

Dual-Earner Couples in Buenos Aires. Structural Adjustment and the Female and Male Labor Force

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Introduction

The economic crisis forced upon Argentina and other Latin American countries has had, and keeps having, profound effects upon families and upon the ways of life of its members. The patriarchal nuclear family model with a father-husband breadwinner, and a mother-wife housewife who remains at home providing affection and contributing to the generational and daily reproduction of the family, has been shaken down to its very roots. Households in which both spouses are in the labor market, some of them hopelessly looking for a job; households in which women have become the principal or exclusive economic supplier replacing their unemployed husbands; households in which marital separation forces women to face both roles breadwinner and mother-housewife, are some of the non-traditional family patterns generated by years of deteriorating conditions in the labor market.

In this paper we examine these transformations, especially the loss of popularity of the male breadwinner model and the expansion of the dual-earner couples model. We do it among complete nuclear families, which still is the most frequent way of family living in Argentina. We cast a look on the households in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area (AMBA) from 1980 to 2000 to answer the following questions: To what extent the patriarchal nuclear family pattern is no longer THE pattern?; To what extent it is no longer so among families with different characteristics, either in terms of the level of education of the wives, stage in the life cycle, or of the age of the youngest child living at home? What are some of the factors that help to understand wives increasing incorporation in the labor market? What are the relations that can be established between husbands and wives' labor force behavior? Have those relations changed over time?. For so doing we will employ data from the Encuesta Permanente de Hogares (Permanent Household Survey), and we will focus on key historical moments of the process started in 1980.¹

¹ This paper is a partial result of "Economic restructuring and family dynamics: Exploring transformations in marital relations and fatherhood" a research program directed by Catalina Wainerman with the financial

Our point of departure is that the significant changes that have taken place in the nature and dynamics of labor market together with a more general value change at the societal level may have considerably affected the way women -individually and in the context of their families- decide to participate in the labor force. More concretely, we propose that in a context of higher labor insecurity on the one hand, and higher cultural acceptance of working women, wives with domestic responsibilities will be significantly more likely to work or look for a job. Furthermore, we also put forward the hypothesis that wives' decision to participate in the labor market is currently associated with a new set of factors which were not included in the explanatory factors in 1980.

As we will illustrate with empirical data, during the last two decades, changes in the socioeconomic context have made the reproduction of the great majority of families a significantly harder task. Aspirations to upward social mobility are currently threaten for many middle and low class families. Labor insecurity seems to have profound effects on the behaviors, hopes, and expectations of individuals and their families. We propose, and we will empirically show, that labor force behaviors of members of the couple are not independent. This co-dependence is greater now than before since losing a job, or working in an unstable occupation has a different meaning in a more competitive and hostile labor market. Wives and husbands develop "labor arrangements" in order to minimize family risks.

The aim of this paper is to examine the increase in dual-earner families and some of the factors associated with it in the largest metropolitan area of Argentina, Buenos Aires, since 1980. For so doing we describe the incidence of dual-earners couples with different characteristics -in terms of stage in the life cycle, number and age of children and wives' level of education. We examine if these characteristics have changed over time. We also look at the associations between husbands' and wives' labor force behaviors, how husbands' jobs affect wives' probabilities to work or look for a job, and how these relations have changed over time.

We will begin by describing changes in the economy and the labor market that have affected men and women's labor force behaviors and consequently the gender division of labor. We will then move to present the data and the methods we used and later on the empirical results. We will end with a discussion on the implication of these changes for family dynamics and gender relations.

The Context: Changes in the Labor Market and Family Transformations

Structural Adjustment and the Labor Market

The economic policy implemented during the military process initiated in March 1976 brought about an unprecedented external debt accompanied by a decrease in economic growth, high inflation, de-industrialization, and a deterioration in labor market conditions. Upon the return of democracy in 1983, the economic plans failed to regain sustained economic growth and to diminish inflation for a long period of time. In the 80s, as a consequence of the gap between the generation of productive job opportunities and the number of people seeking work led to a strong expansion of open unemployment and under-employment and the increase in the informal sector. Labor productivity as well as real income decreased from 1980 to 1991.²

The regressive labor market trends, far from reverting, accentuated during the 90s. At the beginning of the decade, and within the framework of the "Washington Consensus", Argentina, as well as most countries of the region (Bulmer Thomas, 1996), underwent a profound economic reform. An aggressive combination of stabilization policies and structural reforms was implemented. It meant the definitive abandonment of the import substitution model of growth with a strong state intervention. The Convertibility Law and the accompanying reforms such as the de-regulation of the economy, privatization of public enterprises and a stronger regional integration, had strong impacts on the labor market. Furthermore, a series of labor market reforms were introduced aimed at increasing hiring and dismissal flexibility, whereas the employers' payment for social security contribution was reduced (Marshall, 1998).

² From 1980 to 1991 real income decreased 14% (Canitrot, 1995).

Between 1991 and 1994 the country reached significant macroeconomic achievements, specially lowering inflation and recovering economic growth at a relatively high rate (Ministerio de Economía, 1998). Economic growth together with price stabilization, contributed to a slight improvement of the purchasing power of salaries. However, the frailty of the economy, which expansion was supported by the incoming of foreign capitals, turned openly clear after the "tequila effect" -caused by the 1994 Mexican crisis- which resulted in a 5% fall of the GDP during 1995.

Open unemployment grew to figures never equaled before, reaching almost 20% among the AMBA population in May 1995. Labor market opportunities decreased even when the economy was growing, making evident the divide between economic and labor market performances (Monza, 1995). Strikingly high open unemployment rates were the result of two different processes: the difficulties of the economy to maintain and generate jobs (due to an increase in productivity, government downsizing, and difficulties experienced by firms to compete with foreign products), and the increase in the number of people looking for jobs (Cerrutti, 2000).

In 2000, argentine families face a significantly different labor market than twenty years ago. Getting a job, loosing one, being unemployed, all these situations have a different meaning, since for the most, the uncertainty about the future is considerably greater than before. As we have argued, this uncertainty have changed the decisions made by families about income generation. As we will see, the change from a single male provider to a dual-earner couple is one of these significant transformations.

Male and Female Participation in the Labor Force

Labor behavior of men and women throughout the last decades was diverse. From the Second Postwar to the 60s, and more swiftly after the 70s, women had increased their participation in the labor force. The expansion of education, specially secondary – matching currently males in this respect - has had an important effect on the increase of female labor supply. Also contributed to this end the delay of marriage and the reduction of family size. Women's movement from home to work was the opposite to men's. They reduced their global labor force participation rates mainly because they remain at school

longer and retire earlier. In the 80s., the reduction in males' labor force participation rates continued, but enlarged now by the economic crisis, as shown by the decrease in the participation rates of the male head of households.

Since the late 80s and the beginning of the 90s, labor force behaviors of men and women were significantly affected by economic re-structuring and changes in the role of the state. With the striking reduction of public services -particularly education, health and infrastructure- these costs were transferred to the domestic units, increasing the family reproduction costs. The withdrawal of the state in its welfare responsibilities together with a deterioration in the job market resulted in a gradual increase of poverty accompanied by high levels of unemployment, self-employment, informal labor and precarious employment.

During these years women clearly increased their participation in the labor force whereas men maintained or diminished theirs. Married women's entry into the labor force when labor market opportunities were deteriorating, suggests that they did so out of the need at reducing household economic insecurity. Married women increased their labor force participation in order to counterbalance a loss of income and thus to avoid a significant deterioration in their family standards of living.

In the 90s the negative labor market trends accentuated. The AMBA labor force participation rate for those aged 15-64 among females grew significantly from 38% to 53% whereas among males it remained at the same level (about 85%). This process intensified the feminization of the labor force (Sautu, 1997).

Since the increase in female labor supply was not accompanied by the same trend in employment levels, part of that supply contributed to the significant increase in the unemployment rate. The average unemployment rate for the total active population of the AMBA which was about 6% in 1991, climbed over 19% in 1995.

Three million people were estimated to be in a precarious labor situation in May 1994 (Monza, 1995). Since then the labor market kept deteriorating. Early in 1999 two million people were unemployed but less than 10% of them had unemployment insurance.

Summarizing, the increase of women economic participation in the 90s., as in the 80s., is not to be understood as an improvement in labor market opportunities or in

women's situation in society but to structural adjustment processes and to economic restructuring. In the AMBA, the growth of the female work force appears to support the "additional worker" hypothesis (Cerrutti, 2000).

Transformations in Womens' Conditions and in the Family

The increase in the number of economically active women does not exhaust the significant change occurred in recent decades. It also involves a truly revolutionary behavioral transformation along the life cycle. Up to the 60s the female labor force was mainly formed by working daughters. They mostly went to work before getting married or having their first child; they then quit the labor market to take care of the house and the children. Males, instead, had no choice. They joined the labor force and remained there, either employed or looking for a job, until retirement or death. Getting married, having children, either few or many, the fact that the younger child went to school, did not affect their stable relationship with the labor market. In the case of women, instead, entering or leaving the labor market were closely related to those vital processes (Wainerman, 1979).

Many women enter and remain in the labor market today -either employed or looking for a job –with certain independence of their family situation, almost like males do. It seems that it does not make a significant difference whether they have or do not have a mate, have or do not have children, or whether the children are small babies, infants or adolescents. In this sense, Argentina would be following a similar path of the American and European developed countries in which the labor trajectory of women has almost been assimilated to that of men.³ This transformation has gone together with others occurring in the lives of individuals and of families.

During the last three decades women have gone a long way towards equaling opportunities with men. They have reached higher educational levels, first in secondary school, then in the university coming to be 52.2% of the total national universities

³ For example, in the United States, whereas in 1980 only 45.1 percent of wives with children under 6 years of age were in the labor force, in 1999 they increased to 61.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In high income countries labor force participation rates of women aged 25-49 increased from 42.3% to 69.0% (Dixon Muller, 2001).

population in 1994 (Palermo, 2000). They have also advanced over the population enrolled in traditionally male careers such as engineering, veterinary or economics.

Over the last twenty years, as a result of socio-demographic changes and of new life values, single-person households increased significantly (formed by middle-aged women in the first place, by young males in the second place, and lastly by young women). Single-parent families mostly formed by mothers and then by parents with their children followed the same trend. These single-parent families, the result of separations and divorces, increased the most: almost 50% in the last two decades. At the same time the extended and complex families diminished, continuing the family "nuclearization" trend (Wainerman and Geldstein, 1994). This "nuclearization" had started in previous years when the own family begun to be valued above the family of origin, together with being independent from the elders and having a private environment that assures intimacy with the mate and children.

We will focus our analysis of dual-earner couples on the most frequent type of family households in the AMBA: the couple with children in which at least one of the members of the couple (the male) is in the labor market, either employed or unemployed. Given our interest in the relationships between family and productive work, we will deal with households of wives aged 20-60 years, the most active life period. They represent half of family households.

Data and Methods

The data for this study come from the *Encuesta Permanente de Hogares*, EPH, (Permanent Household Survey) and correspond to the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. EPH survey uses a representative household sample, gathered with a multistage and stratified design. It is collected by Argentina's Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, INDEC (National Institute for Statistics and Census). The survey contains information on employment, demographic, economic, and social characteristics of the population living in private households. We analyze data collected for the October waves of 1980, 1985, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 2000, selected because they correspond to major economic cycles.

In order to depict dual-earner couples and their variation over time we use descriptive statistics. We characterize couples in terms of wives' age (as a proxy for stage in the life-cycle) number of children and age of the youngest child (as indicators of domestic demands over women's time); and wives' level of education (as a proxy of human capital as well as of values and expectations).

We examine the increase in wives' probabilities to work or look for a job controlling for composition effects by estimating a pooled binomial logistic regression. Besides, in order to determine how much of the increase in wives' probabilities of being in the labor force was due to changes in their sociodemographic composition and how much was due to the influence of individual, family and husband's characteristics we perform a logit decomposition analysis.

To determine the extent to which wives' participation in the labor force is not only determined by individual and family cycle considerations but also by their husbands' labor force and employment condition we perform a statistical analysis using also binomial logistic regressions. In so doing, we identify the significance of a series of covariates on wives' probabilities of being in the labor force. This regression includes characteristics of the wife (age, education) of her husband (labor force condition, and for those employed, job type, seniority, income), their family (number of children, age of the youngest child). In order to assess changes in the significance of those covariates over time, we estimated the regressions for 1980, 1991 and 2000.

Results

From the Male-breadwinner to the Dual Earner Couple Model

In this paper we examine a major family transformation: the decrease of the single (male) earner family and the expansion of the dual-earner family with both members of the couple supplying work to support economically the household. The male breadwinner model⁴ involves a rigid division between a husband/father exclusive economic supplier and a wife/mother exclusively devoted to maintaining the household and taking care of

the children. Rather than a reality reachable by everybody, it was a culturally valued ideal only available to those sectors with higher economic resources. The capability of economically supporting the household was closely related to maleness - within a patriarchal pattern in which the male was the uncontested authority for the children and for the wife as well. In Argentina this model prevailed until a couple of decades ago and still continues (at least in the mythology) among some sectors of the population - increasingly cornered by cultural change.

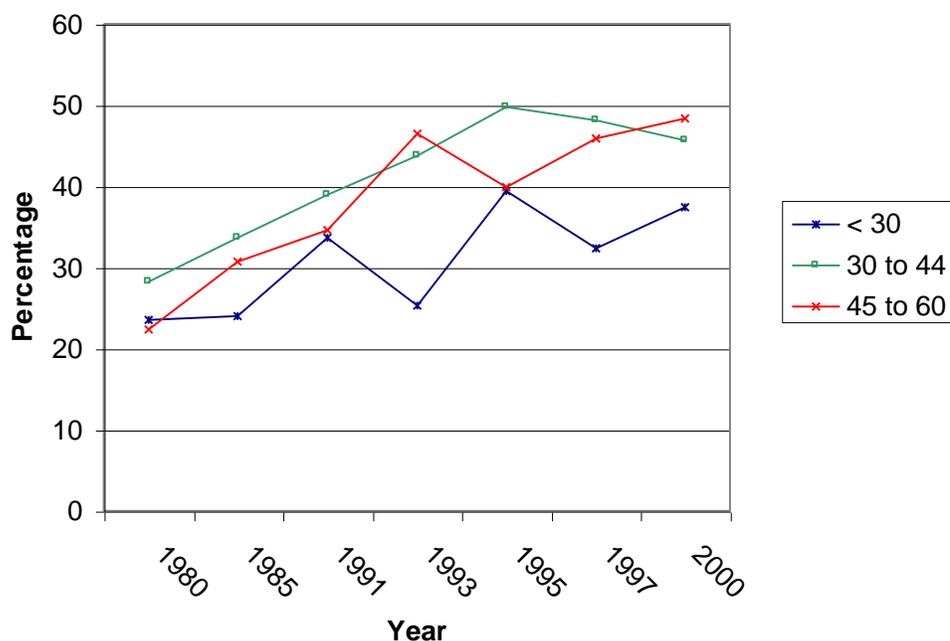
The data for AMBA, the most modern and the largest agglomeration of the country, are eloquent. From 1980 to 2000, among the complete nuclear households, with children, and wives aged 20-60, the single (male) earner pattern (active husband and inactive wife) lost popularity decreasing almost one third, from 74.5% to 53.7%, whereas the dual-earner pattern increased over three quarters, from 25.5% to 46.3%. It implies an almost revolutionary social transformation which questions the dominant values regarding the definition of gender roles as well as the division of extra-domestic labor.

Albeit families face different responsibilities at different life stages, in the last decades the expansion of the two-providers model and the contraction of the single male provider affected all households -either at the stage of "formation", "expansion", or "consolidation"⁵. The age of the wife, the number of children living in the household, or the age of the younger child all show similar trends. As can be seen in Chart 1, from 1980 to 2000, the two-providers pattern expanded from 23.5% to 37.4% (59.1%) among households with young wives not older than 29 years old, while it expanded from 28.2% to 45.7% (62.1%) in the medium age couple (30-44 years old), and from 22.4% to 48.3% (115.6%) in older ages (45 to 60 years old). A similar trend was found among households with different number of children, even though more women refrain from entering the labor market when they have children than when they do not. (Chart 2).

⁴ The model appeared in the United States of America after the industrial revolution and began to crackle after the Second World War (see Bernard, 1981; Pleck, 1987).

⁵ During two decades, from 1980 to 1999, the average age of 20-60 years old wives living in complete nuclear households, with children, increased from 38 to 40 years old and the "mode" (the most frequent age), from 33 to 44 years old, consistently with the postponement of the age to enter marriage or union. On the other hand, the couple formation pattern has been almost immutable: women with the same age as their husbands (or one year more or less) represent only one quarter, whereas the prevailing pattern is males being five or more years older than wives (almost one third).

Chart 1. Percentage of Dual-Earner Couples by Women's Age



The domestic demands derived from the presence of one or more children in the household must be qualified by age. The greater demands over women's time take place during childhood, prior to schooling, diminishing as the children grow up. Again, we find that in the 1980-2000 period the two providers pattern with the mother entering the labor force, was adopted by households with one small child not older than 5 as well as by those with one child aged 6-12, or one aged 13 or more. However, the expansion among the latter was higher (106.6%) than among the former (67.6%) as can be seen in Chart 3.

Chart 2. Percentage of Dual-Earner Couples by Number of Children

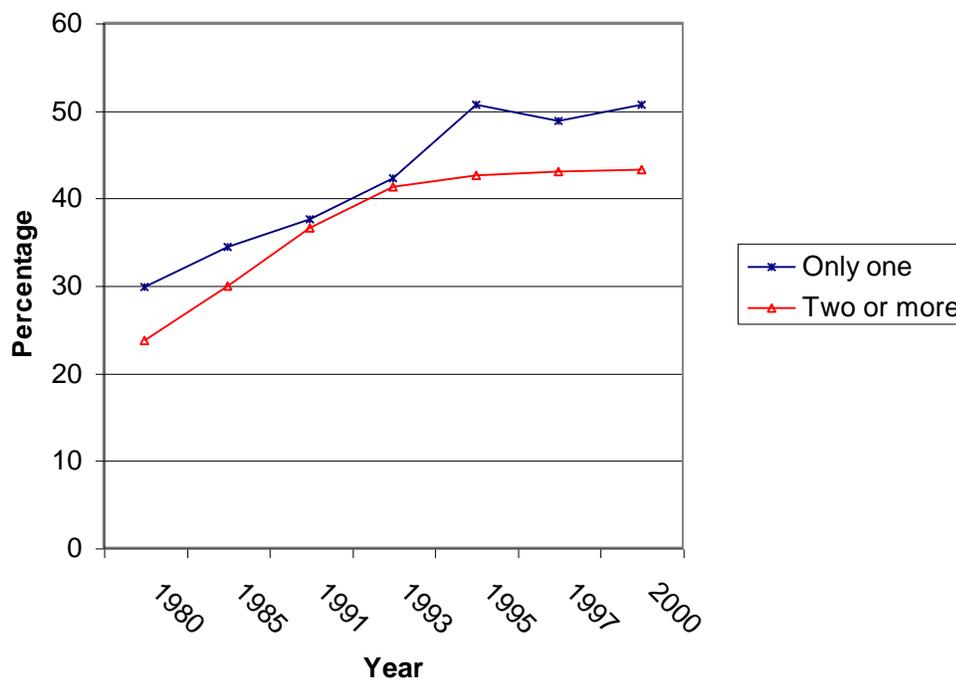
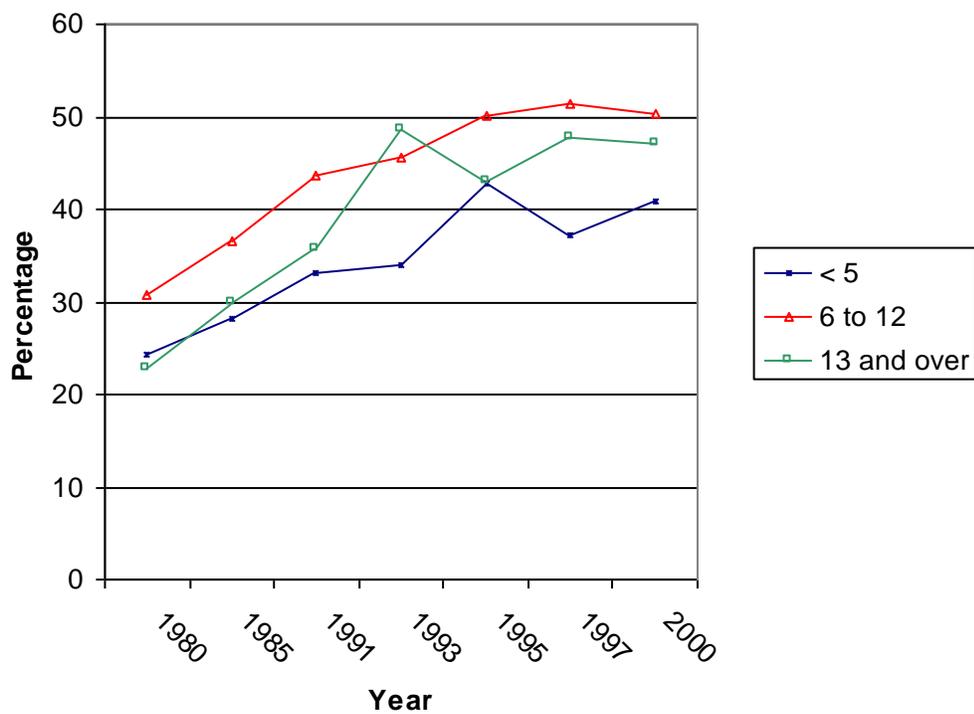


Chart 3. Percentage of Dual-Earner Couples by Age of Youngest Child

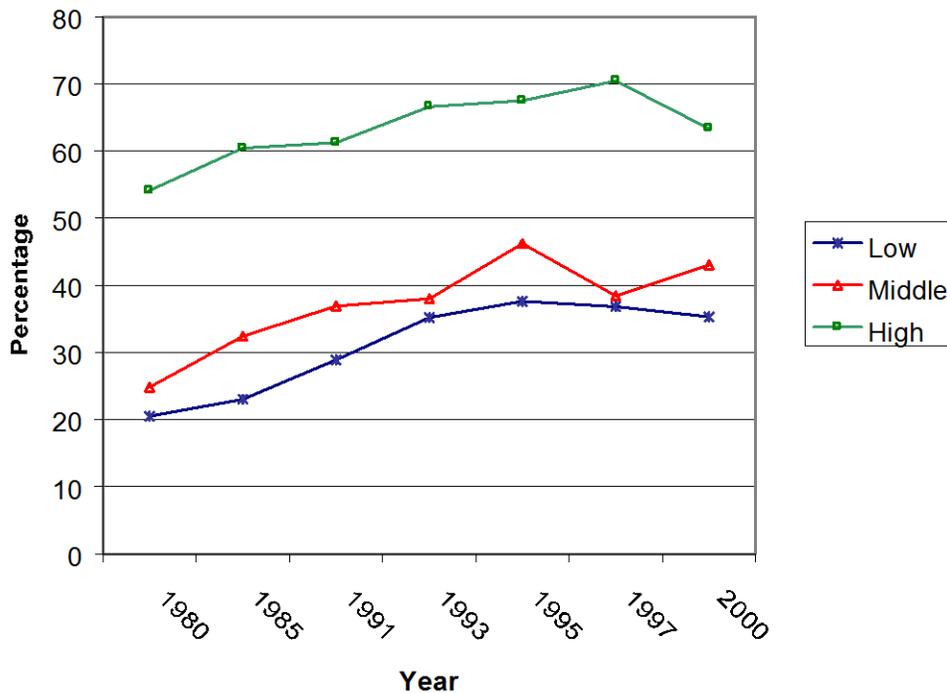


In Argentina, as in many other countries, women that reached higher educational levels have a higher propensity to participate in the economic activity. This higher propensity does not obey to the sole satisfaction of economic needs but to values and life expectations that go together with a tendency to postpone the age at family formation, at entering motherhood and at having a small number of children. These facts keep domestic duties relatively low, thus making easier for women to add a "second shift". The high opportunity cost of not working after having invested many years in education is another explanatory factor for the propensity to work of highly educated women (Wainerman, 1979). This accounts for the higher frequency of the two providers pattern among couples highly educated (incomplete and complete university education) than among those with lower levels (complete elementary school or less), or medium levels (incomplete or complete secondary school).

As shown in Chart 4, in 1980 the percentage of dual earner couples in households with women of high educational levels was two and a half times the percentage of that in households with women with low levels of education. As time went by, in the 90s., the dual-earner pattern has been adopted by the former to the extent that towards 2000, the frequencies dual-earner couples became somewhat more similar in both household sectors albeit it was still much more popular among the more educated women (63.3% versus 35.3%). The data show, hence, that the adoption of the two provider pattern was led by the households with high educated women followed afterwards by low educated women at a swifter trend, especially during 1991-1993.

In short, the nuclear families with children residing in the AMBA have suffered a radical transformation, moving away from the pattern of work division by gender which prevailed for decades after a patriarchal view. The adoption of a new pattern, impelled by women rapidly entering the labor force, especially those married and cohabiting with children resulted, since the early 80s, in the expansion of families in which not only the father but the father and the mother go to work. This change had several reasons and took place at different moments and paces, in low as well as in middle or high socio-economic sectors, among women with higher or lower levels of education, among recent or old families, with only one or two or more children, with newly born babies, small children, adolescents, youngsters, or even entering adulthood.

Chart 4. Percentage of Dual-Earner Couples by Women's Education



Disentangling the Increase in Dual-Earner Couples

We have shown that in the last twenty years there has been a significant increase in the percentage of dual-earner couples. We have also shown that this increase has taken place among couples in different stages of their family cycle. It seems that almost irrespectively of their characteristics, wives are significantly more likely than ever before to be in the labor force. What are the factors underlying that increase?. The rise in the aggregate percentage of dual-earner couples in nuclear families could be originated by different factors. One is the change in socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of wives and husbands. It could be the case that because women currently have considerable higher levels of education (even higher than men) than twenty years ago, they are more likely to work or to look for a job. A different explanation could be that irrespectively of their characteristics more women now are willing -or forced by economic necessities- to

work than before. In order to examine whether those changes in the socioeconomic and demographic composition of couples are the sole explanation for such a significant increase in dual-earner couples we performed a statistical analysis. We estimated two pooled binomial logistic regressions aiming at predicting wives' probabilities of being in the labor force in different periods that coincides with economic cycles (1980, 1985, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 2000) controlling for a series of individual, family and husband characteristics.⁶ These regressions allow determining if women's probabilities of being in the labor force have really changed over time irrespectively of other social transformations, for example their higher educational attainment.

Results from Table 1 clearly show that, once composition effects are controlled, wives were in 1980 almost two times less likely to be in the labor force than in 2000 (see Table 1). However, it is important to point out that the overall increase in wives' labor force participation takes place from 1980 to 1993. From 1993 on, this increase is not statistically significant. This result suggests that wives' higher propensity to work or to look for a job is not the exclusive result of changes in their social condition and has a lot to do with changes in the social context. Wives' propensity to work or to look for a job increased rapidly at the same time unemployment rates started growing at a fast pace. Later, when the open unemployment rate reached its peak in 1995 (20%) and stabilized around 15%, wives' labor force participation rates increased only marginally. These results suggest that even though women decided to enter the labor force to reduce household economic uncertainty ("additional worker hypothesis") soon afterwards they found great limitations to obtain jobs. This behavior explains the rapid increase and later stabilization of wives' labor force participation rates during the 90's.

⁶ One of the regressions is estimated with all couples irrespectively of husband's labor force status. The second regressions is restricted to couples where husbands are in employed. In the case of the second regression a set of husbands' job related variables were included as control variables.

Table 1. Estimated odds ratios of wives' probabilities of being in the labour force by year.

Year	Odds Ratio	
	Model 1	Model 2
1980	0.515 ***	0.547 ***
1985	0.579 ***	0.605 ***
1991	0.773 ***	0.814 ***
1993	0.908	0.949
1995	1.025	1.049
1997	0.966	1.034
<i>2000 (ref. Cat)</i>		

Note 1: *** p<.001

Note 2: Model 1 was estimated for all couples, and controls for wives' age, education, number and age of children, husbands' education and labor force participation.

Model 2 was estimated for couples where husbands are employed. It controls for wives' age, education, number and age of children, husbands' education and job-related characteristics

Source: Encuesta Permanente de Hogares, pooled data from 1980 to 2000,

Having said that wives' increasing participation in the labor force is not exclusively related to the individual and family changes they have experienced in the last twenty years does not mean to say that these changes did not have any influence in their labor force behavior. In order to determine how much of the increase in their propensity to work is due to changes in their sociodemographic composition and how much is related to the way and intensity individual and family characteristics affect their behavior, we performed a logit decomposition exercise.⁷ This exercise parcels out the increase in wives' probabilities of being in the labor force in two components: composition and "effects". We found⁸ (results not shown) that during the 80's, two thirds of the

⁷ This decomposition of the difference in estimated probabilities was performed using Thomas Pullum program (DLOGIT), University of Texas at Austin.

⁸ This exercise was carried out using logistic regression estimates as well as population proportions in each variable, for years 1980, 1991 and 2000,

difference in wives' estimated probabilities of being in the labor force⁹ were due to changes in the level of coefficients ("effects") and only one third due to the differences in population composition. In other words, between 1980 and 1991 more women entered the labor force with certain independence of their individual and family characteristics. These result suggest, as it was argued before, that changes in the economic contexts –in particular a more unstable labor market- pushed women with more or with less family responsibilities, with low or high education with one or more children, etc., to work or look for a job in order to reduce households' economic uncertainty. We found similar results for the years 1991 and 2000.¹⁰

Associations between Husbands' and Wives' Labor Force Behaviors

To say that more wives than ever before were willing to work or to look for a job and that one of the most significant reasons for so doing was to reduce household economic uncertainty implies that wives and husbands labor force behaviors are not independent from each other. Thus, a question that we put forth is to what extent wives' participation in the labor force is not only associated with individual and family cycle considerations but also with their husbands' LF and employment conditions. Seeking to answer this question, we first consider whether husbands' labor force status and wives probabilities of being in the labor force are associated, we then examine if the type of husbands' job as well as their labor conditions are related to wives' propensity to work. For so doing, we assess wives' probabilities of being in the labor force taking into consideration their husbands labor force status. We estimate a binomial logistic regression that also controls for wives age, education, number and age of children and husbands' education. This regression tell us how much (or less) probable is for a wife to be in the labor force if her husband is employed, unemployed or out of the labor force with independence of many other significant traits.

⁹ Between 1980 and 1991, the estimated probabilities of wives' participation in the labor force grew from 0.23 to 0.35, that is in 0.12.

¹⁰ Between 1991 and 2000, the estimated probabilities of wives' participation in the labor force grew from 0.35 to 0.44, that is in 0.09.

Table 2 shows that wives' labor force behavior is strongly associated with their husbands' labor force status. If husbands are unemployed wives are between two or five times (depending on the year) more likely to be in the labor force than if their husbands are employed. Having found that husbands and wives economic behaviors are not independent does not mean that we can easily establish a causal relation between the two. A plausible interpretation is provided by the "additional worker" hypothesis: women enter the labor force "pushed" by the unemployment condition of their husbands. A study carried out with panel data gives support to this hypothesis (Cerrutti, 2000). However, it is also important to point out that it could perfectly be the case that it is having an employed wife what influences husbands' unemployment. More clearly it could be that because wives are employed, husbands feel more free to remain unemployed for longer periods until they find a suitable job. In any event, the association between husbands and wives labor force behavior appears to be very significant overtime.

The multivariate analysis of wives labor force behavior coincides to a great extent with the description of the main characteristics of dual-earner couples. As we argued before, wives with high educational attainment have a higher propensity to participate in the labor market. This higher propensity takes place specifically among those women with at least high school complete (Table 2). Among those who have lower levels of education, high school incomplete or lower, the level of education does not make a significant difference. This result suggests the existence of a kind of threshold in the meaning of work for the labor market (in terms of values and expectations as well as in economic need) for women who had attained higher levels of education against those who had not. Furthermore, it also appears that it is only at higher levels when education pays off at the labor market, increasing considerably the opportunity cost of staying at home taking care of the family and children.

Regarding the relationship between wives' labor force behavior and her family situation when other significant factors are controlled, we found that the number of children in the household does not constitute a deterrent for wives participation in the labor force. Keeping in mind that all the women considered have children, we found that having one, two or more does not affect women's propensity to work or look for a job. As we have claimed before, Argentina is currently following the trend found in many

developed countries were women's labor trajectories are getting more similar to that of men.

Table 2. Estimated logistic coefficients of wives' probabilities of being in the labour force by year (all couples).

Independent Variables	1980	1991	2000
<u>Women's Characteristics</u>			
Age			
Age	0.2089 ***	0.1612 ***	0.1822 ***
Age squared	-0.0031 ***	-0.0024 ***	-0.0022 ***
Education			
No Educ/Primary Sch. Incomp	-3.1534 ***	-1.9461 ***	-1.7516 ***
Primary Comp.+ High Sch. Inc.	-3.1721 ***	-2.1445 ***	-1.4739 ***
High Sch. Comp. + Univ. Inc. <i>University Complete</i>	-2.3522 ***	-1.5257 ***	-1.1183 ***
<u>Husband's Characteristics</u>			
Husband's Labor Force Status			
<i>Employed</i>			
Out of the Labor	0.3464 *	0.013	0.4438
Unemployed	1.751 **	1.2353 ***	0.6086 ***
Husband's Education			
No Educ/Primary Sch. Incomp	1.1104 ***	0.6474 **	0.21
Primary Comp.+ High Sch. Inc.	0.6424 **	0.5658 **	0.0233
High Sch. Comp. + Univ. Inc. <i>University Complete</i>	0.2578	0.319	0.1625
<u>Family Characteristics</u>			
Age of the Youngest Child			
Less than 2 years	-0.4914 *	-0.7648 ***	-0.3095
from 2 to 5	-0.5936 **	-0.3474	-0.0968
from 6 to 12	0.0411	-0.0522	0.1115
<i>Older than 12</i>			
Number of Children			
One child	0.3294	0.0372	0.3556
Two children	-0.1787	0.0314	-0.1477
<i>3 or more</i>			
Intercept	-1.9185 ***	-1.5786 ***	-2.7047 ***
Number of Cases	1287	1321	1336
Likelihood Ratio	113	134	128

Note 1: *** p<.001, ** p<.05, *p<.01

Source: Encuesta Permanente de Hogares, October 1980, 1991 and 2000

If the number of children do not make a significant difference in wives labor force behavior, having a baby or a toddler at home does (Table 2). This result suggest that wives may leave the labor force when they have a baby and just remain out of work for a relatively short period.

As regards of trends over time, the comparison of the results corresponding to 1980, 1991 and 2000 suggests that “supply side” characteristics are losing influence over wives’ labor force behavior. As was suggested before, wives’ economic behavior is getting more independent of their family responsibilities and level of human capital. As can be seen, in 2000 education has lost part of its strong influence on wives’ probabilities to be in the labor force, as well as the age of the youngest child.

We also consider to what extent husbands’ level of education -as an indirect indicator of their earning potential- was associated to wives’ participation in the labor force. We found that in 1980 and in 1991, the higher the earning potential of the husband the lower the probabilities of the wife to be in the labor force. This relation vanishes in the year 2000 probably as a result of an increasing disassociation between education and income.

Summarizing, although human capital characteristics are still associated with wives’ LF behavior, their influence has decreased over time. We found that currently wives’ decisions to enter the labor force are more independent than in the past of family related characteristics, that are indicators of family demands on women’s time, as well as husbands earning potential, that is an indicator of household socioeconomic level. The association between wives’ labor force participation and their husbands labor force status appears to be strong and steady over time.

Having established that wives’ and husbands labor force behavior are not independent from each other and reinforced the support for the loss of influence of “supply side” characteristics on wives probabilities to work or look for a job, a significant question arises. Is there any association between husbands’ job and wives’ participation in the labor force? Has this association (or lack of it) changed over time? In order to answer this question we performed a similar statistical analysis (binomial logistic regression) but conditional on husbands’ labor force status. More explicitly, we restricted

our estimations and the analysis to those couples in which husbands were employed.¹¹ Aiming at identifying if there is any association between the quality and stability of husbands' job and wives' participation in the labor force we added to the original regressions a set of husbands' job-related variables. We evaluated two working hypotheses. One was that wives' participation in the labor market would be associated with the instability of husbands' jobs. We expected to find that if the husband has a stable job his wife is less likely to work or look for a job. The second hypothesis was that this influence would become stronger with time. That is, when economic uncertainty became a characteristic newly trait of the labor market.

The set of indicators of the quality and stability of husbands' jobs to the original regression equation were: "position and work" combines the relation of the worker with its job (employer, self-employed or employee) with the perception of fringe benefits; "seniority" establishes the number of years that the worker has spent in this occupation; finally, "number of jobs" is a dummy variable that indicates if the husband has only one or more than one jobs.

Results presented in Table 3 give empirical support for the two hypotheses. Several relations can be established between husbands' jobs and wives' labor force behavior and these relations have become stronger with time. In 1980 when "supply side" characteristics had a stronger influence on wives' behavior, as we noted before, there were only one job-related variable that was associated with wives' probability to be in the labor force. Wives' were less likely to be in the labor force if their husbands had spent at least five years in their jobs. In other words, husbands' stable employment was a deterrent to wives participation in the labor force. Twenty years later, when individual and family related characteristic lost part of their influence on wives decision to work or look for a job, the stability and quality of husbands' jobs appears to have a strong association to that decision. If husbands work as self-employed or as an employee without receiving labor benefits, or if they have spent only one year or less in their jobs, their wives are significantly more likely to be in the labor force. On the contrary, if husbands have a stable job (that is, if they have spent at least five years in them) and

¹¹ We have not considered for this analysis couples in which their husbands were unemployed or out of the labor force.

work as an employee receiving fringe benefits, their wives are significantly less likely to work or look for a job.

One relatively puzzling result is that of husbands' number of jobs. We found a negative association between husbands having only one job and wives' participation in the labor force. Although just only 10 percent of husbands have more than one job, they are more likely to have a wife who is working or looking for a job. This could be that having more than one job is an indicator of being in an inadequate labor situation. Wives' participation in the labor force may be a strategy to counterbalance this situation.

Table 3. Estimated logistic coefficients of wives' probabilities of being in the labour force by year (husbands employed).

Independent Variables	1980	1991	2000
<u>Husbands' Job-Related Characteristics</u>			
Position at Work			
Employer	-0.0711	0.0221	0.2529
Self-Employed	0.0348	0.5124 ***	0.423 ***
Employee, no fringe benef.	-0.062	0.1883	0.3633 **
<i>Employee with fringe benef.</i>			
Seniority			
Up to one year	-0.1943	0.1067	0.1012
from one year to five			
More than five years	-0.3596 **	-0.2373	-0.4584 ***
Number of Jobs			
One	-0.4034	-0.4538 **	-0.6626 ***
More than one			
Intercept	-4.1099 **	-3.2022 **	-4.9225 ***
Number of Cases:			
Log Likelihood			

Note 1: *** p<.001, ** p<.05, *p<.01

Note 2: The model also controls for wives' age, education, number and age of children, and husbands' education.

Source: Encuesta Permanente de Hogares, October 1980, 1991 and 2000

It appears that families have lately been more reactive to changes in the environment, particularly in the labor market. When stable employment was the norm, to have a relatively precarious job was not necessarily seen as a threat to the household standard of living. It was probably conceived as a temporary condition. More recently, labor opportunities as well as labor conditions have changed dramatically, affecting the way people guarantee (or at least try to) household reproduction.

Concluding Remarks

Economic restructuring has significantly affected the gender division of labor in the last two decades in Argentina. Dual-earner couples among nuclear families with children have been rapidly growing in Buenos Aires, from 25.5% in 1980 to 45.3% in 2000. The breakdown of the father breadwinner model has been related to growing unemployment and job instability coupled with value changes. In this paper we have examined the increase in dual-earner families and some of its determinants.

Argentine families are currently facing an uncertain future. The uncertainty about the future has changed the decisions made by families about income generation. We argued that the change from a single male provider to a dual-earner couple is one of these significant transformations. Many more women enter and remain in the labor market today -either employed or looking for a job -with certain independence of their family situation, almost like males do. It seems that it does not make a significant difference whether they have or do not have children, or whether the children are small babies, infants or adolescents. The data presented in the paper suggest that wives' higher propensity to work or to look for a job is not the exclusive result of changes in their social condition (increased education, etc.) and has a lot to do with changes in the social context.

We found that, even though human capital characteristics are still associated with wives' LF behavior, their influence has decreased over time. Currently wives' decisions to enter the labor force are more independent than in the past of family related characteristics, that are indicators of family demands on women's time, as well as

husbands earning potential, that is an indicator of household socioeconomic level. The association between wives' labor force participation and their husbands labor force status appears to be strong and steady over time. Furthermore wives decision to work or look for a job is currently more associated than ever before with the stability and quality of husbands' jobs.

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