Labor trajectories and transition to adulthood in Latin America: the risk of being young and a newcomer in the labor market.

Key words:
Job insecurity, workers trajectories, transition to adulthood, individualization process.

Abstract
Many youth in Latin America lack clear occupational opportunities. This uncertainty in achievement a regular job may affect transitions to adulthood in terms of social roles related with age and stage of life course (involving prolonged education, frequent job changes, postponement of events, family dependence, etc.). The purpose of this paper is to ask weather increasing labor insecurity in local labor markets of Latin America have produced a fundamental shift in transitions to adulthood. The aim is to examine the relationship between job insecurity and transition to adulthood in Mexican women. We use data from a longitudinal study to examine how uncertainty in labor trajectories of young workers affects transitions of the life course. The applied method is Kaplan-Meier survival analysis for four events: First job (1), first protected job (2), first perceptions of insecurity (3) and transition to second job (4). Results suggest that youth with precarious labor trajectories handles a great heterogeneity of transitions to adulthood, supporting the view that labor insecurity heightens the individualization of life course.

Introduction:
During recent decades, global labor markets have undergone profound transformations in their composition and dynamics. The internationalization of economies has changed not only the kind but also the nature of labor trajectories and transitions to adulthood.

Contemporary social debate is trying to reframe the process of transition to adulthood. By taking critical distance from the studies on normative life course, these new glances point out general explanations about the complexity and heterogeneity of social roles, status and, in general, a diversification and individualization of youth trajectories and transitions to adulthood. Of the main exponents of these new perspectives, some defend the predominance of historical inequalities in life course while others favor the emergence of a new kind of social differentiations. The recognition of the complex and multidimensional character of transition to adulthood is an important stating point to understand the structural heterogeneity of Latin America youth situations where educative credentials are not enough to explain social inequalities.

In this framework, the paper is part of a greater research about cumulative risks over the life course in Latin America. This greater research addresses the question of how institutional arrangements, the heterogeneity of occupational careers and individual conditions, shape the experience of job insecurities as well as the impact of social uncertainty on the life course. In order to answer those questions, we analysed the links between conditions and perceptions of job insecurity during labour trajectories. In this paper, in particular, we focused on Mexican women from three cohorts of analysis.

Under this premise, the main objective of the paper is to analyze the bonds between job insecurity and transition to adulthood in the specific field of Latin America labor markets. From the assumption that risk is the great characteristic of modern societies, the central question to ask is if the generalized and extended increase of labor insecurity is changing normative patterns of transition to adulthood in the life course. We want to know if we are been witnesses of new kinds of transitions or if, actually, changes represent a simple update of historical patterns of life course models in Latin America.

1. Methods and data.
To get this objective, we focused on three methodological axes: life course perspective, trajectories analysis and cohort analysis. From the perspective of the life course, how people think and live the social world around them may depend on what was
happening in the world at the time they were growing up. There is always a shared
cultural identity that sets them apart from other generations. In this sense, cohort
consists of a specific age group of people who have shared a common historical
experience during the same interval of time. Cohorts, in effect, link age and historical
time.

Trajectories are socially available ways of being, or, in another words, they are
sequences of roles and experiences. They have a historical-temporal component but
also a methodological component. As such, it is a tool that supports the representation
of meanings (methodological component) located in one's own biography (historical-
temporal component). The reconstruction of trajectories allows us to connect
representations of life (narratives, biographical forms) with social reality (actions,
practices), both anchored in structural situations.

To do this, the main components of this reconstruction are the transitions in the
life course as moments of biographical changes. In general, transitions often involve
changes in status or identity, and thus open up opportunities for behavioural and social
change. At the same time, these changes are considered from the bifurcation of
individual, social and historical temporalities. The complex interplay of time, historical
and situational context, and individual agency is the concern of trajectories analysis. All
these concepts (trajectories, transitions, events, timing) reflect the temporal nature of
lives, where time operates at both a socio-historical and personal level.

The methodology is based on statistical analysis of event history data from a
probabilistic longitudinal survey (Retrospective Survey of Labor Insecurity). In this
study, the method of analysis is Kaplan-Meier survival analysis. The Kaplan-Meier
method is used to describe labor events, such as transition to first job, transition to first
protected job, and transition to the second job according to cohorts and sex status (in
this case we only present results for adult women).

Kaplan-Meier technique is a useful tool to analyze the time it takes for the
transition to the first events related with social risks. In addition, these techniques can
produce correct estimates of the proportion of workers who have different events of
insecurity at a successive duration of exposure. Thus, this technique is more sensitive
to measure changes in labor market compared with conventional transversal
measures. This technique may provide more detailed information about the cause of
social change in labor markets. In sum, this analysis of longitudinal job insecurity may
provide information both on quantum and tempo of social and labor changes.

In the Kaplan-Meier approach, it is not necessary to group episode durations
according to arbitrarily defined time intervals. Instead, the Kaplan-Meier method is based on the calculation of a risk set at every point in time where at least one event occurred. In this way, the information contained in a set of episodes is optimally used, considering the number of individuals at risk at certain time as well as the number of events at the same time (Mehmet and Koc, 2012).

For an understanding of historical differences within Mexican society we compare three cohorts internally. One hypothesis of research indicates that the experiences of job insecurity have changed in the last decades from structural changes in the labour market. To observe these changes, the main criterion of analysis has been the identification of cohorts to distinguish three key moments in the history of social and economic transformations of Latin America:

1. A first cohort of workers who was born in the classical period of import substitution in LA (from the fifties to the seventies). These workers consolidated their labour trajectories in a moment of great economic expansions and finished their occupational trajectories in a period of economic crisis and important changes in the pattern of accumulation.
2. A second cohort of workers who was born during the eighties’ crisis and which the consolidation of their occupational careers occurred in the new model of accumulation.
3. And a third cohort of workers who “consolidated” their occupational careers in the “crisis” of this new model of accumulation.

2. Findings
In this section, Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of different transitions and events in labor trajectories will be presented. The equality of survivor functions within each covariate will be tested using the logrank test. The logrank test is a hypothesis test to compare survival distributions of the two samples. It is a nonparametric test and appropriate to use when the data are right censored. The logrank test compares estimates of the hazard functions of the two groups at each observed event time. It is constructed by computing the observed and expected number of events in one of the groups at each observed event time and then adding these to obtain an overall summary across all time points where there is an event.

2.1 The transition to the first job.
The onset of labor trajectory has important impact on subsequent job (in)security and
cumulative social risks both at the individual and the societal level. The timing of first job determines the timing of subsequent jobs; the transitions to more (in) secure jobs, and has also strong impact on overall labor trajectory. As labor trajectory joint with schooling are difficult in Latin America, there is a strong association between age at the end of school and age at first work. The postponement of first jobs reflects a rise in age at finishing school and contributes largely to the emergence of the current overall occupation level. The first job marks a worker’s transition into the labor market and has important implications for the status of individuals both at familial and societal level.

Figure 1. Kaplan-Meier survival estimate of the proportion of having first job. Women. Mexico and Argentina. 2011.

First it is useful to look at the picture at the cohort level. Figure one confirms the fact that first job for women was far from being a universal event in Latin America just some years ago. The majority of women of the third cohort (almost 90 percent) have their first jobs before 30 years old. Almost 9 women out of 10 become workers within 25 years old. This data mark a great difference with the first and the second cohorts. In the case of the oldest cohort, only half of the cohort has their first job before the thirties. This difference expresses the increase in the intensity of woman participation in the labor force among the younger cohorts during last years.

The percentage of women who have never worked before fifteen increases in the younger cohorts, probably due to the massive increase in education in recent years. These women enter later than the first cohorts in the labor market and they do so in a more extended and intensive way.

These are the two major trends of social change for women in these cohorts of
analysis: the increase in the intensity of female labor force participation and the long delay in the timing of entry into the first job because of general increasing schooling.

Regarding the pattern of the survival curves, it can be said that the timing of first jobs differentiate according to women’s cohort status. The result of logrank test also shows that survival curves by cohort status are different.

Unstable conditions at the early stage of labor trajectories may be another reason to postpone the entry into the labor market among women of the third cohort. Therefore, we may argue that older women faced to job insecurity earlier than the others cohorts of analysis.

2.2 The transition to the first protected job.
Institutions facilitate and restrict social behaviors, habits, and practices; they make routines orderly and, therefore, reduce uncertainty. The institutional weakness of a State is important not only because it has an effect on working conditions, but also because the State is unable to allow workers to organize their lives due to the instability to which they are subject. The institutional arrangements of a society determine the system for managing and distributing labor risks, which serves as a bridge between the discontinuities that may arise at any time in workers’ life courses. This system lends continuity to employment trajectories, avoids breaks, and allows for mediation between family and work during workers’ life courses. Institutions afford continuity and coherence to work biographies.

Figure 2 provides evidence for differential social protection behavior by cohort of analysis. Nevertheless, the great majority of women of the three cohorts did not have social protection at their first job before 30 years old. Only few women did have a protected position in their first jobs in Latin America. At their first jobs, less than half of women started to have social protection.

The percent of women having a first protected job increases to 40 percent for the younger cohort compared with only 10 percent of the first cohort. On average, in the three cohorts sixty percent of women do not have social protection during their first job. That is to say, more than half of the women workers in Latin America had not a protected job in their first transitions of their labor trajectories.
While the curve of the second cohort is more similar to the pattern of the youngest cohort, the oldest cohort reflects the pattern of the greatest labor insecurity apportioning the graph. In the youngest cohort social protection is more frequent than in the other cohorts of analysis. These results suggest three general hypotheses. First, there is a general trend towards the formalization of women's work. Contrary to the claims of job insecurity among the youth, in the case of women, this trend is more difficult to observe. Two related processes of social change in Latina America, in turn, could explain this. The rising labor force in Latin America has the advantage of being bettered educated, on the whole, than previous generations. So, a later entry into the labor market and a more educated entry to the labor market may reduce the likelihood of job insecurity. Second, differences between cohorts are so small because, in reality, in Latin America, the welfare state has never acted as a true support of job insecurity, as such it is not true that "before we were better than now." This explanation derives, directly, in the third hypothesis, which is the structural condition of job insecurity in Latin America where then and now, the chances of a first protected employment are scarce for the vast majority of the working population. This would mean, in turn, a certain indeterminacy or independence (in the case of Latin America) between the change in the pattern of accumulation and new social risks in the world of work. In certain regions, social risks are structural, systemic; more related with cultural characteristics and path dependence factors than with new economic transformations.

2.3 The perceptions of insecurity at the first job.
How secure or insecure did you feel in your first job? A subjective indicator of job insecurity among workers in Latin America is the desire to get a better job and the perception about insecurity during the first job. Kaplan-Meier survival estimates show that the great majority of women felt very insecure at their first job (Figure 3).

![Kaplan-Meier survival estimate of the proportion of perceiving job insecurity at first job. Women. Mexico and Argentina. 2011.](image)

The percentage of women perceiving job insecurity increases to almost 80 percent for the youngest cohort compared with 60 percent for the second cohort. By the thirty years old, only few women do not feel insecure at their first job.

Unlike previous patterns, in this indicator we find that younger cohorts of women felt more insecure in their first job than the other cohorts. There is a significant similarity between the survival curves of the three cohorts. No significant differences between them coupled with high rates of subjective insecurity indicate two fundamental processes: the homogeneity of social change and widespread uncertainty in the world of work. As we have seen before, there are important differences between cohorts in the level and degrees of social protection. Nevertheless, these differences do not translate into differences in the subjective dimension of biographical risk. This process would be directly related to the so-called homogeneity of the social change that indicates that, despite the differences in the objective conditions of life, there is a widespread and pervasive perception of uncertainty and social risk.

2.4 The transition to the second job.
Labor insecurity is not only related to features of employment and the labor market, but also to the possibilities for turnovers between one job and the next, including perpetual transitions between formality and informality. A basic feature of security is work
stability, not only because of the socio-economic security it implies, but also because it constitutes an important indicator of the quality of work, as well as the levels of satisfaction with one's job (Berg, Ernst, and Auer 2006).

Kaplan-Meier survival estimates reveal that 45 percent of younger women have their second job before 30 years old following their first job compared with only 20 percent of the oldest cohort (Figure 4). The survival curves of second jobs by cohort indicate that younger women got more and earlier transitions in their labor trajectories than older workers. We could observe, so, two related processes: among the younger cohorts, the transition to the second job is much earlier and, in addition, these women perform a greater number of transitions before age 30 than women in the other cohorts.

Figure 4. Kaplan-Meier survival estimate of the proportion of having second job. Women. Mexico and Argentina. 2011.

To end with, 75 percent of the first cohort in Latin America has their second jobs at 25 years old. This value decreases to 19 years old in the younger cohort (table 1). At the same time, the number of labor transitions during trajectories before the thirties are higher between younger women (Figure 5).

Table 1. Age at second job. Women. Mexico and Argentina. 2011.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohorts</th>
<th>75%</th>
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<td>1961 or before</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962-1981</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982-1993</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>21</td>
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These data suggest that in Latin American societies there is a tendency towards the individualization of job insecurity. Particularly among younger women, job insecurity is experienced in a personalized manner, with a great heterogeneity of transitions and de-standardized labour trajectories.

3. Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, the relationship between job insecurity and transition to adulthood was analyzed at different levels. First, the relationship was analyzed through changes at the age of the first job. Second, the bond was measured through changes at the age and intensity of the first protected job. Then, the analysis was centered into changes in the meaning of job insecurity for women from the different cohorts. Lastly, we focused on changes in transitions to second job in labor trajectories. Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of the transition to first job, and subsequently to the second, as well as transitions to the first protected job and perceptions of insecurity were presented according to the cohort status.

The Kaplan-Meier survival curve estimates revealed that the timing of first job differ highly by women’s cohort status. The shortest age at first job is observed among the oldest women. Older women were less educated and attended less time to school, so, the entry into the labor force is earlier than in the younger cohorts. At the same time, we could observe a great increase in the intensity of women participation between younger cohorts. This is related with social changes associated with family patterns, women conditions and, also, labor markets patterns. New dominant values and new social norms of social change, shape women’s social, family and labor behaviors.

In the case of protected jobs, the Kaplan-Meier survival curve estimates
revealed that the timing of first protected job does not differ highly by women’s cohort status but the shortest age at protected job is observed among the youngest women. This interesting finding was explained with the “compensation effect.” As younger women enter later into the labor market than their counterparts, they might tend to compensate the time “wasted” by having social protection earlier. This process is related with the formalization of work between women in the last years and, at the same time, with the structural weakness of welfare states in Latin America to protect employment.

Analyzing the subjective dimension of job insecurity, we realized that perceptions of insecurity at the first job are relatively homogeneous between the different cohorts, contributing to the explanation of the homogeneity of social change and widespread uncertainty in the world of work. Therefore, younger women’ labor trajectories converge with that of older cohorts in this new environment of generalized uncertainty. The results suggest that the homogeneity of social change hypothesis in Latin America is more explanatory for subjective dimension of job insecurity than for the objective dimension of biographical risks.

Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of second job provided evidence for differential labor trajectories by cohort. Considering survival curves of second jobs, we observed that survival curves of younger women are not similar to the other cohorts. The third cohort tends to have higher transitions before than second and first cohorts. This situation may be related with the current impossibility of keeping the same job for a long time. However, it can also be related to the greater selective ability of young women to quit jobs they do not prefer or find better jobs. This situation reminds us the reflexive hypotheses, which underlines the importance of new environment for open options and decisions related with social change.

Certainly, trends toward the individualization of the life course clearly bring new freedoms but they also, especially in Latin America, bring new responsibilities and insecurities. In this scenario, personal failures, in particular, become no one’s fault but one’s own.

Kaplan-Meier survival estimates revealed that, on average, a woman in Latin America today has a second job at age 19, while twenty or thirty years ago, they did it at age 25. The results showed that women experience all these events related with job insecurity earlier in their life course. All these reflect a long-term historical process leading to the individualization of the life course. That means that the experience of time at work is more contingent and less predictable than in other spheres and periods.
Nowadays, the common feature of women work careers of Latin America would seem to be individuals’ experiences involving discontinuities, as well as an increase and repetition of their transitions in the labor market. While they are institutionally regulated and managed, these transitions are also negotiated on an individual level and mediated by social networks. Individual work transitions are diverse, variable, discontinuous, and disconnected; with many more breaks in the work career. In a context of deregulation, the link between individuals and work is mediated by informal mechanisms whereby the ability to “mold” transitions presupposes a certain degree of horizontal socialization that makes it possible to plan and negotiate them, where individual traits become paramount.

These transformations are expressed in a fundamental modification of the social inclusion process and new kinds of social inequalities, by means of widespread labor uncertainty and individualization of work that implies new perspectives and challenges for how we theorize and do research in the fields of early work experience and the future of youth in developing countries.

**Bibliography**


