differentiated groups in the four simultaneously analyzed domains.

Regarding the four domains, we could say there are more and less successful life paths. Higher education, stable non manual work sequences, stable marriages and small family sizes would be perceived as the most successful in this period of social transformations related to increasing levels of education, growing female labor participation and fertility transition.

Almost all women who had an early birth are in life paths 1 and 5. They are both characterized by low education and big family size. The greatest differences between them is that in the first women remain at home and have stable marital life whereas in life path 5 women work in informal commerce or manual jobs, mainly low qualified, and have more unstable marital life. Life path 1 is the most common, one third of women are in this group.

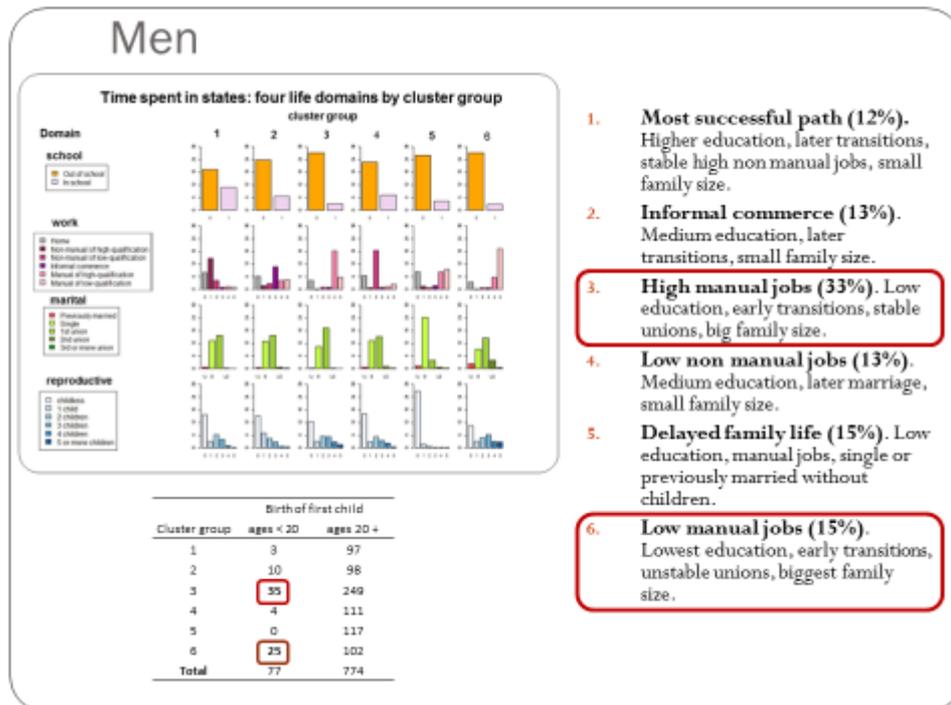


In order to investigate whether within the two cluster groups, early mothers' trajectories in the four domains were similar to those of other women who postpone their first birth, we graphed the trajectories making this distinction. We find that early mothers had in both cases bigger family sizes, and more unstable marital unions in life path 5.

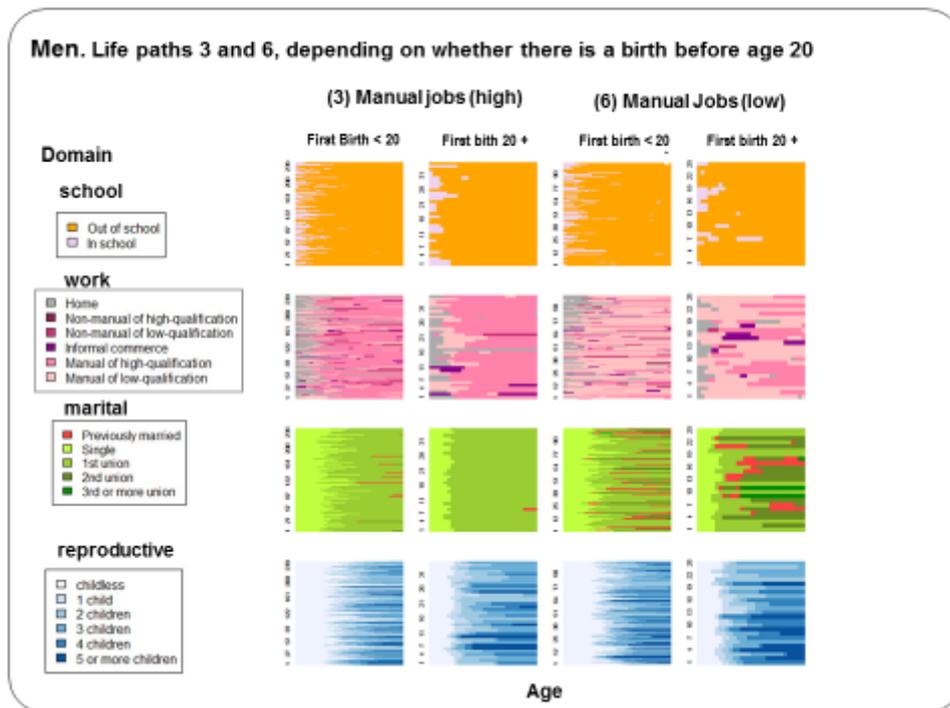


Men. We chose the six group cluster because of theoretical and statistical reasons. In the case of men, the life paths are more unevenly distributed in the groups than in the case of women.

Having an early birth is less common among men than among women. Early fathers are mainly in life paths 3 and 6, both characterized by very low education and manual jobs, and big family size. However, jobs are more precarious, marital life more unstable and family size bigger among the last one.



Within life paths 3 and 6, early fathers have higher family size, and more marital instability among the last life path.



### Composition of the cluster groups where early parenthood occurs.

### Results of logistic regression models

	Women		Men	
	1. Traditional path. Low education, at home, early-stable union, large family size.	5. Low qualification jobs, unstable unions, big family size.	3. Manual jobs (high). Low education, early transitions, stable unions, big family size.	6. Manual Jobs (low). Lowest education, early transitions, unstable unions, biggest family size.
Intercept		(-) ***	(-) **	(-) ***
Medium Social Strata (MedSS)			(-) *	(-) **
High Social Strata (HighSS)	(-) ***	(-) **	(-) ***	(-) ***
Youngest Birth Cohort (YBC)	(-) *			
Early birth of first child (EBFCh: women < 18; men < 20)	(+) **	(+) **		(+) **
<b>Significant interactions</b>				
MedSS * EBFCh			(+) &	
HighSS * EBFCh				(+) &
YBC * EBFCh		(+) **		

p value: \*\*\* < .001 \*\* < .05 \* < .1 & < .2

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