

Changes in the division of the family work in Mexico

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Resumen

En este documento se revisan los estudios elaborados durante la década de 1990 sobre las principales transformaciones ocurridas en la división del trabajo, tanto extradoméstico como doméstico, al interior de las familias mexicanas. Se observan las transformaciones en los roles laborales de las esposas o cónyuges, los hombres adultos, y los adolescentes y jóvenes. Finalmente, se evalúa el momento en que se encuentra la investigación sobre la división del trabajo en las familias mexicanas y se discuten algunas pautas para la investigación futura. Por ejemplo, el estudio de las actividades domésticas y extradomésticas de algunos integrantes de los hogares que no han recibido hasta ahora la atención que merecerían, como los adultos mayores y las jefas de hogar, al igual que algunas consideraciones de orden metodológico-técnico sobre la investigación de la división del trabajo familiar.

Palabras clave: adolescentes, cónyuges, división del trabajo familiar, familias mexicanas, hombres adultos, jóvenes, trabajo doméstico, trabajo extradoméstico.

Abstract

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In this paper the studies elaborated during the 1990's decade on the main transformations occurred in labor division, both at home and outside it, in the Mexican families are presented. Transformations in the laboring roles of the spouses, adolescents and young adults are observed. Finally, it is evaluated the moment which the research on labor division in Mexican families is at, and some guides for future research are discussed. For instance, the study of the home and external activities of some members of the family who, thus far, have not received the attention deserved, such as the elderly and women family heads, similarly to some considerations of methodological-technical order on the research of family labor division.

Key words: adolescents, elderly people, family labor division, house work, Mexican families, out-of-the-house work, spouses, young adults.

Introduction

In the first decade of the XXI century almost half of the Mexican families still have the same deficit conditions of life, according to official estimations.¹ Likewise, a relevant result from the studies on poverty and income distribution in the country is that the number of preceptors by family has systematically increased ever since we have that statistical register. In 2002, on average two people per household received some income, in comparison to 1.5

¹ 47 percent of the households has been located on patrimonial poverty in 21004 and 2005. This is

people in 1977 (Cortés, 2006). It is known then, that before economic limitations normally faced, in Mexican households or families have increased the number of people who have a job properly established, they develop any sort of occupation or receive an income from other sources, such as governmental transferences, remittances or revenues from properties (these are the scarcest); one must add that achieving quotidian support, as precarious as it is, also lies upon in long hours of domestic work, which could have been modified without us being aware of it along recent years.

In this document, our attention is paid to some of the main transformations in labor division, both outside the household and inside it, as well as in the Mexican families. We try to delimitate the most recent and most significant in the knowledge accumulated throughout the years 1990 to 2000, and discuss its reach and outline some directions for future research. We are aware that there are some other dimensions, besides labor, which allow defining familial welfare (other surces of income, access to services of governmental goods, properties, leisure time, indebtedness capacity, and others, see Damián and Boltvinik, 2003). Nevertheless, we consider that different types of jobs are central axes of reproduction, and they constitute defining features of the capitalist society we live in. Likewise, men's performance of extra-domestic labor, and domestic activities by women are an inseparable part of the identity traditionally constructed of both genders, which is subject to redefinition. This last perspective is also of our concern in a special manner, both concerning adults and youths in and outside the household.²

In this document's central body we analyze the transformations which involve three groups of integrants, of the domestic units, studied in an important number of researches: wives, adult men and in the third place adolescents and youths.³ We start with the changes and permanence in wives' activities. We

the third poverty line currently existing in the official measurement of the phenomenon in Mexico (the other are capacity poverty and alimentary poverty). Alimentary poor are those people whose income is so meager that it is not enough to cover their nutritional requirements; capacity poor include the alimentary plus those who can not afford education and health expenses; patrimony poor groups all of the above plus those who can not afford housing, clothing and public transport necessities. In the three situations this occurs supposing that all the income would be spent on these entries only (Inmujeres, 2005; Coneval, 2007; Cortés, 2006).

² In the text we indifferently use the terms family, household, or domestic unit to refer to the residential group, kindred or not, who share a common budget.

³ In the case of the female spouses and aged people, we refer to the changes that have taken place in the households with male heads of family; either nuclear, extended or composed. However in adolescents and youths' case, the options are wider, for a series of studies have also been devoted to the analysis of their activities in woman-headed families.

know about the increment observed in their labor participation, however, we are interested in highlighting what we have learnt on the sort and duration of the economic activities they carry out, the contribution they do to households' income, as well as the combination of the different tasks and the influence of the transformations in the feminine economic role on other dimensions of family life. Later, we pay attention to adult masculine labor, always searching to specify those places where phenomena that have some repercussion in family work division have been experienced (or where they have been visible). Men are still the main economic suppliers of Mexican households, even though they do it less frequently in an exclusive manner. In their case, apart from the vicissitudes they face in labor market, their domestic participation has been explored in a more detailed fashion, and mainly their involvement in childcare. It is still a phenomenon of short reach in quantitative terms, yet for this work's ends it is important to clearly state what is known on a possible transformation in this sense, as well as the nature of the factors which condition men's participation in childcare.

In a third section, we examine the activities developed by Mexican adolescents and youths. It is known that Mexican young population contributes to the economy and the search of familial welfare in diverse ways, but now the way they combine (an the hours they use) to their activities such as domestic and extra-domestic work and school tasks has been put under scrutiny. The performance of an important series of studies in this sense allows us to deepen into these aspects and learn the manner in which the socio-economic and familial demographic context influences the juvenile tasks. Also, researches on transition toward adult life have enriched the individual perspective on these phenomena, generally seen through a familial lens.

In the last part of the text, our intention is to evaluate the moment we currently are on the analyzed knowledge and discuss some patterns for future research; it is here where we introduce preoccupations of different nature. The first thing we distinguish is that domestic and extra-domestic activities of some integrants have not received the attention deserved (for instance, aged people, either they live on their own or accompanied, an also up to a certain point the women heads of family). It is necessary to precisely follow what occurs to them, given the socioeconomic transformations and continuous difficulties of methodological-technical order on the research of family work, now that we have in Mexico series of data on extra-domestic and domestic work for the recent quinquenniums (representative at national, state or local levels). Locating the individuals in their domestic context or intertwine the individual and familial trajectories is still a

methodological disjunctive with faces and solutions aplenty, which are important to ponder so as to benefit future studies on these subjects.

Impact of wives' activities in family life

Out of the changes observed in the last decades in family work division the phenomenon that has received the most attention, both in Mexico and in Latin America, is the labor participation of wives. Nonetheless, at first we must clarify that up to 2002 our country was the most delayed among those studied in the region in respect to these transformations: still today 44 percent of the bi-parental households with children did not have wives who took part in labor market (Ariza and Oliveira, 2007). It has been documented as from 1980's decade that wives have been gradually leaving their fulltime housewives' role, and that in economic scarcity even young children have stopped constructing a barrier to perform different extra-domestic jobs. These changes have been attributed to long and medium term phenomena, such as the increment of feminine education, fertility's descent, the growing importance of economic option in services and in assembly industry which offer spaces for women, as well as the successive economic crises that have lead to increase the participation of the family members in the search for a minimal welfare (García and Oliveira, 1994; Arriagada and Aranda, 2004).

The fact that an important part of the extra-domestic labor performed by wives is precarious or unremunerated, or not fulltime carried out is known; what is more, sometimes domestic responsibilities prevent these women from fully committing with their performance in labor market, unless they do not have someone to support them in the family space (mainly daughters, other relative or remunerated maids). The aforementioned causes the contributions of the feminine spouses to family income to be in moderate to low levels still, especially in Mexico. Existing estimations for the case of Mexico in the 1990's decade indicate that wives' participation in family income was 28 percent (in countries such as Argentina the comparable figure in that moment was 38 percent, Arriagada, 1997). Likewise, for Mexican urban areas we have that even if the number of economically active women sharply increased, there were no observable changes in their monetary contributions between 1987 and 1997: in both years their incomes constituted less that a half of those corresponding to their husbands in approximately 71 percent of the couples (Cerruti and Zenteno,

2000).⁴ Well now, it is also true that without women's income poor households would increase in the country and in the Latin American region, as it has been stated in a series of studies. For instance, based on the information for 16 Latin American countries (including Mexico), ECLAC reaches the conclusion that the magnitude of poverty in bi-parental households with economic contribution from female spouses is lower than in bi-parental households where said contribution is inexistent (data from 2002, ECLAC, 2003, see also Arrigada, 1997).

If only previous figures were taken into account, we would have a very partial idea of what has taken place with the sexual division of family work in the last quinquenniums. One of the most significant contributions to the accumulated knowledge is to consider the modifications in extra-domestic labor of both genders. The information gathered in Mexico in this respect was quite rich in the 1990's decade, both in employment surveys and other socio-demographic ones, especially in those of time use in 1996 and 2002.

From the first estimations in Mexico of men and women's total load of extra-domestic and domestic labor, it was proved that labor participation resulted in an overload for the latter. This result is known for some countries, for the most frequent is that women modify their involvement in the public sphere with no such thing occurring in men's domestic contribution. In our case, as for active women of 12 years of age and more at the beginning of the 1990's decade it was specified that their working week surpassed on average 9.3 hours that of men, when both sorts of activities were taken into account (Oliveira, Ariza and Eternod, 1996, data from the National Survey on Employment (*Encuesta Nacional de Empleo*)).

At the beginning of the new century, this result has been reaffirmed in general terms, and even some more elevated estimations of the feminine workload for some sub-populations have been presented. Silvia Luna, in a work carried out for the National Institute of Women (*Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres*) based on the National Survey on Time Use in 2002 (Inmujeres, 2005) presents the following amounts: for the total of men and women of 12 years of age and older, the average load of feminine labor (domestic and extra-domestic) per week is superior to that of men in slightly more than nine hours. Here the difference, as it could be expected, is mainly defined by housework performance, since women devote an average of 34 hours a week in urban areas (and 43 in rural ones), in comparison with men's 7.5 and 10 hours on average, respectively. If only men

⁴ For the national total in 1996, husband's income was higher than wife's in 74 percent of the households where both spouses received an income (Rendón, 2003).

and women who take part in labor market are considered, the overload estimated for women is greater, as it could be supposed.⁵ It is especially worth noticing that this can represent an average of 16 additional hours for urban economically active women from 20 to 34 years of age —compared to men of the same ages and residence— when it is considered as a whole domestic and extra-domestic labor. A large part of Mexican women at these ages are already spouses and have small children, so these figures allow us to state that the combination of maternity and labor participation in Mexico represents considerable overloads for the women involved.

Are the impacts of the examined phenomena upon other ambits of family life known? Studies of qualitative nature have suggested that transformations on family work division do influence so as to broaden the action sphere where women act in the domestic and personal spaces, even though these studies anticipate that it is not possible to expect fundamental changes, given the heavily asymmetric nature of the gender relationships in the society we live in.⁶

In recent years in quantitative studies, the challenge of exploring the influence of extra-domestic labor of wives on several aspects which could be considered as indicators of the gender relationships at the households have been retaken (husband's participation in domestic work and childcare, the presence of women in important decisions, their freedom of movement and the presence or absence of domestic violence) (Casique, 2001; García and Oliveira, 2006). Both at national level as well as in some metropolitan areas, it has been proved by means of statistical tools applied to probabilistic samples that feminine spouses' participation positively influences on achieving greater autonomy or freedom of movement, independently from these women's socio-demographic characteristics. Likewise, in the case of Mexico City and Monterrey, it has been corroborated the importance of taking into account diverse aspects of feminine labor participation (laboring experience, sort of occupation, familial income contributions, meaning of extra-domestic labor) as characteristics which can influence on different dimensions of the gender relations, once the role of demographic factors is incorporated, and the current and origin families as intervening features. Female spouses' laboring experience from the metropolitan areas of the country was the aspect which presented a positive relation with a greater

⁵ Besides, it has also been considered that domestic working hours of men who have economically active spouses are not always longer than those with fulltime housewives.

⁶ For a bibliographic revision on this subject, see García and Oliveira, 2006; Garay Villegas, 2007, also performs a similar task for the case of the rural areas of the country.

number of dimensions of gender relationships; this finding indicates us that it is necessary to explicitly introduce the effect of time in the associations of our interest and modify the information gathering which almost always refers to a specific moment.

Participation of male adults in childcare

Even if this sort of inquiry is still raising certain skepticism, one of the aspects of the intra-familiar division of work that has motivated reflection during the last decade is the type of participation men have in domestic activities and childcare. We have seen that gathered data in the national surveys on time use carried out in 1996 and 2002 clearly state the global overload women have when domestic and extra-domestic activities are accounted for; nevertheless, they also allow indicating that masculine contribution to domestic chores is perceptible in certain activities (care and repairs of the household and car, if it is the case, water and firewood supply in rural areas, household support services and childcare). It is especially noteworthy what occurs in childcare.

We have already stated that in 2002, Mexican urban men of 12 years of age and older dedicated on average 7.5 hours a week to general domestic activities and women 34; in comparison, there was a smaller difference between genders in the average hours devoted to help other people, including childcare (2.8 hour men and 7.8 hours women)⁷ (Inmujeres, 2005, and Rendón, 2003). The relative greater men involvement in childcare has also been confirmed in the case of Mexico based on the employment surveys, as well as other surveys on familial dynamics in the metropolitan areas of the country (García and Oliveira, 2006).⁸

It could be argued that, in terms of time, it is still very reduced the approaching Mexican men to their children, nonetheless some authoresses as Teresa Rendón compare the results for Mexico to those of developed countries and figures for Mexico are ostensibly higher than those reported for most of them (only in Spain, Norway and Sweden there are similar levels to Mexico; see Rendón, 2003, and United Nations 1995). Hence, it is pertinent to follow this phenomenon and its possible transformation.

⁷ The same tendency for the case of rural areas.

⁸ this is datum which is frequently mentioned in the specialized bibliography for other places in the world (Wainerman, 2000; Mora, 2004; Rojas, 2007). Nonetheless, in researches carried out in Europe, differences by country have been stated, as in some countries men presence in domestic activities is more visible than in childcare (Devreaux, 2007).

As there is not a series of data which allow us to talk with certainty of the possible changes, diverse strategies have been used to deepen into the reach of this contact of Mexican men with their children, mainly in relation to different generations and social strata. Thus, we have studies of qualitative nature, such as that carried out by Olga Rojas (2007); this authoress suggests important differences in paternity attitudes and practices among young (20 to 44 years of age) and aged men (45 to 65 years of age).⁹ the oldest would be closer to a traditional paternity, centered on authority and the role of economic suppliers; those younger, mainly those of the middle sectors, would be more open to express their affection and closeness to their children, would openly take part in their children raising and care, and what is more, they would be supporters of dialogue and convincement in respect to disciplinary aspect.

Other studies of quantitative nature and based on probabilistic samples at national level, such as that carried out by Silvia Luna for Inmujeres (Inmujeres, 2005), also allow supporting the idea of a differential exercise of paternity according to social groups. One of these research's results, worthy of attention from that perspective, is that the hours dedicated by urban men of different ages to domestic work increases as one transits from the low-income strata to the high-income ones, suggesting a greater (or different) involvement of these privileged men with domestic reproduction. This does not occur with hours devoted to extra-domestic labor, where the greater the income the fewer the working hours (seen in other way, in these situations masculine laboring activity can be more productive, even though they work fewer hours, this means higher retributions).

The previous confirmations can be the result of an important number of intervening factors, so it is necessary to focus this problem in a multi-varied context. In a conjunct research with Orlandina de Oliveira (García and Oliveira, 2006), we approached in this way the aspects that influence the participation of men in childcare in Mexico City and Monterrey.¹⁰ We simultaneously took into account the possible effect of age, education, wife's extra-domestic labor, position in parental structure, the place of residence in childhood and current residence, position in employment, income, the age of the oldest person in the household, sort of household and the opinion on the gender roles. The results from

⁹ See also Gutmann, 1993 and 1996; Nava, 1996; Vivas Mendoza, 1996, Hernández Rosete, 1996; Keijzer, 2000; Casique, 2001; Esteinou, 2004.

¹⁰ The research was based upon a probabilistic sample of men (and women) from both cities (late 1990's decade) and male participation in childcare disregarding time was enquired into. Hence, it was sought to register any approach of metropolitan men to said care.

the logistical regression we applied indicate that, in equal conditions in the rest of the factors having better schooling and urban residence during childhood is clearly associated to greater childcare. These aspects become more significant than the economic ones in this metropolitan context of the end of XX century. Also, the females spouse's extra-domestic labor is another issue of the utmost importance to understand the masculine approach to children, as it would be expected. Finally, we think that our findings on age influence contribute to affirm and specify the groups which would define the differences from previous generations. We found that, bearing in mind social and economic characteristics, men between 30 and 39 years of age are the ones with a greater involvement with their offspring as well as clearly being the ones who separate from the behavior of men older than 40 years of age. Conversely, according to our data, men from 20 to 29 years of age from different strata who are parents are not following the new practices, perhaps since they have had children at those ages and have not postponed the beginning of reproduction. This indicates us that they are not willing to question and eventually change traditional behavior patterns, long ago established. It is necessary to deepen into this delimitation of generational change in future researches.

Activities and trajectories of the adolescents and youths

It is common in studies on familial work that besides taking into account adult men and women, special attention is paid to adolescents and youths' contributions to different domestic and extra-domestic activities carried out in the households. As some authors indicate, Mexican youths are far from being fulltime students (Camarena, 2004) despite we know schooling levels in young population in most of the social sectors have visibly increased in recent decades. More specifically, juvenile labor participation has been interpreted as part of the survival strategies started by some demographic groups in order to face their lifestyles' deterioration (Tuirán, 1993; García and Pacheco, 2000).¹¹

¹¹ Contrary to what could be expected, juvenile activity rates in Mexico do not show a clear descending tendency, except for the case of some major metropolitan areas. Emma Lilitiana Navarrete systematized figures from censuses and employment surveys for the 1970-2000 period, and based on this effort, it can be said that variations in economic participation of youths of both genders until 19 years of age have been lower, with the exception of the increment experienced by feminine rates in the 15-19 years of age with censal data (Navarrete, 2001). Tuirán (1993) also reports increments, but for both genders, in the 1982-1987 period, based on different socio-demographic surveys and the same is verified by Camarena (2004) for 1987-1997 with data from the surveys on employment (12 to 20 years of age). Conversely, García and Pacheco (2000) point out a stressed descent in the children's economic activity for Mexico City in the 1970-1995 period (12 to 17 years of age). In 2000, according to the census, 17.8 percent of the children and adolescents, offspring of the male head of family (12 to 17 years of age) worked (Estrada, 2005).

In order to document in a specific manner young men and women's involvement in different types of domestic and extra-domestic activities (in addition to their normative role of students) it is necessary to have information on devotedness to different tasks, their combination and duration. As it was seen, it is only from the early 1990's that this sort of data in employment surveys has been generated (or paid attention to) in Mexico and also in some of the socio-demographic surveys and in population census. As there are more analyses with this information the diversity of activities performed by young men and women in the households is clear, as well as the differences between the activities the former and the latter perform.

Based on the data from the 1997 National Survey on Employment, Camarena was able to establish eight combinations of the different tasks, apart from analyzing the average time devoted to each particular activity at national level (youths from 12 to 20 years of age). As previously seen in the adults' case, we found that the introduction of time dedication is the fundamental aspect to determine greater workloads among women and men.¹²

Among Camarena's results it is noteworthy that the role of student is the one with fewer variations among young men and women, independently if it is carried out as a single activity or combined with other.¹³ Similarly, the high proportion of youths who besides studying performs other activities is significant, yet this situation is less favorable for women, who combine the role of student with a larger number of tasks. Although education opportunities have broadened for men and women almost the same for both, each of the genders combines them with domestic and extra-domestic tasks in a differential way, and the heavier domestic workload young women have is noticeable, even in the relatively more privileged sectors (professionals and technicians).

As for the hours used, according to Camarena's results, by the end of last decade, young men from 12 to 20 years of age devoted on average 43 hours a week to the set of activities whereas young women 45. Among students (fulltime or combined) there were no differences in men or women, for both devoted 35 hours on average to this activity. Men who participated in labor did it for 40 hours,

¹² If time consideration is not introduced (or such information is not available), one reaches the conclusion that labor (the addition of domestic and extra-domestic) is more frequent among young men (Estrada Quiroz, 2000), or that it is not possible to discern a clear discrimination against women at these ages (Mier y Terán and Rabell, 2004).

¹³ The combinations this authoress takes in consideration are: a) no activity or less than 10 hours devoted to it; b) only household; c) only study; d) study and household; e) study and labor; f) only labor; g) labor and household; h) study, labor and household.

on average; young women for 39, either they performed that activity or altogether with other. Finally, young women carried out domestic chores for 23 hours and men 17, on average, either in an isolated or simultaneous manner with the rest (Camarena, 2004).

Apart from offering the general panorama in the most comprehensive possible manner, several recent studies deepen into the macroeconomic aspects, as well as into the famial and individual, which can give an account of the greater involvement of the children in study, labor and domestic activities (Mier y Terán and Rabell, 2004; Giorguli, 2005; Estrada Quiroz, 2005). These researches have draw to statistic multi-varied techniques and given the different options of possible results, multi-nominal logistic regression has been the most used tool.¹⁴ Infantile and juvenile labor has been confirmed to be closely linked to a low socio-economic level, as well as residing in rural areas (or at households with farming heads of family). Likewise, apart from life level, nuclear families and with both parent present constitute the most privileged context to increase the probabilities of being only devoted to study, especially in the non-agricultural sectors. Conversely, in extended families, the probability of only laboring is higher.

Adolescents and youths residing in households with a woman head of family have a more controversial situation. From the findings by Estrada Quiroz (2005), who includes an ample consideration of the sorts of households and gender of the heads of family (moreover, based on a huge household sample from the 2000 population census), it is possible to affirm that living in a household with a woman head of family almost of any kind leads to increment the possibilities of extra-domestic labor among children and adolescents of both genders. Well now, this is only a part of the panorama, for when the combination of activities is analyzed, one reaches the conclusion that in mono-parental households or those where the mother works (even more if she has a non-salaried activity) youths combine more frequently labor and school (see studies by Mier y Terán and Rabell, 2004, and Giorguli, 2005 both with data from the 1997 National Demographic Survey, *Encuesta Nacional Demográfica de 1997*). This shows us the presence of a multi-faceted reality in this sort of households, which undoubtedly has implications of diverse nature on the children and adolescents according to the position had respect to the combination of labor and school at an early age. International

¹⁴ One has to take into account these researches are not totally comparable to one another as in them different young subpopulations are selected: Mier y Terán and Rabell work with youths of both genders from 15 to 16 years of age in the middle and popular sectors and from 13 to 14 years of age in the agricultural sector (Enadid, 1997); Giorguli with youths from 12 to 16 years of age (Enadid, 1997); Estrada Quiroz with children from 12 to 14 and adolescents from 15 to 17 years of age (2000 census of population).

organisms generally postulate this is detrimental since the effects labor has on school permanence in the middle term; other defend the idea that working at early ages can represent an advantage for the individuals' income and careers (Giorguli, 2005).

Knowledge on the activities of the youths we have examined thus far is normally based on analyses performed for a moment in time. Said knowledge is notoriously enriched when we also incorporate the studies on transition to adulthood, which start from the age of occurrence of different events in the individuals' lives, such as the age at the first job, graduation, leaving the parental household, the first union and the first child.¹⁵ It is interesting to highlight that diverse studies reach the conclusion that the first job is the first transition many Mexican experience, even before leaving the parental household (see, specially, Pérez Amador, 2006; Echarri and Pérez Amador, 2007; Oliveira and Mora Salas, 2007).¹⁶

In accordance with data from the National Survey on Youth (2000) (*Encuesta Nacional de la Juventud*), reaching 29 years of age, 79 percent of the young population has had a first job, however, only 39 percent has left the parental household. Similarly, when the analysis is focused on the youths who have left the parental household, 64 percent had a first job before establishing on their own (Pérez Amador, 2006; Echarri and Pérez Amador, 2007). These data pinpoint, from other perspective, the importance of young workforce for domestic reproduction. Nonetheless, the panorama is more complex than as hereby sketched so far for it is also found that once youths' laboring life starts, it becomes an important booster to leave the parental household. Independently from the route they choose to establish a new residence, young men and women who are already inserted into the labor market have higher probabilities to leave the household at any age than those who have not been inserted into a remunerated activity (Pérez, 2006). These results offer us the necessary dynamic perspective of the juvenile economic participation and allow us to distinguish the individual angle of said phenomena, besides the familial one we have emphasized. Knowing this other face of the youths' involvement in labor we can conjecture that most of them remain in the parental household not to contribute to their support, but

¹⁵ See Coubes and Zenteno, 2005; Pérez Amador, 2006; Echarri and Pérez Amador, 2007; Gandini and Castro, 2007; Oliveira and Mora Salas, 2007.

¹⁶ This is differential according to social strata and gender, as indicated by Oliveira and Mora Salas (2007). Less privileged young men are earliest to enter labor market, compare to more favored young men (and women of all social sectors). Conversely, women from poor strata are the ones who integrate the least to labor activities.

waiting for a better labor opportunity that allows them to become independent (see the work by Pérez Amador, 2006, and the dialogue there established with the study by García and Pacheco, 2000).

Discussion and final considerations

The knowledge of transformations in familial work in Mexico has advanced in a differential manner, according to the different types of integrants of the domestic units. Even though Mexican wives' economic involvement is still delayed in respect to other countries, it is true that some of its effects are perceptible from some points of view and these have been clearly documented. We have studies which detail the overload magnitude of the economically active women, phenomenon which aggravated in the early stages of life, when spousal life starts and there are children. Said estimations, linked to those that indicate the contribution of these women to familial income, have been possible because of the amount of existing information in the country on domestic and extra-domestic labor, which has been gathered in two recent surveys on time use, in the employment surveys and in other of diverse socio-demographic nature. Nevertheless, beyond data, nowadays there is in Mexico a critical mass of men and women devoted to social research, who have made the pertinent questions and have answered the challenge of analyzing through large samples men and women's participation in labor market and altogether domestic reproduction. The results are coherent and motivate to continue along the road which has already been opened.

There are some people who have worried about defining the time devoted and other features of domestic and extra-domestic housework of men and women, and some other try to deepen in the possible impact of the observed tendencies on different aspects of familial and personal life. In spite fundamental changes are not expected, these studies' merit has been delimiting specific areas and sort of influence, as well as the particular aspects of labor participation which condition relationships inside households. For such end they have applied multivariate statistical tools based on probabilistic surveys that allow generalizing the results to the whole of analyzed populations. A solidly established relation refers to the freedom of movements. Both at national level and at some metropolitan areas, wives' extra-domestic labor has been proved to positively influence reaching greater autonomy or freedom of movement, independently from these

women's socio-demographic and individual characteristics. Likewise, in Mexico City and Monterrey the female spouses' labor experience has been proved to be the aspect that has a positive relation with a larger number of dimensions of the gender relationships (important decision-making, women's autonomy or independence, masculine participation in domestic life, absence of intra-familial violence). We are, then, before relations that are forged along time, which imposes new challenges, both in gathering information and the analytic tools we use.

As for adult males' participation in the familial division of labor, it is usual in Mexico and other Latin American countries that the reduced presence of men in reproduction tasks is verified (linked to a descent in the number of male heads of family who are the exclusive economic suppliers). As Luis Mora states (Mora, 2004), it has become common place the affirmation that feminine integration to labor market in the last years has been extensive compared to the scarce participation of men in domestic tasks. In the case of Mexico, there has been some advancement that allow observing through a different glass this common place, even though there is not comparable information that enable us to state the existence of transformations in a determined direction yet.

The performance of researches on the sort and duration of domestic and extra-domestic tasks has made men participation in the household's care and fixing—and of the car if there is one—water and firewood supply in rural areas, household supportive services and childcare visible. Certainly, they are few working hours, compared to those devoted by women to the set of tasks; nonetheless some authoresses state the possibility that a generational change among social strata is taking place, mainly in relation to male presence in childcare. In the explorations on this particular point based on probabilistic samples for the metropolitan areas of the countries it has been proved that under equal conditions in a wide series of individual and familial socio-demographic characteristics there is indeed a greater male involvement in childcare among some sort of fathers. Among them its is worth mentioning those who are between 30 and 39 years of age in comparison with those older; the ones who have higher education; the ones who had an urban residence in childhood and those who have an economically active spouse. We consider very important to keep a record of these results in the years to come.

Developments in the knowledge of young population and its contribution to familial reproduction (apart from student activities) also deserve being underscored. It is known, contrary to what could be expected, juvenile economic participation

at national level in Mexico has not decreased in an appreciable manner in the last decades. What is more, several studies on familial life strategies point out that in difficult economic conjunctures, youths' contribution can be important to maintain a minimum life level. Within this general framework, advances are relevant when one deepens into the combination of domestic, extra-domestic and student activities performed by young Mexicans, besides the hours devoted to each one of them. It is a rather complex panorama, where the estimations that define an overload of work for young women are distinguishable.

The influences of the social group and familial context they belong have also been documented as crucial to understand what occurs to juvenile activities. Women's laboring and domestic participation at an early age are characteristic of less favored social strata, which represent a considerable part of Mexican society. However, independently from life conditions, bi-parental nuclear families—in comparison to the extended ones and those headed by a woman—seem to constitute the best environment to inhibit said participation and motivate adolescents and youths to only study. To sum up economic and domestic tasks (besides school activities) are not at all alien to the large young majorities in Mexico, which reinforces the perspective which considers them as a relevant component in the division of familial work. Nonetheless, it is also relevant to wonder about the age and sequence of these events in juvenile life, as researches on transition to adulthood do. The studies carried out under this approach corroborate that the entrance to labor market and performance of domestic chores are early transitions in the life of adolescents and youths, but also show that the entrance to economic activity constitutes a booster of the parental house departure. So it is possible to conjecture that they remain with the family of origin as contributors to familial support (or their own) only while they have a good opportunity (which are scarce) to become independent.

Thus far we have pinpointed the findings we think are most significant, as well as those that open alternative ways, which undoubtedly will allow deepening and enriching the existing knowledge. Reaching this point it is also necessary to mention some omissions and situations which deserve special attention, such as that of the female heads of family and the elderly.

In the case of the female heads of family, nowadays bibliography on several aspects that dealing with welfare (or its absence) at their households is abundant. On several occasions, these researches have been directed to compare poverty levels that characterize families headed by women in comparison to those headed by men. In respect to the subjects analyzed in this document, in Mexico

there are specific studies (of qualitative and quantitative nature) that approach the overload of domestic and extra-domestic work which many women heads of family face, as well as the existing work division at their domestic units (see, for example, González de la Rocha, 1999; Acosta Díaz, 2000; Gómez de León and Parker, 2000; García and Oliveira, 2006). Nevertheless, we think there is the need to strengthen this research lines, mainly because female heads of family are a very heterogeneous demographic subgroup and the characteristics, stages and circumstances the division of labor undergoes among them and their relatives, as well as the balance or overload sometimes takes place must be delimited.

It is also necessary to monitor the specific activities of the elderly in a detailed manner, either they live alone or with other relatives. We know our population's aging is a process that will accelerate in the years to come, and before the absence of a retirement system that allows a worthy survival in old age, a considerable part of elderly people in our country is still active after 65 years of age. In the group of 70 years of age and older, a fifth part of the income still comes from labor, yet it is true that as age increases the role of familial help perceptibly increases (data for 2001 from the National Survey on Health and Aging in Mexico, *Encuesta Nacional sobre Salud y Envejecimiento en México*, Wong and Espinoza, 2003; see also Ham Chande, 2003; Pedrero Nieto, 1999). These figures confirm that elderly population's economic support has different facets, and the scenario increases if we add the perspective of their marital status and residential arrangements at these ages (alone or accompanied). Generally, in the studies on family and advanced ages Mexico—and other countries close to our cultural traditions—the crucial role sons, daughters and other close relatives have in the elderly survival has the tendency to be emphasized; nonetheless, it is true that they do not only receive support, but offer it in different manners to their own families, and this situation is possibly on the rise (Pérez Amador and Brenes, 2006). We witness, undoubtedly, a changing reality, which deserves a larger number of researches.

The approached demographic groups can, at first, reside in families or households of very diverse nature and this dimension has been considered as many times as it has been explicitly included in different researches. Nevertheless, reaching this final point we think it is not redundant to retake one of the methodological discussions of greater tradition in the studies on familiar labor division. What is the most appropriate analysis unit in this field of study, individuals or family? We know the first studies on survival strategies, as well as on poverty, household is the unit of analysis generally chosen; we know,

moreover, the frequent criticisms from different perspectives to this stance (Lloyd, 1998; García and Oliveira, 2006). If household is analyzed as non-differenced unit, gender and generational inequities are left aside, which —we have had the opportunity to confirm— are intrinsic part of family life; this has led us to emphasize the individuals and their acting in different contexts, or the need to intertwine family and individual trajectories. However, one must bear in mind there are multiple manners to solve this statement in methodological-technical terms, and there are already in our case different proposals in this direction (see, for instance, García, Muñoz and Oliveira, 1982; Cerruti and Zenteno, 2000; Mier y Terán and Rabell, 2004; Giorguli, 2005). We consider it important to retake and enrich these attempts in the future studies which consider the combination of the individual and familial analyses primordial.

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